

# Learning about summative assessment

## What pre-service language teachers want and need to know

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# Introduction: rationale

It is evident that reforms in formative assessment (FA) should have a profound affect on the field of summative assessment (SA) (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Popham, 2008)

However, within higher education as well as in school **assessment literacy [AL] is still in development**

(DeLuca et al., 2016; Fröjdendahl, 2018; Hildén & Fröjdendahl, 2018; Huber & Skedsmo, 2016; Medland, 2018)

This concerns also:

**“language testing expertise” for teachers** (Inbar-Lourie, 2017, p. 257, 265–266) [emphasis added]

# In target-oriented teaching and learning, one ultimate goal is SA

“When learning outcomes become one of the main sources for improving teaching and learning, increased emphasis is placed on” AL  
(Huber & Skedsmo, 2016, p. 202)

Hence it is relevant to ask questions about:

1. pre-service language teachers' perceptions of, and perspectives on, summative assessment literacy (SAL)
2. what the regulatory framework stipulates and what research shows

# Theoretical framework

language assessment literacy (LAL) (Inbar-Lourie, 2017; Scarino, 2013)

- concerns “knowledge skills and principles that [various] stakeholders [...] are required to master in order to perform assessment tasks” (Inbar-Lourie, 2017, p. 257)

# Complexities and challenges

Inbar-Lourie argued that “there seems to be a meaningful gap between contemporary theory [...] and its manifestations in the field” (Inbar-Lourie, 2017, p. 265–266. See also Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2010; DeLuca et al., 2021)

Further findings in a Norwegian study:

Student teachers must navigate across different borders or gaps. There are curricular divides between academic disciplines, subjects and education coursework as well as between education foundations courses and methods courses. Then, there is the disconnection that has plagued preservice teacher education for years: the separation between university and school as two different learning arenas. (Sjølie & Østern, 2021, p. 264)

# Mixed methods

- The knowledge derives from teacher education (TE) for lower- and upper secondary school at the three universities (on-campus courses and teaching practice in schools)
- some results will be presented from surveys (s=90) and semi-structured interviews (n=25) with pre-service teachers

Further source: Yildirim et al., *Teaching summative assessment: A curriculum analysis of pre-service language teacher education in Sweden and Finland*. Paper presented at AERA conference, April 12, 2021

# Methodology (Hyland, 2016)

## constructivist grounded theory

“systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves. Thus researchers construct a theory ‘grounded’ in their data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 2)

## pre-service language teacher cognition

“pre-service teachers’ beliefs about language teaching”

“cognitions in relation to practicum experiences” (Borg, 2015, p. 58)

## phenomenography

trying to understand and interpret “the learner’s own experience [...] as expressed in words or acts” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 16) and

“there is a variation in the approaches learners adopt to their tasks of learning, and the approaches are profoundly intertwined with the learning outcome” (p. 56)

## heutagogy (see also self-directed learning; constructive alignment )

“to invite the students to self-determined learning” [...] “encourage them to deliberate about their decisions and whether they can really justify them”; “trust” is the ideal (Glassner & Back, 2020, pp. 205, 209)

## Examples of themes; interviews

### Pre-service language teachers' perceptions of SAL

#### UofG

a) I: So, you do not think that the focus on SA is sufficient [in TE], or is it?

R: No, I do not think so. No, I think that it... if the thing is that you, that you are expected to regard [FA and SA] as complementary and that both of them should sort of play an important role, then I think that, that it, it feels as if [SA] is not at all covered in the same way [as FA], and then the pros and cons of FA are discussed but **with SA it is as if the situation is like, that it is old fashioned and sort of, and not so good, but then again it is stated over and over again that sure, [SA] has a role to play and is good, but, but it is, repeated that you cannot really, really talk about what it [SA] is, I find [\*starts laughing\*]** [emphasis added]



## UofH

b) I: Is there anything you would like to say about assessment, studying assessment in teacher education, and especially summative assessment. Was the teaching we had included in those curricula, in those courses and the number of hours that were available, sufficient? If not, **what should have been added?**

R: **In my opinion, it was quite sufficient for the time that is in use. At least I felt that I had learned, I may not remember the exact terms anymore, but I did learn a lot and I think it is enough**  
[emphasis added]

## Pre-service language teachers' perceptions of, and perspectives on, SAL

### Gaps: theory & practice; instruction on campus vs teaching practice in schools

#### SU

c) R: Now we have talked a lot about why you use SA, not so much about how you conduct it. Very little about grading and yet most of it comes from teaching practice anyway.

I: Is there anything else you would like to say, anything that you'd like to recommend for TE?

R: Yeah, what I really think is that we should have more time in... with people who are actually working as teachers, to get some more experience there

d) R: I find that TE has given me the basic training, how the two interact [FA and SA] but I really would have had, for example, a seminar [on campus] in which you would go through questions with seminar leaders and fellow students and then discuss "what grade would you have given", try to justify your assessment from the targets provided by the Swedish National Agency for Education

e) TE is rather distant from reality; at the same time you need to be conversant with theory and to understand it in order to be able to teach and I find that in some way you can learn these things rather quickly with the help of the various tools that are at hand in a school environment

/Name Name, Institution or similar

## Survey. Theory & practice; instruction on campus vs in schools

Please add comments on how TE can further develop your SA knowledge and competency

f) Responses from **UofH** [emphasis added below] :

- Assessment is taught far too little at all
- **More internships in schools. By doing you learn**
- **More practical** exercises with real test answers and others
- **In practice, SA can be practised**
- In the internship, you could create your own exam and pilot it for some teaching group
- There could be more or more of a role in developing **practical** exercises
- Quite comprehensively things have already been mentioned. I also believe that assessment is an aspect of a teacher's work that is **best learned by doing and for which there is always a need for development**
- It would be interesting to better **understand the bridge between FA and SA**. Now they are kept quite separate in teaching. Of course, I understand the difference between FA and SA, but they also have similarities...
- We have received a high level of teaching and we have been taught key skills for SA. I would like more capacity to **activate students** for class work in the long term so that it serves SA
- It would be useful to **practise** more evaluation of experiments
- There have been **practice trials** that are being piloted. Could there be more of this? [emphasis added]

/Name Name, Institution or similar

## Cooperative assessment and test construction

j) SU: for

we assessed NTs, but it was not much; maybe one minor exercise in which we could try grading [...]

**Yes, I actually think [test construction] would be good specifically, for instance, how to design multiple-choice questions [...] It would also be good [...] to focus more on the knowledge requirements** and go deeper into what is "varied" in language, for instance

k) SU: against

I: So test construction – is this something that you've done on campus or in school? R: No, not really.

[...] I did some kind of test construction to make them test [...] how much they know about things.

[...] at the school I was they didn't really work with tests like for an assessment-assessment; it's more for self-assessment

I: So, you feel that you'd like to have more of this, let's say... R: No, I think it's fine, I think, what I wanted to say - it's more like they didn't do it at the school where I was to assess really something, to give a grade on that [...]

I: That's right, I was thinking about campus, should we provide you with more... R: **No, no I don't think so. And it's the same for multiple choice because I think everybody... it's nothing that they really grade**, so it's something that they do to help the students to know what they have to learn more about [emphasis added]

/Name Name, Institution or similar

# Test construction

**UofG:** Not conversant

**l)** I: At this late stage of your teacher training, do you feel confident when conducting SA, assessing students' achievements in various kinds of tests and test construction?

**R: No... not conversant at all.** I have no idea of how you produce language tests. It is true that I have read this book *Konstruera prov* or what it was called, *Konsten att göra bra prov* [...] but it doesn't deal with languages all that much. Multiple-choice questions ... I have no idea how you make [...]. Essays, however, I do feel confident with them; you formulate a topic in an authentic way

**UofG:** Conversant

**m)** I: How confident or conversant are you with regard to assessing students' achievements [test construction]

**R: I feel very confident.** I have read several books about it and every day, I, what should I say; I help myself with such issues, am constantly trying to improve [my SAL] [emphasis added]

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## UofG

n) I: Have you been dealing with test construction in TE?

R: Yes, we have. I recall that we were expected to conduct an assignment connected with...

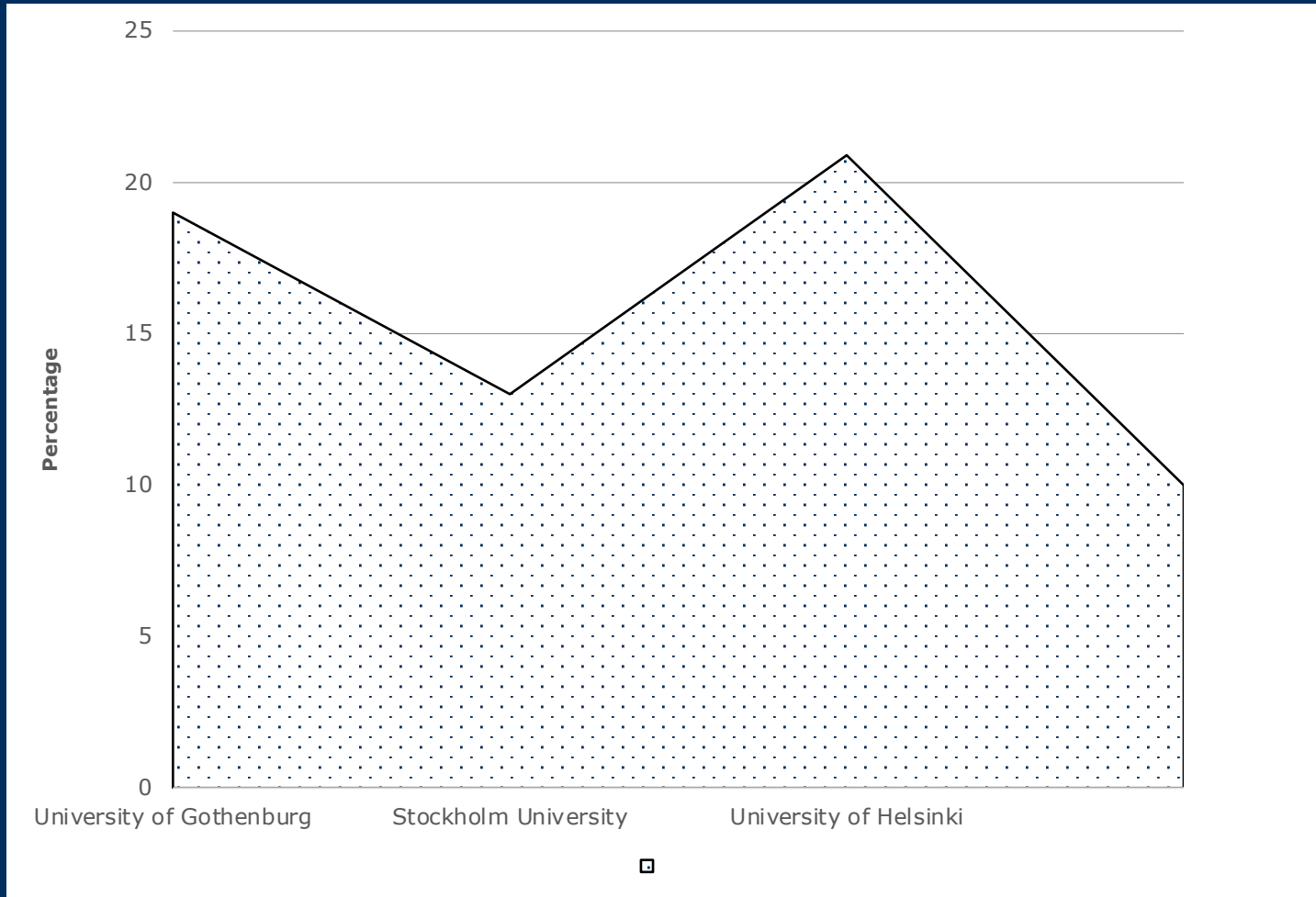
**Yes, we did, although it may not have been test construction *per se***; it was more like a lesson, a kind of lesson planning in which there was some sort of examination embedded and how you reflected on, well, partly the planning and partly the evaluation, then, and what you were looking for and how you did it, during, during the assessment procedure, then, and it was actually rather interesting, it was good to see, partly which lessons other [pre-service] teachers came up with and which tools they were using, and the we had the opportunity to give, well, feedback to each other and you received some critique and it was, well, so we did this, although I should say that this was not really a *test*; it was more like, like an assignment that would be examined

o) I: So you did not focus on how to construct tests specifically, then?

**R: No, that is right; I didn't have the opportunity to do so, not, not in any advanced sense of the word, no** [emphasis added]

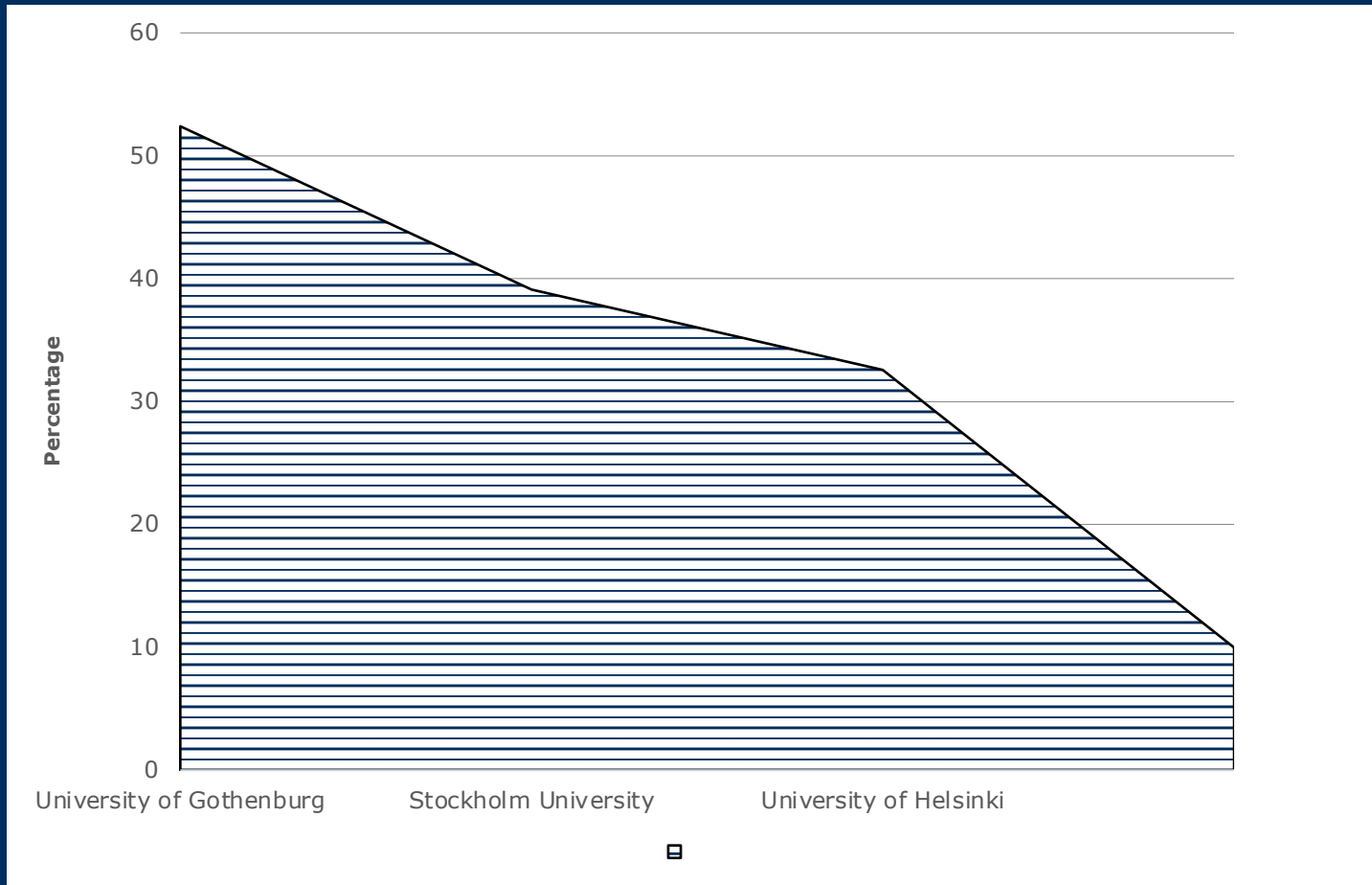
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# Survey: Test construction – “sufficient as it is”



/Name Name, Institution or similar

# Test construction – “a lot more”



/Name Name, Institution or similar



# Legal frameworks for higher education

The Higher Education Ordinance (1993), outlines provisions relevant to TE.

For example, the Ordinance (Annex 2, para. 7) includes **undefined** requirements regarding professional qualifications for secondary education, and principles for addressing SA in TE courses.

Students are expected to "demonstrate specialized knowledge of assessment and grading" to prepare for "future professional practice" for the Degree of Master of Arts/Upper Secondary Education (para. 4).

**Such national regulations do not exist in Finland**, which suggests a pronounced ambition on the national level to encourage local deliberation – possibly even more so for Finland than for Sweden?

# Conclusions

In this study, responses from pre-service language students at the latter stages of TE in both Sweden and Finland show evidence of:

- **shallow theoretical knowledge of theoretical and practical/empirical understanding of SA**, but even if theoretical terminology, such as alignment; validity and reliability may be difficult to define, or rather, that they need to be reminded of their meaning and implications,
- **they show a pronounced interest in, and ask for further opportunities to, develop deep knowledge of the practical aspect of SAL in school**

- literacy with regard to FA and SA as well as the necessary alignment and interaction between them in language testing, for example, require **extensive knowledge and understanding both in terms of theory and of practice** and
- in light of contemporary demands on autonomy and the need for life-long learning (heutagogy) and
- of considering varieties in the ways of learning (phenomenography) and challenges in view of multilingualism and translanguaging
- and of extensive demands on local deliberative democracy

**we need to design pre- and inservice training that caters for various skills**

- placing extensive focus on FA – as the case has been in TE ever since the “formative reform” (Black & Wiliam, 1998 and the Assessment Reform Group as well as CEFR, 2001, etc.) – means that we have probably reached the halfway point of LAL

Designing courses for SAL in the aftermath of such reforms, involves challenges, such as:

- knowledge and understanding of an extensive field;
- of bridging the gap between campus and school;
- and of teaching skills for local deliberation

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