

# Research on the Strategy of Developing Assessment Literacy of English Teachers in the Context of English Subject Key Competences

LIANG Caili, LU Jinping

Gannan Normal University, Ganzhou, China

Assessment is an indispensable part of the teaching and learning process. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the professional development of teachers is receiving increasing attention. As a key component of teacher professional development, teacher assessment literacy is naturally valued by scholars. *The English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High School (2020 version)* emphasizes the cultivation and development of students' English subject key competences. Based on the emphasis of English subject key competences, accordingly, there are requirements for the assessment literacy of senior high school English teachers. This research elaborates the requirements for senior high school English teacher assessment literacy under the context of English subject key competences in China, including four aspects: assessment attitude, assessment knowledge, assessment skill and assessment reflection ability. Besides, in order to help develop English teacher assessment literacy, this research provides strategies for the development of English teacher assessment literacy involving different subjects related to education.

**Keywords:** English subject key competences, teacher assessment literacy, development strategy

## Instruction

In 2012, *The Professional Standards for Middle School Teachers (Trial)* suggested that teachers should utilize assessment tools, master different assessment methods, and evaluate students' development from various perspectives in the whole teaching process. Besides, teachers should guide students to conduct self-assessment and improve teaching based on the result of teaching effect. It reaffirms the importance of the ability to evaluate education and teaching, which is conducive to promoting the development of teachers' assessment literacy. In 2020, *The Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era* pointed out that "the single assessment of students should be avoided and the multiple assessment standards should be established", which marks the important position of educational assessment in improving the system and mechanism of education. In recent years, in order to adapt to the needs of the development of key competences, the *English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High School (2020 version)* clearly points out that teachers should make a comprehensive evaluation of students' performance, including their achievements and their development of key competences. The evaluation results should be used to improve teaching and learning so as to carry out the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" philosophy. English teachers with a high assessment literacy

can give full play to the incentive and improvement function of evaluation, thus, a positive backwash effect on teaching will be manifested (Zhang, 2020).

The assessment of English instruction in elementary education should fully reflect the requirements of key competences (Cheng, 2017). At present, the relevant researches on teacher assessment literacy in China mainly focus on its components, its influencing factors, and the strategies to improve teachers' assessment literacy. However, few studies have paid attention to the requirements of English subject key competencies for English teacher assessment literacy. Therefore, it is of great significance to discuss the requirements faced by English teacher assessment literacy under the background of key competences and try to propose some strategies to meet the requirements.

### **English Subject Key Competences and English Teacher Assessment Literacy**

The goal for primary and secondary education in China has changed from developing students "knowledge and skills" to the "three dimensional goals" and "key competences" (Chen, 2023). English teacher assessment literacy is an important part of their professional development and its contents should be adjusted according to the requirements of teaching goals.

#### **English Subject Key Competences**

English subject key competences, including language competences, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability, are a concentrated manifestation of the educational value of the English subject, with its constituent elements intertwined, infiltrated, integrated, and coordinated development. It clarifies that in the courses of learning English in a corresponding learning period, students need to "gradually form and improve the necessary character and key ability to adapt to the needs of personal lifelong development and social development" (Cheng, 2017, p. 8).

Language competences refer to the ability to understand and express meaning and emotion in social situations by language, and the skills to construct language knowledge through listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing. "Viewing" here refers to understanding the meaning of a text by using figures, tables, symbols, pictures, or videos presented in a multimodal text (Zhen, 2020).

Cultural awareness refers to the tolerance and understanding of multiculturalism, as well as the recognition of excellent culture. It is a cross-cultural communication awareness, attitude and behavior of students under the background of economic globalization. The cultivation of cultural awareness is conducive to strengthening students' national identity and emotion as well as enhancing their international understanding, which makes a student with cultural literacy and social responsibility.

Thinking quality refers to the improvement of students' thinking ability and mental development through the process of English learning. The development of thinking quality helps students learn to think about problems from different aspects, improve their ability to find, analyze, and solve problems, deepen their understanding of the world from a cross-cultural perspective, and finally form correct value judgments for everything.

Learning ability refers to the ability that students are good at using and adjusting learning method and therefore they can form effective English learning strategies. Students with learning ability are likely to find different ways to learn English and strive to improve English learning efficiency. Emphasizing the cultivation of learning ability contributes to gradually forming good learning habits and improving the efficiency of English learning.

### **English Teacher Assessment Literacy**

English teachers mainly engage in language evaluation activities, therefore, they need to possess knowledge and skills related to English evaluation activities, which Inbar-Laurie calls “Language Assessment Literacy”. Inbar-Laurie (2008) elaborated on its connotation from three dimensions: assessment purpose (why), assessment content (what), and assessment method (how). Fulcher (2012) concluded that assessment literacy contained assessment practice, assessment principles, and assessment environment. The assessment practice and assessment principles are related to the assessment of practical ability, theoretical knowledge, and epistemological knowledge. And assessment environment involves the impact on individuals, institutions, and society from different history, society, politics, philosophy. Scarino (2013) believed that the definition of language assessment literacy should not be limited to language testing and evaluation theory, but also cover teachers’ opinions about the role in assessment.

In the field of English subject, Shen (2015) believed that English teacher assessment literacy is the ability to evaluate students’ foreign language proficiency by correctly using a variety of evaluation methods according to the characteristics and knowledge of the English discipline, and to be good at using the evaluation results to find teaching problems and improve teaching. This research holds that teacher assessment literacy mainly refers to the assessment in language learning, including four aspects: assessment attitude, assessment knowledge, assessment skill, and assessment reflection ability. The four aspects mean that teacher should correctly view the role of assessment and master the knowledge about what to assess and how to assess. Besides, they must know whether their assessment is reasonable or not and reflect on the assessment process. English teacher assessment literacy also includes the three parts. An English teacher with good assessment literacy will highly value the role of assessment and master the assessment theory to design and implement scientific and effective assessment schemes by adopting various assessment methods according to the characteristics and knowledge of the English discipline. Moreover, they can objectively analyze the assessment results, and give feedback to students so as to help students correctly understand their English level and improve teaching effect. In the course of assessment, both teachers and students should work together to finally achieve the goal of “assessment as learning”.

### **The Requirements for English Teacher Assessment Literacy From English Subject Key Competences**

English subject key competences in English have different requirements for English teacher assessment literacy.

**Requirements to the assessment attitude of English teachers.** Attitude is not only the internal experience of human emotion, but also the human behavior tendency. In the context of key competences, teacher assessment attitude includes teachers’ views or attitude on the function of assessment to promote the development of students’ subject key competences. Subject key competence is the sublimation of the new curriculum reform and quality education. Teachers should recognize English subject key competences. And when they make assessment, they should not only assess language competences but also assess cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability.

**Requirements to the assessment knowledge of English teachers.** A teacher will be more successful in teaching English if he has adequate knowledge of assessment. Based on the concept of subject key competence, knowledge of assessment for senior high English teachers contains the knowledge of what to assess and how to assess with the purpose of involving subject key competences. In other word, assessment content, assessment language, and assessment methods are included. Firstly, knowledge about assessment content refers to the fact that

English teachers know they should not only focus on the accuracy of students' use of the language, but also the assessment of students' cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. It is recommended that simple and unfocused assessment language such as "good" and "well" should be used sparingly. Concluding language and generalized language do not serve the educational purpose of enlightening and motivating students (Xiao, 2019). Furthermore, in order to be in accordance with key competences, teaching assessment methods should be based on the combination of formative assessment and summative assessment, combining quantitative and qualitative assessment. Students' position in learning should be paid attention to. If teachers neglect the assessment of students' participation in teaching activities, it will lead to inaccurate assessment of students' learning effectiveness and therefore hinder students' learning. Worse still, it will reduce students' enthusiasm for learning English probably.

**Requirements to assessment knowledge of English teachers.** The assessment skills of senior high school English teachers mainly include the skill in preparing test paper, developing classroom assessment scale, collecting classroom assessment information, and using the network to conduct teaching assessment or process assessment information. When making preparing test paper, English teacher should fully penetrate the four aspects of subject key competences in examination and prepare a comprehensive and measurable assessment reference scale for students when they are assessed (Q. Yang & X. Y. Yang, 2019) in order to examine what shortcomings students still have. In addition, with the rapid development of technology, English teachers can record daily teaching and learning by using portfolio or network with a variety of relevant activities to facilitate learning.

**Requirements to assessment reflection of English teachers.** English teacher assessment reflection includes the ability to interpret assessment results so as to adjust to teaching and the ability to consider the rationality of the evaluation process. The subject key competences require teachers should not only present grades and scores, but also make full use of the grades and scores to analyze the gap between students' current performance and learning expectations. And according to the results, teachers make further suggestions for students' learning so that the assessment can achieve its purpose of promoting learning. In addition, English teachers should analyze the feedback information obtained from the evaluation objectively to reflect teaching in order to find out the shortcomings and timely adjust the English teaching content, teaching objectives, and teaching methods. This will allow for more scientific planning of the next teaching activities.

### **Strategies to Develop Senior High School English Teacher Assessment Literacy**

Under the background of key competences, how to effectively improve the assessment literacy of senior high school English teachers is worth thinking about. People from all walks of life need to work together with English teacher to promote the development of teacher assessment literacy. Only in this way can teacher enhance their professional development so as to further promote students' development.

#### **Education Department Promotes and Implements Subject Key Competence-Oriented Test**

It is necessary to break through the traditional pattern of assessment and establish a sound view of academic quality based on subject key competences. In November 2019, *the China College Entrance Examination Evaluation System* answered the question of "why, what and how to test" in terms of the core functions, content, and requirements of the college entrance examination. The system consists of "one core, four layers and four wings". The core elements of the system are to establish moral values, serve talent selection, and guide teaching. The subject key competence runs through the whole process, which realizes the transformation of college entrance

examination from a mere test evaluation to a moral and quality education (Zhang, Shan, Wu, & Zuo, 2019). Furthermore, it reflects the transformation of college entrance examination from knowledge-oriented and ability-oriented to quality-oriented, value-oriented, ability-oriented, and knowledge-based. Besides, the education department should implement various examinations and update the teaching and learning materials so as to incorporate subject key competence into all English examinations. What's more, teachers' qualification access system should be also modified, making subject key competence-oriented assessment literacy included. All in all, education department should play a role as a guider to make schools and teachers aware of the importance of key competences by implementing subject key competences-oriented test.

### **Society Provides Support for the Development of Teacher Assessment Literacy**

The social environment provides an indispensable setting for the development of teacher assessment literacy. If society interferes too much in teacher assessment activities, it will fail to promote the development of their assessment literacy. Parents need to change their "marks-only" view of teaching quality and reduce unnecessary interference in teacher assessment activities, and create conditions that support assessment activities. It is sure that the change of parents' view on the assessment of teaching quality cannot be achieved without the help of schools and teachers. Schools can organize parents meetings and conduct education and training for them. In the process of training, it is necessary to illustrate the current educational goals and status quo briefly, and enhance their awareness of key competences so as to change their "marks-only" view of teaching quality assessment. Only through the joint efforts of home and school can we truly help students acquire the necessary character and key abilities for their lifelong development. For example, the student's file bag assessment can be done jointly by parents and teachers. Parents are responsible for collecting the student's growth file at home. Teachers are responsible for collecting the students' data at school. Through the data from different aspects, the assessment of students can be more objective. Other social organizations can provide bonuses to teachers who have made outstanding contributions or performed well in language evaluation to motivate them and establish a social atmosphere that values the key competences. Understanding and support is the only way to promote teachers' professional development and help students to grow and become successful.

### **Schools Conduct Assessment Education or Training Based on Subject Key Competences**

Pre-vocational education and post-vocational education are the main ways for teachers to receive education. In the pre-vocational education stage, it is necessary to provide students with knowledge about assessment and broaden their understanding of assessment. Universities should set up language assessment courses. Curriculum in normal college should focus on training normal students' cognition of the concept of assessment, assessment methods, and the ability to interpret and apply assessment results. Teacher educators should consciously explain the requirements of the English subject key competences on teacher's assessment literacy. Post-vocational assessment training should focus on practice. Schools where normal students are taught should provide specific examples of assessment lessons based on subject key competence to help teachers better master how to make an assessment. Some related lectures about key competences or assessment are also needed to be offered because these activities will present new information about assessment to teacher so that they can have a new understanding about it. Besides, systematic training programs need to be provided and the scientific research development platforms needs to be established by colleges and elementary education schools for improving teacher assessment literacy. Learning community and the "distinguished teacher workshop" are powerful platforms for the development of teacher assessment literacy. Since the term "key competences" of learning subjects was put

forward, all kinds of famous teacher studios have followed the forefront of education and carried out various forms of assessment research based on the key competence of subjects. Different teachers have different understanding about subject key competence and language assessment. By actively participating in such platforms and engaging in research on assessment, teachers can discuss and learn from each. Holding a teacher assessment literacy competition is also a good method to develop teacher assessment proficiency.

### **English Teachers Raise Awareness of Assessment and Change Previous Concept of Assessment**

Teachers' assessment literacy is crucial to both student development and teacher professional development. If the teachers themselves do not have the sense of development, then the assessment literacy will be difficult to develop. How teachers implement the assessment based on key competence is directly related to their own professional development. Only when teachers pay enough attention to assessment can their assessment literacy be greatly developed. English teachers should deeply learn about assessment, read books about teaching assessment, participate in teacher seminars, and learn online courses related to teaching assessment. In addition, they need to change the misconception using tests as the only way to assess. Education under the concept of subject key competences is about cultivating students to be a person who are well-rounded in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labour aspects. The truth is that examinations are only a diagnostic tool in the teaching and learning process and is not the whole purpose of assessment in the context of key competences. As curriculum reform calling for the cultivation of key competence in the subject, English teachers have to be aware of the importance of key competence in their teaching and should pay more attention to develop students' key competence.

### **Summary**

The teacher's assessment is a part of professional quality, reflecting their overall instruction competence. Improving the assessment literacy of senior secondary English teachers provides teachers with opportunities and more possibilities for their own professional development. A high level of assessment literacy can have a positive and countervailing effect on teaching and learning, helping students to have a comprehensive grasp of their own learning, improving their independent learning ability, and thus enhancing their overall English language skills. Developing students' English subject key competences is a specific goal of the English curriculum. In order to measure the development of students' subject key competence, it is imperative for English teachers to improve their own assessment literacy, including enhancing their attitude of assessment, assessment knowledge, assessment skills, and ability to reflect on assessment. This research provides some strategies in order to better develop teacher assessment literacy, which covers different objects. Although some achievements have been made in the research of teachers' assessment literacy, it still needs long-term and in-depth research by the majority of educators.

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