
Assessment literacy among English language teachers in Ghanaian senior high schools: Classroom assessment practices and implications for student learning

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A B S T R A C T

Assessment literacy is important in language education because teachers' assessment decisions shape classroom learning. Within Ghanaian senior high schools, English language teachers are expected to implement classroom assessment practices that support learning while preparing students for high-stakes examinations. This paper examined assessment literacy among English language teachers, their classroom practices, and its implications for student learning in senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana. The paper used a qualitative approach and employed a phenomenological research design to explore teachers' lived experiences with classroom assessment. Twenty English language teachers were selected through criterion sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2019) framework. The findings revealed that classroom assessment practices remain examination-oriented, with tests, quizzes, and end-of-term examinations serving as dominant modes of assessment. Although teachers employed formative assessment strategies such as questioning, peer correction, and classroom exercises, these practices were often irregular and provided limited opportunities for feedback and revision. Teachers with stronger assessment literacy described and enacted engaging tasks and explanatory feedback, while limited assessment literacy constrained assessment of writing and speaking. The findings point to implications for student engagement, feedback, and revision rather than measured gains in achievement. The paper concludes that assessment literacy extends beyond technical knowledge and directly influences classroom interaction, feedback quality, and student engagement. The paper recommends that strengthening teachers' assessment literacy will foster more learning-oriented assessment practices and improve student learning outcomes in English language classrooms.

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment shapes educational experiences in profound ways. It influences what teachers teach, what learners prioritize, and how success is defined within classrooms. In language education, assessment extends beyond the measurement of achievement (Green, 2013; Stoyanoff, 2012). It provides evidence about learners' progress, strengths, limitations, and instructional

needs. Through assessment, teachers gather information that informs pedagogical decisions and supports learning improvement (Curry, 2016). For English language teachers, assessment functions as a central mechanism through which curriculum intentions are translated into classroom practice. Its quality therefore affects not only instructional effectiveness but also learners' opportunities for academic growth (Bishop, 2024; Pastore, 2023).

Within contemporary educational discourse, assessment literacy has emerged as a major concern. Assessment literacy refers to teachers' knowledge, skills, beliefs, and professional judgment regarding the design, implementation, interpretation, and use of assessment information to enhance learning (Xu, 2019). Teachers who possess strong assessment literacy are able to align assessment with learning objectives, construct valid assessment tasks, interpret student performance meaningfully, and provide feedback that promotes improvement (Levi & Inbar-Lourie, 2020; Pastore, 2023). They understand assessment as part of the teaching process rather than an activity reserved for grading and certification. Teachers with limited assessment literacy often depend on traditional testing approaches that emphasize marks, ranking, and examination preparation while paying less attention to formative assessment, feedback, and learner development (Brookhart, 2017; Yan et al., 2021).

Assessment literacy, however, should not be treated as synonymous with classroom assessment practices. The two concepts are related, but they refer to different dimensions of teachers' work. Assessment literacy concerns what teachers know, believe, understand, and are able to judge about assessment (Pastore, 2023; Popham, 2018), whereas assessment practices refer to what teachers actually do when they design tasks, administer assessments, interpret learner responses, provide feedback, record performance, and use assessment information during instruction (Mertler, 2016; Moss & Brookhart, 2019). A teacher may, for example, possess knowledge of formative assessment principles but make limited use of formative practices because of examination demands, time constraints, school expectations, or uncertainty about how to apply those principles in a particular lesson. Conversely, a teacher may use a particular assessment technique without demonstrating a deeper understanding of why that technique is appropriate for a given learning purpose. Distinguishing the two is therefore necessary for understanding assessment literacy as a professional capacity that is expressed through, but is not reducible to, classroom assessment practice.

The growing interest in assessment literacy is linked to evidence showing that teacher assessment practices influence student achievement. Black and Wiliam (2018) contend that assessment has the capacity to improve learning when evidence gathered from classroom activities informs subsequent instruction. Hattie and Clarke (2018) similarly maintain that feedback derived from assessment can accelerate learning when it helps learners understand their progress and identify pathways for improvement. Such arguments position assessment literacy as a professional competence with implications for educational quality because teachers require assessment knowledge and judgment to decide what evidence to collect, how to interpret it, and how to respond to it. In language classrooms, where learning outcomes involve complex communicative skills, the quality of assessment decisions becomes even more consequential.

For English language teachers, assessment literacy carries particular importance because language learning cannot be adequately captured through traditional testing alone (Levi & Inbar-

Lourie, 2020; Fulcher, 2012). Reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical language use require varied assessment approaches capable of capturing performance across different contexts. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) argue that language assessment demands specialised expertise because teachers must evaluate not only linguistic accuracy but also communicative competence and meaning-making. Scarino (2017) adds that language assessment involves interpretive judgment, making teachers' assessment knowledge indispensable. Where assessment literacy is weak, assessment practices may fail to represent learners' actual language abilities and may provide limited support for learning improvement. The concern, therefore, is not simply whether English language teachers assess their students, but whether they possess the knowledge and judgment needed to make appropriate assessment choices and enact them effectively.

Within Ghanaian senior high schools, assessment literacy has gained renewed relevance due to ongoing educational reforms. The Standards-Based Curriculum, competency-based approaches, and continuous assessment policies require teachers to employ diverse assessment strategies that support learning and provide evidence of competency development (Anapey, 2026; Wawire et al., 2026). These reforms call for assessment practices that move beyond recall and examination preparation toward application, problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication. Yet classroom realities often reveal a different picture. Discussions with teachers and observations from school settings suggest that assessment continues to be heavily influenced by high-stakes examinations, particularly the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) (Rossiter et al., 2025; Bosan, 2018; Rossiter et al., 2021). Assessment activities frequently emphasize test preparation, factual recall, and score attainment, while formative assessment practices receive less attention. These practices should not, however, be taken as direct measures of assessment literacy. Rather, they provide one avenue through which teachers' assessment knowledge, beliefs, and professional judgment can be examined in practice.

This tension between policy expectations and classroom practice is not unique to Ghana. Studies conducted across Africa report persistent challenges in teachers' assessment literacy and assessment implementation. Alordiah (2025) found that many teachers struggle to design assessments that support learning despite curriculum reforms advocating formative assessment. Kanjee and Mthembu (2015) report similar concerns in South African schools, where assessment practices remain examination-driven despite policy shifts toward learner-centred approaches. In East Africa, Kyaruzi et al. (2019) observed that teachers often possess limited preparation in assessment design and interpretation, constraining the educational value of classroom assessment. Taken together, these studies point to a recurring mismatch between what assessment policies expect teachers to do and what teachers are able to enact in their classrooms. The problem is not limited to teachers' knowledge of assessment terminology or procedures; it concerns their capacity to translate assessment principles into the design of classroom tasks, interpretation of learner responses, provision of feedback, and subsequent instructional decisions. Yet the studies do not present a uniform account of the problem. Alordiah (2025) draws attention to teachers' difficulty with designing assessments that support learning, while Kanjee and Mthembu (2015) emphasise the persistence of examination-oriented practices. Kyaruzi et al. (2019), in contrast, point to weaknesses in teachers' preparation for assessment design and interpretation. Read together, these findings suggest that assessment literacy involves several connected competencies,

and weakness in one area may limit the extent to which assessment can inform learning even where teachers are working within reform-oriented curricula.

The African evidence also leaves questions that warrant further investigation. Much of the existing research identifies deficiencies in assessment practice or teachers' preparation, but less attention has been given to how teachers' assessment literacy is reflected in the actual assessment decisions they make within specific subject areas. This matters because assessment is not enacted in the same way across all subjects. English language teachers, for example, assess knowledge of language forms alongside reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, and communicative competence. The quality of assessment therefore depends not only on teachers' general knowledge of assessment principles but also on their ability to select or construct tasks that correspond with the language abilities being taught and to use assessment information to improve subsequent instruction. A broad finding that teachers have limited assessment literacy does not, by itself, explain how such limitations operate in English language classrooms or how they may affect learners' opportunities to develop language proficiency.

Evidence emerging from Ghana raises similar questions. Awuah et al. (2024) note that many teachers experience difficulties implementing formative assessment despite policy directives encouraging learner-centred approaches. Arhin and Yeboah (2025) found that classroom assessment practices remain strongly influenced by summative traditions, with limited integration of feedback-oriented assessment strategies. Awuah (2022) argues that gaps in assessment knowledge continue to affect the quality of classroom assessment across Ghanaian schools. Research by Quainoo et al. (2025) further suggests that many teachers require sustained professional development in assessment design, feedback provision, and data-informed instructional decision-making. These concerns become more pronounced within English language classrooms, where assessment decisions influence learners' communicative competence, academic achievement, and examination performance.

Although these Ghanaian studies provide useful evidence of weaknesses in assessment literacy and implementation, they leave an important empirical gap. The studies tend to establish that teachers encounter difficulties with formative assessment, remain influenced by summative traditions, or require further preparation in assessment-related practices. What receives less attention is the relationship among teachers' assessment knowledge, the assessment practices they employ, and the learning consequences of those practices within Senior High School English language classrooms. There is also limited evidence that brings together assessment design, feedback, interpretation of learner performance, and instructional decision-making as interconnected dimensions of English language teachers' assessment literacy. As a result, it remains difficult to determine whether weaknesses in assessment literacy are merely procedural problems or whether they shape the kinds of learning opportunities available to students.

The absence of such evidence has practical consequences. When English language teachers lack sufficient assessment literacy, classroom assessment may become a means of recording marks rather than a source of information for improving learning. Poorly designed tasks can measure forms of knowledge that do not adequately represent the language abilities teachers intend to develop, while limited feedback may leave learners without clear information about how their performance can be improved. Where assessment information is not properly interpreted,

teachers may also continue with instructional approaches that do not respond to learners' actual difficulties. In a Senior High School context in which learners are also preparing for high-stakes examinations, persistent reliance on summative and examination-driven practices may narrow classroom assessment to preparation for tests and reduce opportunities for assessment to support ongoing language development. Failure to examine these issues may therefore leave an important gap between assessment policy and classroom practice unaddressed, while teachers and learners continue to work within assessment systems whose capacity to support learning is not fully understood.

The present paper emerges from these concerns. It seeks to examine assessment literacy among English language teachers in Ghanaian Senior High Schools and explore its effects on student learning outcomes. By focusing specifically on English language teachers at the senior high school level, the study responds to the limited subject-specific evidence in the existing literature and moves beyond simply documenting whether teachers experience assessment difficulties. It examines assessment literacy as it relates to the ways teachers design and use assessment, provide feedback, interpret learner performance, and make instructional decisions. In doing so, the study seeks to provide evidence that can clarify how assessment literacy is connected to students' learning experiences and outcomes. Such evidence can contribute to the ongoing discussion of assessment reform in Ghana by showing whether policy expectations concerning learner-centred and formative assessment are reflected in the practices of English language teachers and where further professional preparation may be needed.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What assessment practices do English language teachers employ in senior high schools?
2. How do teachers perceive and enact the role of assessment literacy in supporting student learning?

1.2 Literature Review

Studies on assessment literacy have expanded considerably in recent years, largely because of growing concerns about the quality of classroom assessment and its implications for student learning. Within Ghana and beyond, studies have sought to understand how teachers assess learners, the knowledge that informs their assessment decisions, and the extent to which assessment practices contribute to educational outcomes. The present study, which examines assessment literacy among English language teachers in Ghanaian senior high schools, draws from this body of work while addressing a context that remains insufficiently explored.

1.2.1 Conceptualization of Assessment Literacy

Assessment literacy extends beyond teachers' ability to construct tests or assign marks. It involves the knowledge and understanding that teachers draw on when designing assessment tasks, interpreting learner performance, providing feedback, and making instructional decisions. Latif and Wasim (2022) examined teachers' beliefs and conceptions of assessment literacy within tertiary English as a Foreign Language contexts. Using qualitative interviews, they found that teachers' assessment decisions were shaped by personal beliefs about teaching, learning, and assessment. Participants who viewed assessment as a learning tool employed more learner-centred approaches, whereas those who viewed assessment primarily as certification relied

heavily on testing. This finding suggests that assessment literacy involves cognitive, pedagogical, and philosophical dimensions rather than technical knowledge alone.

Asamoah et al. (2023) extended this discussion through a cross-cultural investigation of teachers' approaches to classroom assessment. Their study found that assessment literacy develops through professional learning, contextual demands, and teaching experience. Teachers' assessment practices reflected the realities of their educational environments rather than assessment theories alone. This observation is important because it cautions against treating assessment literacy as a fixed body of technical knowledge that teachers either possess or lack. Teachers may understand principles of effective assessment but still adopt practices shaped by examination requirements, institutional expectations, previous professional experiences, and their own conceptions of teaching and learning.

The Ghanaian evidence provides further support for this broader conceptualization. Arhin and Yeboah (2025) investigated teachers' understanding of validity and reliability in classroom assessment. Using mixed methods, they discovered that many teachers struggled to explain these foundational assessment concepts despite using assessment regularly. The researchers concluded that assessment competence among teachers remained uneven, raising concerns about the quality of classroom assessment decisions. The finding is important because frequent use of assessment does not necessarily indicate assessment literacy. A teacher may administer tests and examinations regularly while having limited understanding of whether the assessment adequately represents the knowledge or skills being assessed.

Awuah (2022) and Awuah et al. (2024) similarly examined assessment practices, beliefs, and competence among Social Studies teachers. Both studies reported strong dependence on written tests and examinations, limited use of formative assessment, and significant variations in teachers' assessment competence. Quainoo et al. (2025) also identified different profiles of classroom assessment literacy among Ghanaian teachers, indicating that assessment competence is neither uniform nor equally distributed across educational settings. Taken together, these studies position assessment literacy as a combination of assessment knowledge, beliefs, practical competence, and the capacity to use assessment information for teaching and learning. They also show that teachers' reported knowledge of assessment cannot be separated from the contexts in which assessment is practised.

1.2.2 Teachers' Assessment Practices and Assessment Literacy in Ghanaian Schools

A substantial part of the Ghanaian literature has focused on the assessment practices teachers use and the extent to which those practices reflect principles of effective classroom assessment. One of the most comprehensive Ghanaian studies on classroom assessment was conducted by Armah (2025), who investigated assessment practices among Senior High School mathematics teachers through a national survey design. Data was collected from teachers across different regions of Ghana using structured questionnaires. The study found that teachers relied heavily on tests, quizzes, assignments, and examinations to assess students. Although many participants rated their assessment skills positively, classroom assessment remained largely examination-oriented. Armah further reported that teachers' assessment practices were influenced by professional experience and assessment training.

Armah's findings are consistent with evidence from Akyina and Oduro-Okyireh (2019), Awuah (2022), Awuah et al. (2024), and Arhin and Yeboah (2025), although the studies examined assessment from different perspectives. Akyina and Oduro-Okyireh (2019) examined formative assessment practices among Senior High School teachers in the Ashanti Mampong Municipality. Using a descriptive survey design, the researchers gathered data from teachers through questionnaires and interviews. Their findings revealed that teachers demonstrated awareness of formative assessment strategies but used them inconsistently in classroom practice. Questioning, assignments, and class exercises were common, yet feedback often remained superficial and failed to guide learning improvement. Awuah (2022) and Awuah et al. (2024) reported similar dependence on written tests and examinations and limited use of formative assessment. Arhin and Yeboah (2025) added another dimension by showing that some teachers struggled with foundational concepts such as validity and reliability.

These studies converge on a concern that cannot be reduced to the frequency with which teachers assess learners. Teachers assess regularly, but the educational value of assessment depends on how assessment tasks are designed, how evidence of learning is interpreted, and what teachers do with the information obtained. The findings from Akyina and Oduro-Okyireh (2019) are useful in this regard because they show a difference between awareness and implementation. Teachers may know about formative assessment strategies but may not use them consistently or provide feedback that helps learners improve. Armah (2025) similarly shows that teachers may rate their assessment skills positively while their classroom practices remain examination-oriented. These findings raise an important question about the relationship between teachers' perceived assessment competence and the assessment practices they actually employ.

The relationship between assessment quality, assessment literacy, and student performance has also received attention. The relationship between assessment literacy and academic performance was examined by Dadzie et al. (2024). Using quantitative methods, the researchers explored whether assessment quality and teachers' assessment literacy predicted students' academic achievement. Their findings revealed a positive association between assessment literacy and student performance. Students taught by teachers with stronger assessment competence recorded better academic outcomes than those taught by teachers with weaker assessment knowledge. While the study established statistical relationships, it provided limited insight into the classroom processes through which assessment literacy influences learning.

A related study by Surman et al. (2024) investigated the predictive capacity of school-based assessment on students' mathematics performance in large-scale examinations. Employing correlational analysis, the researchers found that well-structured school-based assessment significantly predicted examination performance. Although the study focused on mathematics, it highlights the educational value of classroom assessment when assessment practices are appropriately designed and implemented. When these findings are considered alongside Dadzie et al. (2024), they suggest a relationship between the quality of assessment and learners' academic outcomes. At the same time, the quantitative orientation of these studies provides limited explanation of how teachers make assessment decisions in the classroom or how teachers themselves understand the assessment practices they use.

The Ghanaian literature therefore presents both strength and limitation. It provides evidence from different educational settings and demonstrates recurring concerns about examination-oriented assessment, inconsistent formative assessment, teacher competence, and the quality of feedback. However, the studies differ in their emphasis and methodological approaches. Survey studies provide information about the prevalence of particular assessment practices, while correlational studies establish relationships between assessment variables and achievement. What remains less developed is an account of how teachers experience assessment literacy in their everyday professional practice and how their understanding of assessment is translated into classroom decisions.

1.2.3 Assessment Literacy in English Language Teaching Contexts

Assessment literacy requires attention to disciplinary context because the knowledge and decisions involved in assessing learners vary across subjects. This issue is especially relevant to English language teaching, where teachers assess not only knowledge of language forms but also reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, and communicative competence. Evidence from English language classrooms is provided by Bintul (2025), who employed a classroom-based qualitative design to investigate the role of teacher feedback in developing grammar skills among Ghanaian senior high school learners. Data was collected through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. The study found that explanatory and corrective feedback improved learners' understanding of grammatical structures and encouraged active participation during lessons. Students responded positively when feedback extended beyond marking errors to explaining why errors occurred.

Bintul's findings suggest that assessment literacy cannot be reduced to test construction alone; rather, it includes teachers' capacity to use assessment information to facilitate language learning. This finding connects with Latif and Wasim's (2022) observation that teachers' conceptions of assessment influence whether assessment is used as a learning tool or primarily as a means of certification. The two studies differ in context and methodological focus, but they point to a related issue: the value of assessment depends partly on what teachers believe assessment is for and how they act on the evidence it provides.

Research conducted outside Ghana presents similar concerns. Pujiawati et al. (2026) explored the relationship between lecturers' writing assessment literacy and students' learning experiences in higher education. Through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, the researchers found that students benefited when assessment practices included clear criteria, constructive feedback, and opportunities for revision. Students associated effective assessment with improved confidence and learning. These findings reinforce the argument that assessment literacy influences learning experiences as much as learning outcomes.

The English language literature therefore adds an important dimension to the Ghanaian assessment discussion. Assessment in language education is closely tied to the development of communicative abilities, and feedback, criteria, revision, and opportunities to respond to assessment evidence can shape how learners develop those abilities. Yet the available Ghanaian

studies have not sufficiently connected teachers' broader assessment literacy with these language-specific processes at the Senior High School level. Bintul (2025) provides evidence concerning feedback and grammar learning, but its focus is narrower than the broader construct of assessment literacy. Armah (2025), Awuah (2022), Awuah et al. (2024), and related studies provide broader evidence about teachers' assessment practices, but their subject contexts do not adequately explain the distinctive assessment demands of English language teaching.

This distinction matters because findings from mathematics or Social Studies cannot simply be transferred to English language classrooms without considering the different kinds of learning evidence teachers are expected to interpret. A mathematics teacher may assess whether a learner can correctly solve a problem, whereas an English language teacher may need to judge the quality of a written argument, grammatical accuracy, reading comprehension, vocabulary use, or communicative effectiveness. The assessment literacy required to make these judgements is therefore partly shaped by the nature of the subject. The limited attention given to this issue leaves insufficient evidence about how English language teachers in Ghanaian senior high schools understand and experience assessment literacy in practice.

1.2.4 Research Gap and Contribution of the Present Study

The reviewed studies provide useful evidence about teachers' assessment practices, assessment competence, beliefs, feedback, and the relationship between assessment and student performance. Several studies converge on the persistence of examination-oriented assessment, inconsistent formative assessment, uneven assessment competence, and weaknesses in feedback and the interpretation of assessment evidence. Other studies show that assessment quality and assessment literacy are associated with better student performance and learning experiences. There is therefore substantial evidence that assessment matters, but the literature does not yet provide a sufficiently detailed account of how teachers experience and enact assessment literacy in Ghanaian senior high schools English language classrooms.

Three gaps are apparent. First, much of the Ghanaian literature has focused on mathematics, Social Studies, or teachers across subjects, leaving English language teaching less adequately represented. Second, quantitative studies have measured assessment practices, competence, or relationships with academic performance, but they provide limited insight into how teachers understand and experience assessment literacy in their daily classroom practice. Third, existing English language research has addressed specific assessment processes, such as feedback and grammar learning, but has not sufficiently examined assessment literacy as a broader professional experience encompassing assessment design, interpretation, feedback, and instructional decision-making.

The present study addresses these gaps through a phenomenological inquiry into assessment literacy among English language teachers in Ghanaian senior high schools. Its contribution lies in bringing the teachers' lived experiences of assessment into the analysis rather than treating assessment literacy only as a measurable level of competence. The study also connects teachers' experiences with the learning opportunities created for students, thereby linking assessment knowledge and practice with the classroom processes through which learning may be supported or constrained. By focusing on English language teachers, the study provides subject-specific

evidence that is not readily available from existing research conducted mainly in mathematics, Social Studies, or cross-subject settings.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This paper used a qualitative research approach to examine assessment literacy among Ghanaian senior high school English language teachers, their classroom assessment practices and its implications for student learning. The decision to use a qualitative design stemmed from the understanding that assessment literacy involves more than technical competence. It encompasses teachers' beliefs, interpretations, experiences, and professional judgments regarding assessment (Latif & Wasim, 2022). Such dimensions are socially situated and shaped by institutional, curricular, and contextual factors. Qualitative inquiry provides the opportunity to explore these complexities and to understand how teachers make sense of assessment within their everyday professional practice (Creswell, 2019).

A phenomenological research design guided this paper as well. This phenomenological design was selected because it allows for detailed exploration of lived experiences within participants' natural settings while maintaining the contextual conditions that shape those experiences (Yin, 2018). The phenomenon examined in this study was English language teachers' lived experience of assessment literacy, including how they understand assessment, make assessment decisions, provide feedback, interpret students' performance, and use assessment information in their teaching. The focus was not simply on identifying which assessment techniques teachers used, but on understanding how teachers experienced, interpreted, and negotiated assessment within their professional contexts.

Assessment practices are not experienced in isolation, but they are influenced by school cultures, policy expectations, examination pressures, resource availability, and teacher experiences. The phenomenological approach therefore enabled the researchers to investigate assessment literacy as it is experienced within the lived realities of Ghanaian Senior High Schools rather than as an abstract construct detached from practice. This orientation was important because teachers may describe similar assessment practices while attaching different meanings to them. Exploring those meanings provided access to the ways teachers understood their assessment responsibilities and the difficulties they encountered when attempting to support student learning through assessment.

The phenomenological orientation also shaped the researchers' engagement with participants. During interviews, teachers were encouraged to describe specific experiences rather than provide only general opinions about assessment. Questions invited participants to recall assessment situations, explain how they responded to students' performance, describe the feedback they provided, and discuss circumstances that influenced their assessment decisions. Classroom observations and documentary evidence were used to situate these accounts within actual teaching practices. This allowed the researchers to examine the phenomenon from participants' descriptions as well as from observable and documentary evidence.

2.2 Study Setting and Participants

This paper involves English language teachers in some senior high schools in the central region of Ghana. The schools were chosen because they represented different educational contexts and provided opportunities to examine assessment practices across varying school environments. The researchers used criterion sampling to select twenty (20) English language teachers for participation. Criterion sampling technique was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to select participants based on predefined inclusion criteria relevant to the study objectives (Patton, 2014).

Included participants were required to meet the following criteria: possession of a degree in English Education, at least three years of teaching English Language experience, and current teaching appointment at the Senior High School level. This ensured relevance and consistency with the study's assessment literacy focus framework perspective. The criteria also ensured that participants had sufficient experience of Senior High School English language teaching to provide accounts of assessment practices grounded in their professional experience rather than in limited or recent exposure to classroom assessment.

The selection of participants was therefore linked to the phenomenon under investigation. Teachers who had experience teaching English at the Senior High School level were in a position to describe how assessment was understood and enacted within the subject. The use of criterion sampling also helped maintain consistency across participants while allowing the study to capture differences in teachers' experiences across the selected schools.

2.3 Data Collection Instruments

Three data collection instruments were employed: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The use of multiple sources was consistent with the study's qualitative design because assessment literacy may not be fully captured through participants' verbal accounts alone.

2.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews served as the main or primary instrument which enabled the researchers to explore teachers' understanding of assessment literacy, their assessment practices, and the factors influencing their assessment decisions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The flexible nature of the interviews allowed participants to provide detailed explanations and examples drawn from their professional experiences.

The interviews focused on participants' understanding of assessment literacy, experiences with designing and administering assessments, interpretation of students' performance, feedback practices, assessment-related challenges, and perceptions of the relationship between assessment and student learning. Probing questions were used when participants introduced experiences that required further explanation. This approach was consistent with phenomenological inquiry because participants were given space to describe the meaning they attached to their experiences rather than being restricted to predetermined responses.

2.3.2 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations also served as supporting instrument that complemented the interview data by providing direct evidence of assessment practices as they occurred during instruction.

Through observation, the researchers examined how teachers assessed learning, provided feedback, and used assessment information to support classroom instruction objectives (Patton, 2014). This made it possible to compare what teachers stated with their actual classroom practices.

Observation also provided contextual information that could not be obtained adequately through interviews. Attention was given to teachers' assessment activities, questioning, feedback, responses to student errors, use of assessment information, and interaction with learners during assessment-related activities. The observations were not used to evaluate teachers for administrative purposes; they were used to understand how assessment literacy was expressed within ordinary classroom practice.

2.3.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis then constituted the final and third source of data. Assessment records, lesson plans, test items, marking schemes, and students' assessed work were examined to gain additional insight into assessment design and implementation. The combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis strengthened the credibility of the findings through methodological triangulation and allowed a more comprehensive understanding of assessment literacy in practice (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The documents also provided an opportunity to examine whether the assessment practices described during interviews were reflected in teachers' assessment materials. Test items and marking schemes provided evidence about assessment design and criteria, while lesson plans and students' assessed work provided information about the relationship between planned assessment, classroom implementation, feedback, and learner performance.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Before data collection commenced, the researchers obtained the necessary permission from the relevant educational authorities and participating schools. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and the procedures involved in interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Participation was voluntary. Participants were informed that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study without penalty. Informed consent was obtained before data collection began. The researchers also explained how confidentiality would be maintained and how information obtained from participants would be used for research purposes.

The interviews were conducted in settings that allowed participants to speak freely about their experiences. Interview responses were recorded with participants' permission and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Classroom observations were conducted during English language lessons, while relevant assessment documents were collected and examined with the permission of the participating teachers and schools. Participants' names and other identifying information were not used in reporting the findings. Instead, codes were assigned to protect their identities.

2.5 Phenomenological Procedures

The phenomenological orientation guided the study from participant selection through data collection and interpretation. The researchers approached teachers' accounts as descriptions of

experiences that had meaning within their particular professional contexts. Rather than beginning with the assumption that assessment literacy could be adequately represented by a predetermined list of competencies, the researchers sought to understand how teachers themselves experienced and interpreted assessment in their classrooms.

During the interviews, participants were encouraged to describe concrete assessment experiences, including situations in which they had to design assessment tasks, respond to students' errors, provide feedback, interpret performance, or modify instruction based on assessment evidence. Follow-up questions were used to clarify participants' meanings and to encourage fuller descriptions of their experiences.

The researchers also engaged in phenomenological reduction by repeatedly examining the interview accounts and observation records and identifying descriptions directly related to the experience of assessment literacy. Preconceived interpretations were held in check during the initial stages of analysis so that participants' descriptions could receive sustained attention. Reflexive notes and analytic memos were maintained throughout the process to record the researchers' emerging interpretations and assumptions.

The use of phenomenological reduction was important because the purpose of the study was not merely to catalogue assessment techniques. It was to understand how teachers experienced assessment literacy and how they made sense of their assessment responsibilities within the conditions of Ghanaian senior high school education.

2.6 Data Analysis

This paper further employed Braun and Clarke's (2019) thematic analysis framework, informed by phenomenological reduction. All interview transcripts, classroom observation notes, and documentary data were first organized and read repeatedly to ensure immersion and familiarity with participants' experiences. Initial coding was conducted inductively, using both in vivo and descriptive codes to capture teachers' accounts of assessment literacy, classroom assessment practices, and perceived influences on student learning outcomes.

The developed codes were then systematically examined and clustered into meaningful categories reflecting assessment conceptions, assessment practices, feedback processes, contextual factors, and perceived effects on student achievement. Analytic memos were written throughout the process to document emerging interpretations, coding decisions, and reflexive considerations, thereby strengthening transparency and trustworthiness of the analysis.

Themes were developed through an iterative process of comparison across interviews, observations, and documents, allowing convergence and divergence in teachers' experiences to be identified. The analysis moved beyond description to interpretation, focusing on how teachers' assessment knowledge, beliefs, and classroom judgments shaped instructional decisions and influenced students' learning experiences within Ghanaian Senior High School contexts.

The analysis involved repeated movement between individual accounts and the dataset as a whole. Codes that described similar experiences were compared, merged, differentiated, or reconsidered where necessary. Candidate themes were reviewed against the coded extracts and the original data to determine whether they adequately represented participants' experiences. The

final themes were then defined and named in relation to the research objectives and the phenomenon under investigation.

2.7 Trustworthiness of the Study

Several measures were used to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study. Credibility was supported through methodological triangulation involving interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The use of these three sources enabled the researchers to compare teachers' accounts with observed classroom practices and documentary evidence rather than relying on a single source of information.

The researchers also used repeated engagement with the data during transcription, coding, categorisation, and theme development. Divergent accounts were retained and considered during interpretation rather than being excluded because they did not conform to dominant patterns in the data. This was important in a phenomenological study because differences in participants' experiences may provide insight into the conditions under which assessment literacy is understood and practised.

Dependability was supported through the documentation of coding decisions, analytic memos, and the stages through which categories and themes were developed. Confirmability was addressed through reflexive consideration of the researchers' assumptions during data collection and analysis. The use of interview, observation, and documentary evidence also provided opportunities to examine interpretations against data obtained from different sources.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the nature of their involvement before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study without penalty.

Confidentiality was maintained by using participant codes instead of names and by excluding identifying information from the presentation of findings. Information obtained from interviews, observations, and documents was treated as research data and was not used for purposes unrelated to the study. Permission was obtained before recording interviews and examining participants' assessment materials.

The researchers also took care to ensure that classroom observations did not interfere unnecessarily with teaching and learning. The study focused on assessment literacy as a professional and educational phenomenon rather than using the research process to evaluate individual teachers for employment or administrative purposes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Data from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis were analyzed thematically. Two main themes aligned with the research questions emerged: (1) classroom assessment practices of English language teachers, and (2) teachers' assessment

literacy and students' engagement, feedback, revision, and perceived learning. A synthesis of these themes is presented in Table 1, followed by a detailed narrative account of the findings.

Table 1. Thematic Summary of Findings

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Summary of Findings	Source Evidence	Illustrative of Excerpts Observed Behaviours /
Classroom assessment practices of English language teachers in SHS	Dominance of summative assessment practices	Teachers relied heavily on tests, quizzes, and end-of-term examinations as the main basis for evaluating learners.	Interview, Document Analysis	"Most of our marks come from tests and end-of-term exams." (T06)
	Limited but emerging formative assessment practices	Questioning, exercises, and occasional feedback were used, though not systematically.	Observation, Interview	Observation note: "Teacher asked oral questions, but feedback was brief and general."
	Feedback practices focused on grading rather than learning	Feedback often ended with scores, with limited guidance for improvement.	Observation, Document Analysis	Marked scripts showed ticks and scores with minimal written comments.
Teachers' assessment literacy and students' engagement, feedback, revision, and perceived learning	Assessment literacy linked to student engagement and understanding	Teachers who demonstrated clearer understanding of assessment purposes tended to use more interactive assessment activities, while students appeared more engaged in lessons where assessment was integrated with explanation and feedback.	Interview, Observation	"When I give immediate feedback, students correct themselves quickly." (T02)
	Feedback and opportunities for revision	Immediate and explanatory feedback encouraged students to identify errors, revise their work, and make further attempts.	Interview, Observation	"When I mark their essays and explain their mistakes, they try again and improve." (T04)
	Weak assessment literacy and limited learning support	Some teachers struggled to design meaningful tasks and interpret student performance, particularly in productive language skills such as writing and speaking.	Interview, Document Analysis	"Sometimes I just follow the scheme because I am not sure how to assess writing properly." (T20)
	Examination-driven assessment and narrowed learning experiences	Teaching and assessment were shaped by WASSCE demands, with limited opportunities for creative language use and extended communicative tasks.	Document Analysis, Interview, Observation	"Everything is about preparing them for WASSCE." (T15)

Classroom Assessment Practices of English Language Teachers in SHS

Dominance of Summative Assessment Practices

Interview data showed that assessment in English language classrooms remains strongly influenced by summative traditions. Teachers repeatedly described tests, quizzes, and end-of-term examinations as the most reliable measures of student performance. A teacher explained:

“In this school, what matters most is the end-of-term exams. That is what determines everything.” (T10)

Document analysis confirmed this pattern. Lesson plans and school assessment records placed strong emphasis on test scores, continuous assessment marks, and examination preparation activities. Very few documents reflected structured formative assessment planning such as feedback cycles or reflective learning tasks.

The emphasis on examinations meant that assessment was often treated as a way of recording performance rather than as part of the process through which teachers identify learning difficulties and respond to them. The accounts of the participants suggest that the pressure to produce assessable marks shaped what was assessed and the amount of attention given to assessment activities that could support learning during instruction.

Limited but Emerging Formative Assessment Practices

Classroom observations further revealed that assessment activities were often integrated into lessons through oral questioning and short written exercises. However, these activities were largely procedural. In one observed lesson, the teacher asked multiple comprehension questions but provided little follow-up feedback beyond “correct” or “wrong.” Observation notes recorded: “Teacher asked oral questions on a passage. Students responded, but feedback was limited to confirmation without explanation.”

This suggests that assessment practices were present but lacked depth in terms of learning support. Feedback rarely extended beyond scoring or judgment, which reduced its instructional value. Despite this dominance of summative approaches, a few teachers demonstrated emerging formative practices. These included spontaneous questioning, peer correction during exercises, and occasional corrective feedback. However, such practices were inconsistent and depended heavily on individual teacher initiative rather than structured assessment planning. The presence of these practices suggests that formative assessment was not absent from the classrooms, but its use was uneven and not always developed into a sustained cycle of assessment, feedback, and revision.

Feedback Practices Focused on Grading Rather Than Learning

Feedback practices provided further evidence of the predominance of judgment-oriented assessment. Marked scripts showed ticks, scores, and brief indications of correctness, with limited written comments explaining errors or showing students how their work could be improved. In several cases, assessment appeared to end with the allocation of marks.

This pattern was also visible during classroom observations. Teachers corrected responses, but explanations of why an answer was incorrect or how it could be improved were often brief. The issue was not the absence of feedback; rather, the feedback did not consistently create opportunities for learners to act on the information provided.

Teachers' Assessment Literacy and Students' Engagement, Feedback, Revision, and Perceived Learning

The data indicated that teachers' level of assessment literacy shaped not only how assessment was conducted but also how students responded to learning tasks. Teachers who demonstrated clearer understanding of assessment purposes tended to design more interactive classroom activities. The evidence for this theme came mainly from teachers' accounts and classroom observations of students' responses to assessment and feedback.

Assessment Literacy Linked to Student Engagement and Understanding

One teacher noted:

"When I give immediate feedback, students correct themselves quickly." (T02)

Observation data supported this claim. In classrooms where feedback was immediate and explanatory, students appeared more willing to participate, respond to questions, and reconsider their answers. In one observed lesson on essay writing, students actively revised sentences after teacher feedback. The observation provides evidence of engagement with the assessment process and of students' willingness to revise their work, rather than evidence of a measured increase in achievement.

The interview accounts also connected assessment literacy with teachers' perceptions of students' understanding. Teachers who described assessment as a means of identifying learning difficulties were more likely to explain how they adjusted classroom activities after noticing errors in students' work. Their accounts suggest that assessment information was used not only to assign marks but also to respond to students' immediate learning needs.

Feedback and Opportunities for Revision

Feedback was most closely associated with students' opportunities to revise their work. One teacher stated:

"When I mark their essays and explain their mistakes, they try again and improve." (T04)

Observation data supported the presence of this process. In one lesson on essay writing, students revised sentences after receiving teacher explanations. Some students corrected errors immediately and attempted the task again. Such behaviours show that explanatory feedback created opportunities for students to engage with their errors and revise their responses.

The finding is important because the value of assessment in these classrooms depended partly on what followed the assessment activity. Where students received only a score or a tick, there was little evidence of subsequent learning activity. Where teachers explained errors and allowed students to attempt the task again, students had a clearer opportunity to use assessment information during learning.

Weak Assessment Literacy and Limited Learning Support

However, several teachers revealed limited assessment literacy, particularly in relation to assessing productive language skills such as writing and speaking. One participant admitted:

"Sometimes I just follow the marking scheme because I am not confident in assessing their essays properly." (T13)

Such dependence on marking schemes limited teachers' scope for providing meaningful feedback beyond predetermined scoring categories. Document analysis of marked scripts showed heavy reliance on ticks, scores, and minimal written commentary, which offered little guidance for student improvement.

The concern extended beyond marking. Some teachers reported uncertainty about how to construct tasks that could reveal different dimensions of students' language ability and how to interpret students' responses for instructional purposes. In such cases, assessment served more as a mechanism for judging performance than as a source of information for planning subsequent learning activities.

The data do not permit a claim that weak assessment literacy directly caused lower student achievement. They do, however, show that limited confidence in assessment design and interpretation was associated with fewer opportunities for explanatory feedback, revision, and learning-oriented use of assessment information.

Examination-Driven Assessment and Narrowed Learning Experiences

The influence of assessment literacy also appeared in classroom task design. Teachers with limited assessment knowledge often designed tasks that mirrored examination formats, focusing on recall and grammatical accuracy rather than communicative competence. This examination orientation narrowed students' learning experiences, as classroom tasks closely resembled WASSCE-style questions.

Another teacher expressed this pressure clearly:

"Everything we do is to prepare them for WASSCE. Even class exercises follow that pattern." (T04)

Document analysis showed that examination-oriented tasks occupied a substantial place in lesson planning and classroom assessment. Observation records also showed high student familiarity with exam-style questions, but fewer opportunities for creative language use, extended responses, discussion, or other communicative tasks.

The finding suggests that the assessment decisions teachers made were shaped not only by what they knew about assessment but also by the institutional and examination context within which they worked. WASSCE preparation was treated as an important classroom responsibility, and this expectation influenced the kinds of tasks teachers selected. The result was a learning environment in which students were frequently prepared for the forms of response expected in examinations, while other forms of language use received less attention.

Synthesis of Findings

Across the data sources, a consistent pattern emerged. Assessment in English language classrooms is shaped by examination demands, yet the quality and depth of assessment practice depend strongly on teachers' assessment literacy. Where teachers demonstrate stronger assessment understanding, learners experience more interactive feedback, greater opportunities for revision, and more active engagement with classroom tasks. Where assessment literacy is limited, assessment becomes procedural, score-driven, and less supportive of learning development.

The findings also reveal a disconnect between assessment policy expectations and classroom realities. While continuous assessment is encouraged in principle, its implementation remains uneven, often reduced to test scores rather than learning-oriented feedback processes.

3.2 Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the paper in relation to existing literature on assessment literacy, classroom assessment practices, and student learning experiences. The discussion is organized around the two main themes generated from the thematic analysis. The first concerns classroom assessment practices of English language teachers in Senior High Schools, while the second concerns teachers' assessment literacy and students' engagement, feedback, revision, and perceived learning. The discussion also considers the theoretical, practical, and educational implications of the findings.

Classroom Assessment Practices of English Language Teachers in Senior High Schools

The findings of this paper show that assessment practices among English language teachers in Ghanaian Senior High Schools remain largely examination-oriented. Teachers relied heavily on tests, quizzes, assignments, and end-of-term examinations as the primary means of evaluating student performance. Although formative assessment practices such as questioning, class exercises, and feedback were evident, they were neither systematic nor deeply embedded within instructional processes. This finding raises questions about the extent to which current classroom assessment practices align with contemporary understandings of assessment literacy and assessment for learning.

The dominance of summative assessment identified in this study mirrors patterns reported in Ghanaian educational research. Armah (2025), in a national survey of senior high school mathematics teachers, found that classroom assessment was largely characterized by frequent testing and examination-focused practices. Although teachers demonstrated awareness of alternative assessment approaches, assessment activities remained strongly tied to grading and accountability requirements. The present study suggests that similar tendencies exist within English language classrooms. The pattern across the two subject areas points to a school assessment culture in which the production of marks and preparation for examinations can take precedence over the use of assessment evidence during instruction.

The findings also resonate with Awuah's (2022) study of Social Studies teachers, which reported widespread dependence on written tests and assignments. Awuah argued that many teachers equated assessment with the measurement of achievement rather than a process for improving learning. The present study supports this concern. Observation data revealed that teachers frequently assessed students during lessons, yet feedback often ended with a declaration of correctness or the awarding of marks. Such practices gave teachers information about whether students had produced an acceptable response, but they did not always help students understand why a response was incorrect or what they could do differently.

A similar concern was raised by Akyina and Oduro-Okyireh (2019), whose investigation of formative assessment practices among senior high school teachers revealed that although teachers regularly employed questioning techniques, these practices rarely translated into sustained

formative assessment. The current findings reinforce this position. Classroom observations showed that questioning was often used to check responses and recall rather than to generate extended reflection, self-assessment, or opportunities for students to work with feedback. Formative assessment, therefore, appeared in classroom interaction, but it was not always developed into a continuing process of assessment, feedback, revision, and further learning.

The pattern observed in this study also lends support to the work of Yan et al. (2021), who found that teachers frequently struggled to implement classroom-based assessment despite policy expectations promoting learner-centred approaches. They attributed this challenge partly to entrenched assessment cultures that privilege examination performance. Such an explanation is relevant within the Ghanaian context. Participants repeatedly referred to examination requirements and accountability pressures as factors shaping assessment decisions. The prominence of WASSCE preparation in teachers' accounts suggests that assessment practices are negotiated within an environment where examination performance remains a strong measure of educational success.

Document analysis further revealed limited evidence of structured feedback practices. Marked scripts typically contained scores, ticks, and brief comments. This finding aligns with Kyaruzi et al. (2019), who found that feedback becomes more useful to students when it provides guidance that can be acted upon rather than merely communicating a performance level. In the present study, the absence of detailed feedback may have limited students' opportunities to identify weaknesses, revise their work, and make use of assessment information during learning. The evidence does not show that such practices caused lower achievement; it shows that opportunities to use feedback for further learning were uneven.

The findings also support the argument advanced by Xu (2019) that assessment literacy should be understood as a practical classroom competence rather than simply knowledge of testing procedures. Many teachers in this study appeared capable of administering assessments but less prepared to use assessment information to shape instruction. This distinction matters in English language teaching because assessment involves more than deciding whether an answer is correct. Teachers must make judgments about writing, speaking, comprehension, grammar, and other forms of language performance, and those judgments need to inform subsequent teaching.

Teachers' Assessment Literacy and Students' Engagement, Feedback, Revision, and Perceived Learning

The second theme requires a narrower interpretation than the original formulation of "student learning outcomes." The study did not measure student achievement through pre-test and post-test scores, standardized tests, or other independent outcome measures. The evidence instead came from teachers' accounts, classroom observations, and students' assessed work. The findings therefore concern students' engagement with assessment activities, their responses to feedback, opportunities for revision, and teachers' perceptions of students' understanding and learning.

The data indicated that teachers' level of assessment literacy shaped not only how assessment was conducted but also how students responded to learning tasks. Teachers who demonstrated clearer understanding of assessment purposes tended to design more interactive classroom activities. In classrooms where assessment was integrated with explanation and feedback,

students appeared more willing to participate, reconsider answers, correct errors, and continue working on tasks. These behaviours are relevant because they show how assessment can become part of classroom learning rather than remain separate from it.

These findings are consistent with Dadzie et al. (2024), who reported a positive relationship between assessment literacy and students' academic performance. Their quantitative study provides evidence of an association between assessment literacy and academic performance, whereas the present study provides a different form of evidence. It shows some of the classroom processes through which teachers believed assessment was supporting learning, including immediate feedback, explanation of errors, revision, and student participation. The present findings should not be taken as confirmation of improved academic achievement because achievement was not directly measured. Their contribution lies in showing how teachers' assessment decisions were experienced and enacted during instruction.

The findings also correspond with Pujiawati et al. (2026), whose study of writing assessment literacy demonstrated that teachers' assessment competence influenced students' learning experiences and perceptions of feedback. In both studies, assessment literacy shaped the quality of interactions surrounding assessment. When teachers moved beyond assigning grades and engaged students in explanations of performance, learners had opportunities to reconsider their work and make further attempts. In the current study, the observed acts of self-correction and revision provide concrete classroom evidence of this process.

Feedback was especially important in explaining the relationship between assessment literacy and students' classroom engagement. One participant explained that immediate feedback enabled students to correct themselves quickly, and observations recorded instances in which students revised sentences following teacher explanations. These findings suggest that the usefulness of assessment depends partly on what teachers do with the information generated. A score can show the level of performance, but explanatory feedback gives students information that can be used while learning is still taking place.

The findings also point to the importance of opportunities for revision. Where students received only a score or a tick, there was little evidence of subsequent activity around the assessed work. Where teachers explained errors and invited students to try again, students had a clearer opportunity to act on assessment information. This finding gives the second theme a more specific meaning: the apparent influence of assessment literacy was visible in the learning processes surrounding assessment, especially participation, self-correction, and revision, rather than in independently measured changes in achievement.

Several participants revealed limited assessment literacy, particularly in relation to assessing productive language skills such as writing and speaking. One participant stated that he sometimes followed the marking scheme because he was not confident in assessing writing properly. Such accounts point to uncertainty in making assessment judgments and in interpreting student performance beyond predetermined scoring categories.

Levi and Inbar-Lourie (2020) argue that language assessment literacy differs from general assessment literacy because language teachers must evaluate complex communicative performances rather than discrete knowledge alone. The findings support this distinction. Teachers appeared more confident with grammar and examination-type tasks than with evaluating

writing quality, communicative competence, or oral performance. This imbalance matters because a strong emphasis on easily scored responses can narrow teachers' attention to aspects of language that are more readily converted into marks.

The findings also echo Latif and Wasim's (2022) argument that teachers' beliefs shape assessment behaviour. Teachers who viewed assessment as a learning tool were more likely to describe feedback and learner-centred activities, whereas those who viewed assessment mainly in terms of certification relied more heavily on marks and examination preparation. The present study adds classroom evidence to this relationship. Teachers' conceptions were reflected in the kinds of tasks they used, the feedback they provided, and the opportunities they created for students to revisit their work.

Another important finding concerns teachers' dependence on marking schemes and predetermined scoring guides. While such tools can support consistency in marking, excessive dependence on them may become problematic when teachers are uncertain about how to interpret quality in students' writing or speaking. Arhin and Yeboah (2025) found that many Ghanaian teachers possessed limited understanding of assessment concepts such as validity and reliability. The present study appears to support this concern at the level of classroom practice. Some teachers followed marking schemes closely because they lacked confidence in making assessment judgments. The issue, therefore, was not the use of marking schemes itself, but the extent to which teachers could exercise informed professional judgment when applying them.

Examination pressure provided another layer to this relationship. Teachers frequently indicated that WASSCE expectations shaped classroom assessment practices. The finding is relevant to Surman et al. (2024), whose study examined school-based assessment in relation to examination performance. School-based assessment can support examination preparation, yet the present findings suggest that when examination preparation becomes the dominant organising principle, classroom activities may become closely tied to examination formats. Students may become familiar with expected question types and response patterns while having fewer opportunities for extended communicative work, creativity, and language use beyond the examination.

The finding is also important for understanding why assessment literacy cannot be treated simply as an individual teacher attribute. Teachers make assessment decisions within particular institutional conditions. Their practices are shaped by school expectations, examination demands, available assessment materials, professional confidence, and conceptions of learning. This position is consistent with Asamoah et al. (2023), and Kanjee and Mthembu (2015), who emphasize the contextual development of assessment literacy. The current study shows this contextual influence through teachers' repeated references to WASSCE preparation and the routine use of examination-oriented tasks.

Theoretical Implications

The findings contribute to the conceptualization of assessment literacy as an enacted and situated professional practice. The teachers in this study possessed varying levels of confidence in assessment design, feedback, interpretation, and judgment. The differences were visible not simply in what teachers said they knew about assessment but in how they responded to students'

answers, designed tasks, used feedback, and interpreted students' work. This supports the position of Xu (2019) that assessment literacy extends beyond technical knowledge of assessment procedures.

The study also points to a distinction between assessment as measurement and assessment as part of learning. In the observed classrooms, summative assessment was often used to generate marks, while the strongest examples of learning-oriented assessment involved explanation, self-correction, and revision. The theoretical contribution of the study is therefore not a claim that assessment literacy automatically produces better achievement. Rather, it shows how assessment literacy may be expressed through classroom practices that create or restrict opportunities for students to engage with assessment information.

The findings further suggest that language assessment literacy deserves attention as a distinct area within teacher assessment competence. Assessing writing and speaking requires forms of judgment that cannot always be reduced to the marking of discrete answers. Teachers need to interpret language performance, communicate criteria, provide usable feedback, and support revision. The difficulties reported by participants indicate that these practices merit explicit attention in conceptions of English language teachers' assessment literacy.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of the findings relate first to teacher professional development. Training in assessment literacy should move beyond definitions of validity, reliability, and types of assessment and provide teachers with opportunities to practise designing language tasks, developing clear criteria, interpreting student responses, and giving feedback that students can use. Writing and speaking assessment deserve sustained attention because participants reported less confidence in these areas.

Professional development should also address the movement from assessment to action. Teachers need opportunities to learn how assessment evidence can inform the next instructional step, how to build revision into classroom tasks, and how to distinguish feedback that merely identifies an error from feedback that helps a learner respond to it. Such support would be more closely aligned with the problems identified in the classrooms than training that focuses only on test construction.

Schools can also review how assessment records and internal assessment practices are used. Where continuous assessment is reduced mainly to the accumulation of marks, teachers may have little incentive to use the information formatively. School-level assessment planning can create space for feedback, revision, learner reflection, and follow-up activities alongside formal tests and examinations.

Educational Implications

The findings have implications for English language education in Ghanaian senior high schools. Examination preparation remains a legitimate concern, particularly within a system in which WASSCE performance carries considerable weight. The issue raised by the present study is not whether teachers should prepare students for examinations, but whether examination preparation should define the full range of learning experiences provided in English classrooms.

The findings suggest the need for greater balance between examination-oriented tasks and activities that develop communicative language use. English language classrooms should provide students with opportunities to write, speak, revise, discuss, explain, and respond to feedback, even when examination preparation remains part of the lesson. Such practices can allow assessment to serve both accountability and learning purposes.

There is also an implication for teacher education and continuing professional learning. Prospective and practising English teachers need stronger preparation in language assessment, especially in relation to productive skills, feedback, criterion use, and interpretation of student performance. The variation observed among participants suggests that a single general model of assessment competence may not address the needs of teachers working with different language skills and different school contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper examined assessment literacy among English language teachers in Ghanaian senior high schools, with attention to their classroom assessment practices and the implications of those practices for student learning. The findings showed that assessment in the participating English language classrooms remained strongly influenced by summative traditions. Tests, quizzes, continuous assessment marks, and end-of-term examinations were widely used, while formative practices such as questioning, corrective feedback, peer correction, and opportunities for revision were less systematic.

The study also found differences in how teachers understood and enacted assessment literacy. Teachers who demonstrated clearer understanding of the purposes of assessment were more likely to integrate assessment with classroom interaction, provide explanatory feedback, and create opportunities for students to revise their work. Classroom observations recorded student participation, self-correction, and revision in lessons where assessment information was followed by explanation and further attempts. Teachers also perceived such practices as supporting students' understanding of lesson content. These findings suggest that assessment literacy has implications for the quality of students' learning experiences.

The findings should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that teachers' assessment literacy directly improved student achievement. The study did not measure student attainment through pre-test and post-test scores, standardized achievement tests, or another independent outcome measure. The evidence concerns students' engagement, responses to feedback, revision, and teachers' perceptions of learning. The study therefore establishes a relationship at the level of classroom processes and perceived learning rather than a measured causal effect on achievement.

The examination-driven nature of assessment emerged as another important concern. WASSCE preparation strongly influenced the selection of classroom tasks, and many activities reflected examination formats. Although examination preparation is an established responsibility of Senior High School English teachers, heavy reliance on such practices may leave less space for extended writing, oral communication, creative language use, discussion, and other forms of language performance. The findings therefore point to a need for greater balance between assessment for examination purposes and assessment that supports learning during instruction.

The paper contributes subject-specific evidence to the discussion of assessment literacy in Ghana. Previous research has addressed assessment practices in areas such as mathematics and Social Studies, but fewer studies have examined how assessment literacy is enacted within Senior High School English language classrooms. By bringing together teachers' accounts, classroom observations, and assessment documents, this study shows that assessment literacy is reflected in concrete decisions about task design, feedback, interpretation of learner performance, and opportunities for revision. The findings provide a basis for strengthening English language assessment practices without treating assessment literacy as knowledge of testing procedures alone.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the study adopted a qualitative design and involved twenty English language teachers from selected senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana. The findings therefore provide contextual accounts of participants' experiences and practices and should not be treated as statistically representative of all English language teachers in Ghanaian senior high schools.

In addition, the study relied on teachers' accounts, classroom observations, and documentary evidence. Although the use of these sources allowed the researchers to compare what teachers reported with what occurred in classrooms and what appeared in assessment documents, students were not interviewed as primary participants. The study therefore presents students' learning experiences largely through classroom observations and teachers' perceptions.

Moreover, the study did not include direct measures of student learning outcomes. No pre-test, post-test, standardized achievement measure, or experimental comparison was used. Claims concerning the influence of assessment literacy on student learning are consequently limited to observed engagement, feedback, revision, self-correction, and teachers' perceptions of students' understanding. The study cannot establish that differences in assessment literacy produced differences in student achievement.

Again, the study was conducted within schools operating under strong examination demands, and the influence of the WASSCE context may have shaped both teachers' assessment decisions and their accounts of those decisions. Other educational contexts may present different conditions and assessment priorities.

Finally, the phenomenological orientation focused attention on teachers' lived experiences of assessment literacy. This enabled detailed interpretation of teachers' experiences, but it also meant that the study was not designed to establish statistical relationships between assessment literacy and measurable student achievement.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies should examine the relationship between teachers' assessment literacy and student achievement using quantitative or mixed-methods designs. Pre-test and post-test measures, classroom achievement tests, writing assessments, or other independent indicators of student performance could provide evidence that was beyond the scope of the present study.

Further research could also include students as participants. Interviews or focus groups with students would provide direct evidence about how learners experience teachers' assessment practices, interpret feedback, and use comments to revise their work. Such data could be compared with teachers' perceptions and classroom observations.

Longitudinal research would also be useful. Following teachers and students across an extended period could show whether sustained changes in formative assessment, feedback, and revision practices are accompanied by changes in students' engagement or achievement. Intervention studies could go a step further by examining the effects of targeted assessment literacy training on teachers' classroom practices and student learning measures.

Future research should also examine specific areas of language assessment, especially writing and speaking, since these were identified as areas of uncertainty among some participants. Studies could investigate teachers' ability to design valid assessment criteria, apply scoring rubrics, provide feedback, and interpret extended language performances.

Comparative research across regions, school types, and subject areas could provide further evidence about the role of institutional and examination contexts in shaping assessment literacy. Such work would help determine whether the patterns identified in this study are specific to English language classrooms in the selected Senior High Schools or reflect wider conditions within Ghanaian secondary education.

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