



## A Study on the Improvement of College English Teachers' Assessment Literacy in the Context of New Liberal Arts

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore how to improve the assessment literacy of college English teachers in the context of the new liberal arts. Enhancing the classroom evaluation literacy of college English teachers in the context of the construction of new liberal arts is of strong practical significance for improving the evaluation system of college English teaching and enhancing the teaching literacy of college English teachers. To address the current problems of English teachers in colleges and universities, such as low awareness of classroom evaluation, insufficient ability of classroom evaluation, and lack of science in classroom evaluation, first, the study discusses the concept and importance of teachers' assessment literacy, and investigates the current situation and problems of university English teachers' assessment literacy by using questionnaire. Then, the paper analyses the reasons that lead to insufficient teachers' assessment literacy and propose specific strategies to improve teachers' assessment literacy, including advocating reflective teaching, cultivating teachers' innovation ability, and establishing a scientific teaching evaluation mechanism. Finally, it suggests steps and suggestions for implementing these strategies. The results of the study show that improving teachers' assessment literacy is a complex and important process that requires the joint efforts of teachers, the education sector and society to achieve the goal of cultivating talent in the new situation.

**Keywords:** new liberal arts background; college English teachers; assessment literacy

### Introduction

Academic core literacy is the conceptual character that students gradually form through learning, and teachers should pay attention to students' core literacy in college English teaching. English core literacy includes students' cultural literacy, language ability, thinking ability and many other aspects. Cultivating English core literacy is conducive to students' learning and growth, cultivating outstanding talents, enhancing students' sense of responsibility, and allowing more outstanding talents to stand on the world stage and tell the Chinese story. Cultivating core literacy in English teaching in colleges and universities should not only be carried out in teaching, but also in course assessment, so that classroom assessment can effectively guide the direction of teaching and motivate students to study hard.

American scholar Sfiggins (Sfiggins, R.J.) put forward the concept of "evaluation literacy" in 1991. He believes that evaluation literacy is a quality that teachers develop or cultivate in their daily teaching and evaluation activities. For teachers, a significant proportion of teaching time is spent on assessment-related activities<sup>[1]</sup>.

### Literature review

In the discussion of teachers' evaluation literacy structure, foreign scholars pay more attention to teachers' evaluation knowledge and evaluation skills acquisition. For example, Plake, B.S. (1993) summarized that teachers scored the lowest on the competency criterion "communicating the results of evaluations", which shows that they are not sufficiently competent in evaluation and that there is an imbalance in the internal structure of their evaluative competencies; Wilssehr, C. (2010) found that a significant majority of both pre-service and in-service teachers do not have good evaluation literacy. Domestic scholars do construct the framework of lecturers' evaluation literacy structure is more scientific and comprehensive, in addition to pay attention to teachers' evaluation knowledge, skills mastery, our scholars also pay attention to the evaluation attitude, awareness, concepts and other values of the level of the teachers have requirements. Chen and Xian (2011) concluded that the evaluation literacy of primary and secondary school teachers in China is at a low level, which is reflected in the lack of teachers' awareness and attitude towards evaluation, the lack of knowledge about evaluation, the low energy saving in evaluation, and the unbalanced use of evaluation methods<sup>[2]</sup>.

In terms of the current status of teachers' evaluation literacy, both domestic and foreign studies have shown that regardless of the subject and stage of the rated teachers, evaluation literacy is underperforming, and the outstanding problem of foreign teachers is the low level of evaluation know-how and the imbalance of the structure of evaluation literacy. Teachers in China are lacking in all aspects of evaluation ability and need to be improved. From the relevant studies, it was found that the influences on teachers' assessment literacy can be attributed to both external and internal factors. The reasons for the general lack of evaluation literacy among teachers in higher education are not very different from those of

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primary and secondary school teachers, as they are all influenced by the state, society, schools and individual teachers, but the individual influential factors are characterized by the unique culture and system of higher education<sup>[3]</sup>.

In order to solve the problem of the lack of teachers' evaluation literacy in China, many researchers have put forward suggestions and countermeasures to cultivate and develop teachers' evaluation literacy. By sorting out the relevant studies, it is known that, corresponding to the internal and external factors affecting teachers' evaluation literacy, the ways to develop teachers' evaluation literacy proposed by researchers are also constructed from two paths: external and internal.

Research on evaluation literacy of college teachers at home and abroad has been mostly conducted on English teachers. Existing studies have explored the connotative components of evaluative literacy among college English teachers in a more innovative way. According to Shen (2015), the evaluation literacy of English teachers in colleges and universities should include the theory of English teaching evaluation, the ability of evaluation design and implementation, the ability of describing and analyzing evaluation results, and the ability of reflection<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **The significance of assessment literacy improvement for college English teachers**

The new liberal arts context places more emphasis on the development of pedagogical literacy and the importance of nurturing and teaching knowledge. Teaching activities carried out in this context should pay attention to classroom assessment literacy, which can not only improve teaching quality, construct lesson plans for efficient classrooms and enhance teachers' teaching ability, but also help a lot to improve the current teaching evaluation system.

#### ***(i) Improving the evaluation system***

In the context of the construction of the new liberal arts, improving English teachers' assessment literacy is conducive to the construction of the evaluation system. College English is a compulsory subject for students in higher education institutions, and it is a combination of humanistic and instrumental subject, and integrating the concept of the new liberal arts in teaching evaluation helps change the traditional concept. Changing the traditional impression of English as a tool makes teaching evaluation more objective and promotes the improvement of teachers' literacy. In addition, it is also conducive to teaching evaluation activities. The new liberal arts concept attaches importance to the cross-fertilization between disciplines, and teaching evaluation under this concept is no longer confined to the traditional way, and will be explored in various aspects when evaluating.

#### ***(ii) Enhancing teachers' literacy***

Improving assessment literacy in the context of the new liberal arts is beneficial to teachers' teaching ability. For a long time, the positioning of college English has been an instrumental subject, with insufficient attention to humanistic content, which can lead to problems in teachers' teaching concepts and teaching evaluation that are not conducive to teaching activities, and changing the traditional teaching philosophy can change this problem. It also helps to improve teachers' educational ability. In practice, teachers' teaching concepts are changed, and their teaching activities are guided by new concepts, and their evaluation ability, creativity, and organizational skills, etc. are improved.

#### ***(iii) Improving teaching effectiveness***

Teachers' assessment has an important impact on students' learning, and in the context of the new liberal arts, improving teachers' assessment literacy can help improve teaching effectiveness. For a long time, the instrumental nature of college English courses has received more attention than the humanities, which in turn affects college English teachers' views on classroom teaching evaluation and hinders the research process of classroom teaching evaluation, resulting in a lack of scientificity in classroom teaching evaluation from language use to specific actions, and updating college English teachers' teaching evaluation concepts can be a targeted addition in these aspects<sup>[5]</sup>.

Conducting the improvement of teaching assessment literacy helps innovation in assessment, brings into play the motivational effect of assessment, solves current teaching problems, enlivens the atmosphere of classroom teaching, and increases student participation. Traditional assessment is often teacher-oriented, ignoring student participation, which affects students' enthusiasm, while improving assessment literacy can help change the current situation and improve teaching effectiveness.

### **Current status of English teachers' assessment literacy development**

In the field of English education, more and more attention is being paid to the assessment and literacy improvement of teachers. The concept of core literacy is newly introduced in these years, so there are still biases in the domestic research on teacher assessment. The educational concept advocated after the new curriculum reform has been gradually promoted and recognized by many teachers. The current English teaching activities in the education field still pay too much attention to the development of students' language skills and neglect the examination of character and competence<sup>[6]</sup>. In order to understand the current status of the evaluation quality of English teachers in higher education, the author conducted a questionnaire survey in November 2023 on English teachers in higher education in Inner Mongolia. A total of 70 questionnaires were distributed and 62 valid questionnaires were returned. The questionnaire consists of three dimensions: evaluation intention, evaluation knowledge and evaluation competence. Evaluative intention emphasizes the important role of professional action and ethical commitment in teacher practice; evaluative knowledge is the declarative knowledge required for effective teaching; and evaluative competence can be observed and evaluated in actual teaching practice<sup>[7]</sup>.

#### ***(i) The concept needs to be updated***

From the result of the survey, the author found that the intention to evaluate English teachers in higher education is generally high. Almost 73.61% of the respondents strongly agreed that teachers were "responsible for aligning teaching evaluations with teaching objectives". While the evaluation knowledge is relatively general. Only 12.50% of the respondents strongly agreed that they "know how to design, adapt or select appropriate assessment tools". The reasons can be summarized as follows: firstly, under the new concept, the main teaching orientation is to improve students' core literacy, while most of the current English assessments in China are based on students' performance and language ability, ignoring students' skill development. Insufficient attention is paid to the development of students' core literacy. Secondly, classroom assessment is mainly verbal. Most of the English teachers' classroom evaluations are in the form of verbal evaluations, and the language used is very simple, which cannot fully reflect the actual learning situation of the students, and is not conducive to the teachers' and students' reflection on the teaching situation after the class<sup>[3]</sup>. Last but not least, in the current teaching context, the test-based philosophy still exists in teaching, which will lead to teaching with more emphasis on language teaching and ignoring the overall improvement of core literacy contrary to the teaching objectives of the new curriculum reform, which is not conducive to the cultivation of high quality and excellent talents.

### ***(ii) Lack of scientific classroom evaluation systems***

Due to the lack of scientific classroom evaluation systems, many problems often arise in classroom evaluation. For example, the evaluation system in English classroom focuses only on students' knowledge mastery and ignores the development of students' abilities, attitudes, emotions. If the evaluation system focuses only on outcome evaluation and ignores the learning process and efforts of students, it will lead to a lack of fairness and motivation in the evaluation results. In addition, the lack of a feedback mechanism is a common problem in classroom assessment systems. Feedback is a very important part of the evaluation process, which enables teachers and students to understand the evaluation results and make improvements based on them. However, if the evaluation system lacks a feedback mechanism, teachers and students may not be able to keep abreast of the evaluation results and make improvements based on them. This may lead to poor educational results and may affect students' motivation and interest in learning. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a scientific classroom evaluation system to help teachers improve the quality of classroom teaching and students' learning efficiency.

### ***(iii) Lower testing skills***

The evaluation skills of English language teachers in higher education are also not as good as they should be. Only 11.11% of the respondents considered themselves fully "capable of designing assessment that is well aligned with learning objectives". Teachers are not competent in planning classroom assessments and have problems with the methods they choose. Some teachers do not know enough about various assessment methods when evaluating students. The new era has put forward higher requirements for teachers' assessment ability, and teachers should be oriented to the curriculum objectives. The core literacy of students is examined comprehensively, but in practical teaching, some teachers ignore the curriculum concept and simply copy and paste when teaching, ignoring the cultivation of students' core literacy. They also cannot cover all the contents of the teaching course when designing the test papers. Only one test paper is used to assess students' learning. This assessment results are not handled well and do not objectively reflect students' learning.

## **Strategies to improve the assessment literacy of college English teachers**

Classroom evaluation literacy of college English teachers has an important impact on English teaching quality especially in the whole process of college English teaching reform. especially from the perspective of the whole process of university English teaching reform, classroom evaluation has become a short board that restricts the reform of English teaching. The new The concept of new liberal arts has provided a new direction for the reform of English classroom evaluation, so English teachers in colleges and universities should start from improving the awareness of classroom evaluation, enhancing the ability of classroom evaluation, and improving the quality of English teaching and learning. Therefore, English teachers in colleges and universities should improve the awareness of classroom evaluation, enhance the ability and effectiveness of classroom evaluation, and enrich the classroom evaluation activities<sup>[8]</sup>.

### ***(i) Focusing on theoretical learning to enhance awareness of classroom assessment***

Theoretical learning is one of the most important ways to increase awareness of assessment in the classroom. The following are some suggestions to help teachers improve their awareness of classroom assessment through theoretical learning: First, keep pace with the development of the times, updating the educational philosophy. English teachers reserve more knowledge and improve their skills, and these are far from enough by virtue of teachers' independent learning. It is not enough to rely only on their own reflective practice when improving assessment literacy, so they should also rely on other main paths when improving assessment literacy. Second, participate in professional training: Teachers can improve their assessment skills by participating in professional training organised by education departments, academic institutions and schools to learn advanced classroom assessment theories and practical experiences. Colleges and universities must recognise that classroom evaluation is as important as curriculum teaching, and provide a series of policy support and financial assistance for the cultivation of English teachers' classroom evaluation literacy, while teachers should consciously improve their awareness of classroom evaluation. Finally, observe excellent teachers' classroom evaluation and reflect on practice. In the course of practice, teachers should observe excellent teachers' classroom teaching, observe how they conduct classroom evaluation, learn their evaluation methods and techniques,

reflect on their own evaluation practice, and thus improve their evaluation skills. At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to students' feedback and needs, and constantly improve their evaluation techniques.

***(ii) Developing a scientific measurement plan***

English teachers in colleges should recognize the relationship between teaching, learning and assessment, realize the importance of teachers' assessment work, improve their own assessment literacy, read and study the English teaching standards in colleges and universities carefully, make relevant assessment plans according to the requirements of teaching assessment. After the concept of core literacy has been proposed, there are new requirements for assessment subjects and assessment contents, so teachers also need to understand these related work, make a rigorous assessment plan, and study carefully. For example, they can borrow relevant books from the school library, collect relevant information on the Internet, subscribe to relevant magazines, and also consult some excellent teachers and experts in assessment to continuously improve their educational ability, change their traditional concepts, and reserve relevant knowledge. In addition, they should actively participate in teaching practice activities, apply the knowledge and skills they have learned to practice, and gain valuable experience.

***(iii) Improving classroom assessment abilities***

The lack of student assessment techniques may affect the quality of teaching and student learning. Teachers should evaluate students diversely and vertically, involve students in the evaluation process, pay attention to students' personality development and all-round quality, etc. Firstly, in addition to traditional test scores, teachers can consider a variety of assessment methods, such as observing students' classroom performance, contributions in group discussions, oral presentations, and individual reports. These forms of assessment can provide a more comprehensive picture of students' learning abilities and qualities. Secondly, teachers can focus on students' progress and growth in the learning process rather than just the final learning outcomes. For example, comparing students' performance at the beginning of the school year and at the end of the school year, observing students' attitudes and efforts in the classroom and after-school hours. Last but not least, teachers should also focus on other aspects of the student's life except academic performance, such as teamwork skills, leadership, and creativity. These abilities are equally important in the future lives of students.

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