



Language Assessment Literacy among Teachers in Goa: Analyses of a Survey Questionnaire and Teacher-made Tests

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This is the first of a two-part article that addresses the concept of language assessment literacy - both in terms of understanding as well as in classroom practice - among language schoolteachers in Goa, a state in the western part of India. The study sought to understand the *why*, *what*, and *how* dimensions of language assessment as well as the dimension of social and institutional context in which teachers work. Using a mixed-method approach to understand the complexities of language assessment in practice in different school contexts, data was collected from a survey questionnaire of knowledge and skills/abilities of study participants and through a sample of teacher-made formative assessments. The findings were contradictory as teachers, in general, reported that they could design, develop, and administer classroom tests and assessments in the survey but on further examination of their own teacher-made tests, it was revealed that they were actually not able to carry out such activities.

Keywords: assessment, literacy, schoolteachers, teacher-made tests, formative assessments

Introduction

There has been a spurt of research on language assessment literacy (LAL) starting from the concept of assessment literacy in general education proposed by Stiggins (1991). In recent years, LAL has garnered increasing attention within the area of language assessment in terms of conceptual definition. Numerous attempts have been made to conceptualize LAL. Brindley (2001) was the first to connect assessment literacy with language assessment. He pointed out two core and three optional components of language assessment literacy needed by teachers. The core units, according to him, were (1) *the social context of assessment*: contexts of assessment, accountability, and ethics, and (2) *defining and describing language proficiency* in theoretical terms. The optional units were (3) *constructing and evaluating language tests*: skills of test development and analysis; (4) *assessment in language curriculum*: methods to monitor and assess student learning and achievement; (5) *putting assessment into practice*: teachers' action plan to explore assessment issues. Brindley's model covered various important constituencies of LAL and the emphasis on the social context of assessment mirrored the "social turn" in language assessment field (Kunnan, 2018; McNamara & Roever, 2006).



Davies (2008) noted that LAL had evolved from “skills” to “skills + knowledge” to “skills + knowledge + principles”. His model is as follows: (1) *skills*: assessment-related practical techniques; (2) *knowledge*: description of language and measurement; (3) *principles*: proper use of assessment. This model moved from the componential view of LAL to a more holistic and integrative one in which three components of LAL are interrelated and cannot stand alone without one another. However, this model is only partially supported by Brown and Bailey’s (2008) investigation into the change of the content of language testing courses, which concluded that little had changed from 1996 and most content fell in the “skills + knowledge” category (2008). To foreground the distinction between AL and LAL, Inbar-Lourie (2008) built on Brindley’s model and stipulated two layers of knowledge base of LAL. According to her, general assessment literacy forms the bottom layer, including “the reasoning or rationale for assessment” (‘why’ dimension), “the description of the trait to be assessed” (‘what’ dimension), and “the assessment process” (‘how’ dimension). The top layer is the core competences, which are about the social role of assessment, views about the nature of language, and emphases on both classroom and standardized assessment.

Fulcher (2012) formulated a tripartite model comprising (1) *practices*: knowledge, skill and practices concerning language assessment practices; (2) *principles*: knowledge of the process, principles and concepts of language assessment that guide assessment practices, and (3) *contexts*: understanding of the larger context. He argued that “practical knowledge provides the foundation of LAL before moving into the more theoretical and principled understandings” (Kremmel & Harding, 2019, p.3). Pill and Harding (2013) adopted models from scientific and mathematical literacy education and outlined a continuum of LAL from “illiteracy”, “nominal literacy”, “functional literacy”, “procedural and conceptual literacy”, to the highest level “multidimensional language assessment literacy”. Unlike previous frameworks centering on LAL primarily required of teachers, Pill and Harding shifted attention to that of decision makers.

Synthesizing the multidimensionality of LAL in previous models, Taylor (2013) went further to stipulate a spider-web type profile model. In this model, there are eight dimensions of LAL (i.e., knowledge of theory, technical skills, principles and concepts, language pedagogy, sociocultural values, local practices, personal beliefs/attitudes, and scores and decision making). The groups of stakeholders could be test writers, classroom teachers, university administrators and professional language testers. Taylor’s model is theoretically comprehensive, and it has been applied by many researchers already (Kremmel & Harding, 2019; Xie & Tan, 2019). The model has been modified with two mediation layers, “assessment context” and “experience,” adjusting mastery levels of LAL for teachers at different career stages, making key distinctions and expansions of the “technical skills” and “language pedagogy” components, and combining “sociocultural values” and “local practices” into one component, namely, “assessment policy and local practices.” But as Inbar-Lourie (2017) stated, there existed an “unattainable gap between the idealized and the realized” in LAL (p. 262).

Review of Previous Studies

The studies reviewed here generally asserted that the conceptualization of LAL by language assessment-related stakeholders (teachers, administrators, policy makers) would exert a profound influence on the important decisions made on assessment issues (Kremmel & Pill, 2019; O’Loughlin, 2013; Pill & Harding, 2013; Taylor, 2009). Research studies showed that relevant stakeholders’ LAL was low profile, in practice. Teachers’ LAL has become a central topic in language assessment with the increasing emphasis on the purpose of accountability and “assessment for learning” (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In study after study, teachers’ LAL levels were not found to be satisfactory (Crusan et al., 2016; Hasselgreen et al., 2004); teachers from Finland, Sweden and the U.K. were found to carry out most assessment activities with little formal training (Hasselgreen et al., 2004); teachers from seven European countries demonstrated that their LAL was ill-trained and underdeveloped (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). In China, Jin (2010) reported that recent developments in language assessment were scarcely covered in

courses on language assessment; Gu (2014) stated that little training was received by experienced secondary teachers and they thought that assessment was the experts' job; and Xie and Tan (2019) argued that teachers were not good at assessment theory and technical skills, task, and rubric design as well as test score interpretation. Vogt and Tzagari (2014) reported a similar situation: they found that most foreign language teachers in Europe had received either "a little" or "no" assessment training. This, according to them, led to 'uncontested adoption' of existing practices or reverting to 'test as you were tested' (p. 54). Further, López and Bernal (2009) stated that in the absence of pre-or in-service training opportunities, it was difficult to create a language assessment culture for improving language education. Novice teachers may, therefore, rely on school mentors or their own educational experience leaving little room for innovation.

Overall, contextual and experiential factors were detected to exert a profound influence on the development of LAL.

Contextual factors: Scarino (2013) presented two contextual considerations: (1) the institutional character of assessment, and (2) contrasting paradigms. Despite common achievement standards, teachers from different countries need to adapt it to fit their own local context. Thus, the educational context was found to exert an influence on LAL. Teachers' needs for advanced LAL training were determined by centrality of tests in education and the construct of tests (Vogt & Tzagari, 2014). In their study, more advanced training of Greek teachers were attributed to the importance of language tests in Greece, while German teachers' needs for advanced training in linguistic skills might be due to the heavy focus on skills-based assessment in Germany. Meanwhile, teachers' assessment practice was also guided by external texts, institutional mandates, and internal assessment reform. Teachers were reported to provide feedback focusing on grammar and vocabulary which are tested in high-stakes tests (Gu, 2014). They were also required to develop tests, use tests, and analyze items driven by the exam-driven educational landscape and institutional mandates and also inhibited in classroom assessment practice by administrative duties. Apart from the educational context, linguistic context also seems to play a role. Crusan et al. (2016) found that L2 English teachers reported to have higher levels of LAL than L1 language teachers, perhaps because there is more training provided for L2 language teachers.

Experiential factors: Scarino (2013) stated that drawing on the sociocultural theories of learning, developing teachers' LAL not only requires the learning of domains of knowledge base, but also teachers' personal knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, or disposition. Cumulative research has shown that ESL teachers tend to use assessment frameworks they had received training in, to use rating rubrics in future teaching they used as students, to adopt self-assessment owing to personal experience of benefiting from it, to lower student scores under the pressure of power-laden relationships, and to develop their own item writing abilities and understanding of assessment concepts and principles based on their experiences. Crusan et al. (2016) also found that novice teachers reported higher levels of LAL than experienced teachers. This could be due to experienced teachers' resistance to LAL training or novice teachers' underestimation of the complexity of assessment practices.

To sum up, three noticeable features emerged from the review of past literature on LAL. First, LAL has been conceptualized in numerous ways. Though they overlap to some extent and fail to reach consensus, the variety of both componential and development models adds to our understanding of the construct of LAL. Second, the LAL levels of relevant stakeholders are underdeveloped and uneven, especially among teachers, test scores users, and policy makers. Third, two factors are important for LAL: contextual and experiential factors. The former comprises social, political, educational, and other contexts, while the latter consists of stakeholders' personal experience, knowledge, beliefs, values, and disposition. It is with these understandings that we proceeded with this study.

The Study

The Context of Goa

Goa is a small state on the west coast of India. It was a Portuguese colony from 1510 to 1961, many years after India gained independence from the U.K. in 1947. Konkani, which uses the Devanagari¹ script, is the official language of Goa while English, Portuguese, Marathi, Hindi, Kannada, and Urdu are also used.

Although LAL has been in currency for 20 years or more, there is hardly any research and perhaps not much interest evinced in teachers' AL and LAL in India (Mahapatra, 2015). This is mostly because school examination boards mandate very rigid assessment frameworks and any deviation from the examination board's scheme is discouraged. Moreover, the board or the schools provide teachers tests or the testing scheme/design which mostly mirror the Grade 10 exam scheme. Thus, there is little room for teachers to adapt or create new assessment tasks. Sultana's (2019) study in Bangladesh echoes a similar situation where teachers' understanding of assessment is restricted to grading and test preparation, resulting in the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon. In Goa, unlike in other states in India, negative washback of exams does not filter down to primary levels as the Grade 10 exam is several years away. The exception though are the schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education, a prestigious national examination board, functioning throughout the country (see Mathew, 2012, for more on this point). In addition, there is also a 'no-detention' policy until Grade 8 enforced by the Indian Government² that makes it mandatory for all students to be promoted to the next higher grade regardless of their performance in tests and exams, thus affecting the meaning and value of assessment.

Students in government primary schools (Grades³ 1 to 5) study through either Konkani or Marathi after which they switch to English medium instruction in Grade 6. Partially funded and private schools however offer English medium instruction from Grade 1. All schools from Grade 6 are required to carry out two formative assessments and two summative tests during the year which are paper-pencil tests and account for 80% of the final grade. Assignments and projects constitute 20% of the total weighting that is left to the teacher/school. Teachers are also expected to complete a 16-page document, part of Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) of co-scholastic areas, for each student twice a year. The aggregated grades are entered in the students' report cards. Again, depending on the kind of school and its ethos, teachers follow a rigid or flexible approach to how they fill the forms assessing different language skills through different modalities. For example, the more creative teachers in a private school with a lot of teacher autonomy, may have fun activities in evaluating children's speaking skills.

It is also important to note that schoolteachers in Goa do not get an opportunity to undergo any course in language assessment as part of the initial teacher training program, the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program. Even those who have opted for English Methodology as one of the pedagogy courses in the B.Ed. program get to study one or two chapters on 'evaluation', where the concepts of test validity, reliability, and item formats are taught in a theoretical manner. One or two institutions might offer an optional course in language assessment but this is grossly inadequate for the massive numbers of teachers in Goa (see Mahapatra, 2015, for more). Even in-service programs that are offered by the education departments focus on teaching methodology and seldom on assessment.

¹ A left-to-right abugida (alpha syllabary), based on the ancient *Brāhmī* script, it is the fourth most widely adopted writing system in the world, used in 120 languages.

² Section 16 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 stipulates that "No child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled from school till the completion of elementary education."

³ The term used in most schools in India for Grade levels is Class or Standard but in this article the word Grade is used for convenience.

Purpose

The study aimed to investigate teachers' LAL, their understanding of assessment issues and of their practices to examine how they cope with the demands of the school system. As there are different kinds of schools ranging from those that are fully funded by the government (government schools), to partially funded (aided schools) to fully self-financed (private schools), teachers deal with their everyday work of teaching and assessment in different ways. For example, classroom pedagogy involves using a textbook based approach where teachers attempt to make the lessons accessible mainly through translation and simplification in students' home language(s), which could sometimes be in two or three languages such as Hindi, Marathi and Konkani (see Mathew & Pani, 2009, for more details). But, other teachers use flexible, student-friendly communicative language teaching methodology with a focus on meaning and opportunities for using the language in more natural ways. However, when it comes to assessment, all teachers generally depend on ready-made tests that are made available. While this reduces their workload, it is also considered safe as students would have rehearsed the kinds of questions/items several times over before they take the end-of-term exam.

Research Framework

The research framework drew mainly on the work of scholars who located teachers in their school context and more broadly in education and assessment policies that governs school education in order to understand the assessment practices teachers engaged in. Scarino (2013) argued for including the teachers' contexts of teaching as well and discussed the particularly complex nature of how the institutional character of assessment creates a "culture of certainty and compliance" (p. 310) for the teacher. Inbar-Lourie (2017) echoed Scarino (2013) by emphasizing that "the approach to the formation of LAL is a contextualized one, which takes into consideration not just the training but also the institutional setting using a constructive interpretive epistemology" (p. 265).

In a similar vein, Fulmer et al. (2015) arrived at a multi-level conceptual model connecting contextual factors with teachers' assessment practices by adapting Kozma's (2003) framework which focused on three levels of influences on teachers' classroom practices. The *micro* level included the immediate context of classrooms including the teacher, students, classroom interactions and a host of other factors that affect teaching and learning. The *meso* level, broader than the *micro* level, involved factors that are external to the classroom, but that have immediate influence upon it, such as school climate and the image it has in the wider community in which it is located, expectations of parents and how the school and the parents interpret macro-level policies. The *macro* level may not affect the classroom and the teacher directly, but it affects the *meso* level and thereby has a significant impact on the teacher and his/her work. This included education policies at national, state and district levels, cultural and social norms. According to Fulmer et al. (2015), "Though macro-level factors seem relatively distant from the classroom, their effects can still be explicit and pervasive" (p. 477). Therefore, by establishing a bidirectional link within and across levels, they could provide a broad lens with which to study teachers' assessment practices.

Building on Scarino's (2013) work and other research in the area, Giraldo (2018) proposed a core list of LAL. More recently, he made an appeal for understanding teachers' "life-worlds, or interpretive frameworks, where their beliefs, values, experiences, and contextual knowledge play a role in language assessment literacy" (Giraldo, 2020, p. 192). What is of special significance to our work is the addition of a third dimension to the knowledge component of LAL (the other two being awareness of applied linguistics and awareness of theory and concepts), i.e., teachers' awareness of their own language assessment context.

To summarize, the educational context has also been found to exert influence on LAL through the importance, content, and reform of assessment. In many studies, teachers' assessment practice has also been guided by external tests, and institutional mandates.

About what constitutes LAL, there has been a continuing debate in the field. Drawing on work done by Inbar-Lourie (2008), Brindley (2001), McNamara & Roever (2006), and Fulcher (2012) among others, we attempted to incorporate the *why, what and how* dimensions as well as the dimension of social context into the tools used. More importantly we tried to avoid accentuating the “unattainable gap between the idealized and the realized” in LAL (Inbar-Lourie, 2017, p. 262), so that the teachers would not be overwhelmed by the area of language assessment. For this study, we focused mainly on the dimensions of assessment knowledge, understanding and application, and the use of assessment methods in the classroom.

Research Questions

1. What were the teachers' assessment knowledge and practice at different levels (micro, meso and macro)?
2. What were the teachers' assessment level in practice? To what extent and which factors facilitated or impeded their actual assessment practice?

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method approach to understand the complexities of language assessment in practice. Scarino (2013) argued for interpretive frameworks that take into consideration their beliefs, attitudes and teaching contexts which shape their LAL. According to Giraldo (2020), “Such research will not only listen to teachers' situated LAL voices and their messages - loud and clear - but also use such data to further conceptualize LAL” (p. 197). This study adopted such an approach. Specifically, the study included both primary and secondary teachers who taught English, Hindi, Konkani, Marathi, and Portuguese languages in government, partially private, and private schools. Although we tried to meet with all language teachers in the schools we visited, many of the teachers we met were teachers of English. In addition, we only have data from teachers teaching up to Grade 10.

Instruments

The following instruments were used:

- (1) A *survey questionnaire* was used to ascertain to learn about the teachers' classroom assessment knowledge and assessment practices in their schools. The survey was made available in English as well as in *Marathi* (the language that all the teachers used). Where necessary and possible, the researcher sat with the teacher(s) and helped to clarify the questions. In total, the survey had 42 items divided into *four* parts: (a) personal information, (b) classroom assessment, (c) classroom scenarios, and (d) educational background. An electronic version of the survey was also created on Google Drive, but it was not accessed by any teacher and therefore the data gathered consisted of hand-written responses. Scaled items were on a 4-point scale.
- (2) *Samples of teacher-made class tests* were also gathered to understand how formative assessments/tests were carried out.
- (3) *Interviews with teachers* focused on the same areas of inquiry through many sub-questions and prompts that helped them to understand and give detailed answers (these results are reported in the second part of this article).
- (4) *Classroom observations*, similarly, examined informal ways of assessing and monitoring student progress in the classroom (these results are reported in the second part of this article).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected in both north and south Goa from 88 schools, approximately 5% of the 1600 primary and secondary schools in the state, during a five-month period (July - November 2017) (see Appendix A for a list of the schools visited). Visits to schools involved travelling long distances, sometimes for over an hour. Once we visited a school, we tried to conduct classroom observations and interviews and left the survey with them after explaining/clarifying what the questions meant. They mailed them back to us or we received them when we went back to collect them two or three days later. Teachers in most schools were busy running from one classroom to another throughout the day and then they would return home soon after classes. The only way for us to get them together for a focus group discussion was when the principal of the school cooperated with us and decided for as many language teachers as possible to be free for one class period when we sat in the staff room and talked. In such cases, the noise level was generally extremely high and the recordings of conversations were often unintelligible. Overall, we were welcome in most schools and teachers talked to us happily and shared their views with us freely. Most teachers expressed their wish to learn more about assessment as they felt that would make them more effective teachers.

The survey data was analyzed for descriptive statistics while the interview data was recorded, transcribed, and read multiple times to identify recurring themes across participants and school types. Teacher-made tests were examined to understand the range and complexity of test items, and the level they represented vis-à-vis the grade for which they were used.

Details of data collection using the four instruments are presented in Table 1 which shows that as many as 88 schools were involved in the study. A total of 448 surveys were completed and returned, and 72 interviews and 23 classroom observations were conducted. The details of the survey respondents are shown in Table 2. Female teachers accounted for 86.7%, while male teachers were 13.3%. Approximately one-third of the respondents were above 46 years with more than 26 years of teaching experience. The teaching languages were English, Hindi, and Marathi.

TABLE 1
Details of Data Collection

Number of schools	Surveys returned	Interviews held	Classrooms observed
88	448	72	23

TABLE 2
Details of Survey Respondents (N=448)

Gender	Percentage	Age	Percentage	Teaching Experience	Percentage
Female	86.7	Below 25	9.0	1-5 years	29.1
Male	13.3	26-30	13.9	6-10 years	18.8
		31-35	17.2	11-15 years	13.7
		36-40	13.0	16-20 years	9.2
		41-45	13.0	21-25 years	10.3
		46+	33.9	26+ years	18.8

Findings

Analysis of the Survey

The following tables and discussion provide information on teachers’ responses to the survey related to their teaching experience, the role of language assessment in their schools, their views regarding assessments and their responses to classroom scenarios.

Table 3 shows the responses Items 9 and 10. They show participants were prepared to teach their first class (Item 9: $M = 3.66$) and prepared to create the first test (Item 10: $M = 3.62$) after their teacher training program while only very few (0.5%) did not feel prepared for either teaching or creating their own tests.

Regarding the role of assessment, as is shown in Table 4, most participants (above 98%) believed that it is to assess their students’ level and to help teachers develop their ability to teach content (93%) while others said that it is to help students improve (80%), assess school quality (72%) and fulfil school Board’s requirement (64%).

TABLE 3
 Items 9-10: Preparation (N = 429)

Question	Very & Somewhat unprepared	Somewhat prepared	Very prepared	Mean	Standard deviation
Item 9. How prepared were you to teach your first class?	3	137	289	3.66	0.08
Item 10. How prepared were you to create your first test?	10	134	283	3.62	0.10

Note. Means are calculated on a 4-point scale (0-4).

TABLE 4
 Items 11-15: Role of Assessment (N = 429)

The role of assessment in your school is to:	Yes	No	Not sure
Item 11. Know your students’ level	98%	1%	1%
Item 12. Help teachers develop their ability to teach content	93%	5%	3%
Item 13. Help your students improve	80%	10%	10%
Item 14. Assess school quality	72%	4%	24%
Item 15. Fulfill the School Board’s requirement	64%	17%	19%

Table 5 shows that most of the teachers agreed that assessments had a strong effect on the way students worked and completed assignments and teachers should know how to improve student learning using test results. About half of them felt that only what is learnt should be assessed. Almost all of them felt that to improve student learning, teachers ought to make use of test results (99%).

Table 6 indicates that teachers were not quite conversant with basic concepts of assessment such as objectivity, scoring criteria, reliability, formative vs summative assessments and ethical concerns. These data were based on their responses to classroom-scenarios.

This was surprising, as shown in Table 7. Teachers reported that they had taken a course in testing/assessment. They also stated that they were trained to prepare classroom tests, how to establish validity of assessments, how to give feedback to students, and how to carry out peer-and self-assessment.

TABLE 5
Items 16-20: Opinions on Assessments

Items	N	Agreement (%)	Mean	Standard deviation
Item 16. Assessments should ONLY include skills that students have learned.	250	55.7	0.58	0.24
Item 17. Teachers should have the same scoring guidelines while scoring the same test Items.	261	57.9	0.58	0.26
Item 18. Assessments impact the way students' study and do assignments.	398	88.6	0.89	0.09
Item 19. Teachers should know how to make use of students' test results to improve teaching and learning.	447	98.7	0.99	0.02
Item 20. Engaging students in peer- and self-assessment is useful in learning.	416	93.1	0.93	0.05

Note. Means were calculated on a 0-1 scale.

TABLE 6
Items 24-27: Responses to scenarios

Survey items with % of correct answer and Means (score 0-1)
Item 25. Students in Mr. Cabral's language class are required to create a picture book as part of their end-of-unit grade. Which scoring procedure below will maximize the objectivity of assessing these student projects? (n = 43; 9.9% correct; Mean = 0.68, SD = 0.20)
Item 26. Ms. Sujata based her students' grades mostly on homework and tests during the term. Ms. Rodrigues based her students' grades mostly on tests/exams at the end of the term. A major difference in these two ways of assessing students (n = 223; 51.5% correct; Mean = 0.57, SD = 0.25)
Item 27. In a school where teachers conducted final evaluations for different sections of the same class, they noted that one of their students did not have time to complete the last few vocabulary Items. Can the teacher's action be considered ethical/right? (n = 164; 38.2% correct; Mean = 0.43, SD = 0.26)

Note. Means were calculated on a 0-1 scale.

TABLE 7
Items 30-42, Part 4, Responses to training and use of procedures

Items	N	%
Item 30. During your pre-service or in-service teacher training, did you take a course in testing or assessment?	310	63.3
<i>Have you been trained in the following areas?(M = 5.72/7.0)</i>		
Item 31. Preparing classroom tests	436	87.6
Item 32. Establishing validity of assessments	344	72.0
Item 33. Establishing reliability of assessments	327	68.7
Item 34. Using statistics to study the quality of assessments	285	63.8
Item 35. Giving feedback to students based on information from assessment	366	76.9
Item 36. Using self/peer assessments	360	75.5
Item 37. Using informal, continuous, non-test type assessments	366	75.8
<i>Which of the following assessment procedures do you use? (M=3.5/5.0)</i>		
Item 38. Regular tests (paper and pencil)	461	93.7
Item 39. Projects	425	88.4
Item 40. Portfolios	154	36.8
Item 41. Peer-assessment	317	69.8
Item 42. Self-assessment	378	81.6

Note. Maximum scores for training received was 7; maximum scores for assessments used was 5.

In summary, the survey revealed that generally, teachers feel that they are quite well prepared to teach and carry out assessments.

- Their understanding of the role of assessment seems appropriate, i.e., to know their students' level,

help students improve and assess school quality.

- The role of assessment is also to fulfil the Goa Board of Examination's requirements.
- They say they do peer-/self-assessment and are also somewhat familiar with the term 'portfolio' assessment.
- Overall, they seem to be assessment literate to quite an extent, except in terms of how the concepts of reliability, validity, objectivity and ethical concerns play out in real situations.

Analysis of Teacher-made Tests

To get a better understanding of what teachers do by way of classroom-based assessment, we examined the classroom tests and assignments prepared by teachers/school clusters and the Goa Secondary Board's exam scheme for Class/Grade 10 (for the year 2017-18).

A sample of tests and assignments (40 in all) were collected from teachers during the research staff's school visits. A sample of sub-sections of two tests is provided in Appendix B and C. Although these were by no means representative of the three types of schools in Goa, they offer a flavor of the kind of work that is carried out in primary and secondary classrooms.

Specifically, an analysis of the tests and assignments indicated the following:

- (1) Tests at primary levels have more student friendly pictures and activities to test reading and writing. They do not follow the Class 10 exam scheme although there are de-contextualized grammar and vocabulary items based on their prescribed textbook lessons. With increasing grade levels, they begin to look more like the Class 10 exam with the same division of marks for different sections.
- (2) However, there is no perceivable progression in language skills or 'content' of passages, or the topics selected in the tests with increasing grade levels. Baker and Riches (2018) also found a similar problem in the Haitian context: "There is no evidence of overall progression in knowledge or competency development in the examinations – it is in fact very difficult to determine from the exam contents which exam is intended for which grade" (p. 558).
- (3) A few common areas of concern that render these teacher-made tests and assignments problematic are: (i) reading comprehension questions both on seen and unseen texts are by and large at a basic level that allow students to mechanically copy the answers without comprehension once they can match the words in the question with the sentence in the text. (ii) There are many grammatical and typographical errors in the instructions and flaws in the test items rendering the English test questionable. (iii) The assignments that were marked and returned only had occasional check marks and sometimes the comment 'seen' at the end, with the teacher's signature.

Table 8 shows the percentage of marks given to assessing reading and writing skills in the Grade 10 exam developed by the Exam Board. Only five marks were allotted to 'unseen' reading comprehension and 75 marks can be obtained by practicing and memorizing answers. The remaining 20 marks were assigned to projects and internal assessment. The 20 marks left open allowed teachers to include various language and other skills, exercise their ingenuity and freedom depending on the school they work in. As this exam framework for Grade 10 is developed by the Exam Board, a prestigious and powerful governmental agency, most teachers reflected their own classroom tests and assignments to look like the Grade 10 exam.

TABLE 8
Goa Secondary Board Exam scheme for Grade 10, 2017-18

Sections	Task type	Subskills	Mark allocation
A	Reading	Seen passage	6
		Flow chart	5
		Unseen passage	5
B	Prescribed texts		32
C	Grammar		16
D	Writing		16
	Assignment/Project		10
	Internal assessment		10
Total			100

Discussion and Conclusion

This article reports on the first part of the study based on the survey questionnaire and teacher-made tests. The survey data, i.e. what teachers say they know or do, revealed that teachers' understanding of the role of assessment seemed appropriate, i.e., to know their students' level, help students improve and assess school quality. This finding echoes well with other research which links knowledge and practice of assessment with the context in which teachers' function (Scarino, 2013). In Goa, as in many other regions and countries, teachers have had to come to grips with the way the local examination boards require them to carry out classroom-based assessment. The role of assessment the exam board endorses is to be interpreted from that context. For example, 'assessing students' level' or 'school quality' is all about getting high scores on rehearsed test items (as the test in the appendix demonstrates), which in turn reflects school quality. It is clear that none of the teachers who participated in this study could contest the existing assessment-structure or practice.

Further, the tests that teachers used as part of their everyday assessment (which accounted for 20% of the entire assessment) at middle and secondary levels or the exams used for summative purposes were such that they do not allow students to demonstrate their language ability but it is focused on getting correct answers so they can be 'passed'. The Indian government policy of 'no detention' of students at grade levels (for poor performance) has clearly constrained teachers to 'push' students to the next higher class regardless of their language level.

On the other hand, teachers in the study were not conversant with basic concepts such as objectivity, reliability, formative and summative assessments or ethical concerns in assessment. This finding again showed that they did not understand these concepts in any serious way. Although from the perspective of the idealized notion of LAL, the survey data probably showed a case of near illiteracy, a good teacher (and a good assessor) in this context is someone who ensures that their students receive high scores in tests and exams and this they do by mapping their work onto the Board/institution-driven framework. Obviously, language assessment courses have not had much effect in terms of their practice. A better curriculum needs to be in place (see Kunnan, 2019 for a new agenda in terms of assessment development, research, and pedagogy). In addition, there needs to be a way of creating an ethical milieu among language teachers (see Kunnan, 2018, chapter 10, for ideas on this point).

It is well known that language teachers are a central stakeholder group because they are directly engaged in doing language assessment (Giraldo, 2020; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017), but it is debatable whether they have any freedom to do things that their profession demands when the school and the school board exert pressure on teachers to follow a rigid exam scheme. Therefore, what we obtained in this survey and through teacher-made tests is that teachers are spectators or implementers of a top-down policy that seemingly keeps the learner in mind, which is to pass (promote) them to the next higher grade level.

That said, the study also gathered in-depth data through focus group discussion and interviews and classroom observations that addressed the 'why' and 'how' of Goa teachers' assessment capabilities within the social context in which they worked. The second part of the article focuses on this aspect of

LAL. Two scenarios emerged that captured an array of understandings and possibilities that exist in Goa schools and suggest pointers for future work in language assessment and for teacher training.

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Appendix A

List of schools visited for data collection (Only 61 out of the 88 schools are listed).

North Goa

1. Amonkar Vidyamandir HS, Mapusa, Bardez
2. Anjuman Nurul Islam P and HS, Panjim
3. Don Bosco P and HS, Panjim
4. Don Bosco P and HS, Tuem, Pernem
5. Government P and H S, Valpoi
6. Government P and H S, Betoda, Ponda
7. Government P and H S, Bicholim
8. Ideal P and H School, Piligao
9. Immaculate Heart of Mary H S Velha
10. Lok Shikshan P and H S, Dhargal, Pernem
11. Madkaikar Vidyaniketan P and H S, Corlim
12. SSV Mushtifund Primary School Panjim
13. New Goa H S, Mapusa
14. Old Goa Educational Institute, Katyebhat
15. Our Lady of Grace H S, Bardez
16. Our Lady of Mercedes P and H S, Mercedes, Tiswadi
17. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel P and H S, Arambol
18. Peoples' P and HS, Panjim
19. SES Daffodils Primary school, Shiroda
20. SES School of Symbiosis H S, Shiroda
21. Shri Kamakshi P and H S, Tarvale
22. St. Ann's P and HS, Tivim
23. St. Brittos H S, Mapusa
24. St. John's H S, Sanquelim, Sattari
25. St. Mary's Convent P and HS, Mapusa
26. St. Francis Xavier's P School, Mapusa
27. St. Thomas Girls P and H S, Aldona
28. Union P and H S, Chimbhel, Tiswadi
29. Unity P and H S, Valpoi

South Goa

30. Anjuman Himayatul Islam H S, Vasco
31. Chandranath Education Society's HS, Assolda, Quepem
32. Fatima Convent (P and H S) Margao
33. GES' Gurukul Primary School, Kajumol, Khola, Canacona
34. Government Primary School, Chicalim
35. Government Primary School, New Wadem
36. Govt. High School, Agonda, Canacona
37. Govt. High School, Baina, Vasco
38. Govt. High School, Valkini, Sanguem
39. Govt. Multipurpose HS, Margao, Salcete
40. Govt. Primary School, Assolda
41. Govt. Primary School, Baina No. 1, Mormugao
42. Govt. Primary School, Baina No. 6, Mormugao
43. Govt. Primary school, Mangor Hill, Vasco

44. Govt. Primary school, Sada, Vasco
45. Gurukul P and HS, Kholo, Canacona
46. Holy Spirit Institute, HS, Margao
47. Late Narendra A. M. Govt. HS, Sada, Vasco
48. Margaon P and HS, Headland, Sada, Mormugao
49. Mata Secondary School, No. 1, Vasco
50. Miracles P and HS, Sanguem
51. Mother of Mercy English HS, Vadem, Mormugao
52. Municipal P and H S, Vasco, Mormugao
53. New Educational Institute, Curchorem, Quepem
54. Popular High School, Comba, Margao
55. Regina Martyrum P and HS, Assolna, Salcete
56. SES High School, Curchorem, Quepem
57. Shri Damodar Vidyalaya English HS, Comba
58. St. Rock's P and H S, Velim, Salcete
59. Union High School, Sanguem
60. Vidya Vikas Academy (P and H S), Margao
61. Yuvak Singh Primary and High School, New Vadder, Mormugao

Appendix B

Sample questions from the Grade 5 exam

MUNICIPAL HIGH SCHOOL		
FIRST SUMMATIVE EXAMINATION 2017		
STD:V	Sub: English	Marks: 50
Time:	Date:	

Q. 1(A) Complete the following. **5**

Q. 1 (B) Answer the following questions in 20-30 words each. **7**

(1) What were the old men on the mountain doing?

Ans.

(2) How many brothers did the Barber have?

Ans

(3) What are the things that Munna liked to do?

Ans.....

(4)...(5)...(6)...(7)

Q. 2(A) Fill in the blanks with reference to the text. **4**

(1) A was going on in the class.

2) Fred is a dog.

3) You must cry till your pillow is soaked with your

4) Theis always the first to jump into bed every day.

Q. (5A) Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow: **5**

Amar and Ajay were good friends. One day they were walking through a dense forest. Suddenly they saw a big black bear coming towards them. Amar ran and climbed up the tree. Ajay begged of Amar to help him as he could not climb up. Amar ignored him.

Ajay lay down as if he were dead. The bear sniffed him and walked away. Amar came down from the tree and asked him, what the bear whispered in his ear. Ajay said the bear had told him not to trust a selfish friend.

(1) Who were good friends?

(2) Who came towards them?

(3) How did Amar save himself?

(4) Find words from the passage that mean the same as

(a) Very thick.....

(b) Spoke softly.....

(5) The bear whispered to Ajay

Amar was good friend not to trust Amar

(B) Write a short paragraph of about ten sentences on your best friend. **4**

C] Read the following extract and answer the question that follows in about 30 words. (2)

1. "In 1835, an Englishman named Macauley suggested a change".
Q. What was the change that was suggested by Macauley?

D] Replace the underlined words/phrases with words/phrases similar in meaning and rewrite the sentences. If necessary reframe the sentences. (2)

1. The shops were burned up completely due to short circuit.
2. There was chaos at the market place when we went out for shopping

Q.4.A] Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:- (2)
'He sways his head from side to side with movements like a snake'.
a. Name the figure of speech used in the underlined part of the extract :-
b. Who sways his head from side to side?

B] Answer any two of the following in 15-20 words each. (4)

1. What does the poet Zulfikar Ghose find difficult to understand from his jet in the sky?
2. When is the boy happy in the poem 'The school boy'?
3. The old man offered the speaker a lot of money. Why did he turn down the offer?
4. How did the cricket spend the summer and the spring season?

Q.5.] Answer the following in about 30 words each. (Any two) (4)

1. What was the reaction of Princess September after the death of her parrot?
2. Describe the giant's garden when he was away for seven years.
3. Why did the camel live in the middle of the desert?

SECTION C

Q.6.A] Fill in each blank with a suitable missing word .write your answers against the number of the blank. (3)
The coconut palm needs little 1 no attention. They may bear nuts 2 more than 70 years. 3 these nuts begin 4 ripen, they 5 filled 6 coconut milk.

B] What would you say if you were the speaker in the following situation. (2)
Frame a sentence for each using a suitable modal
1. WARN your younger brother not to touch your books.
2. REQUEST your friend to help you with your assignment.

C] Report what was said by Ritesh to Arjun using the appropriate reporting verbs:- (3)

1. "Whats the matter? You look worried".
(Jimmy to Shubham)

2. " I lost my umbrella yesterday. It was a new one ".
(Shubham to Jimmy)

ENGLISH (E.L.) -3- Std. VIII