

■ EDUCATION RESEARCH PROGRAM

Developing a Theoretical Framework

for the Multiliteracy Assessment
of Multilingual Adolescent Learners

A photograph showing a person's hand reaching towards a row of books on a shelf. The books are white with colorful covers and text. The background is a plain wall.

*Marie Grace C. Reoperez, Ph.D.
and Lalaine F. Yanilla Aquino, Ph.D.*

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A black and white photograph of a hand reaching for a book on a shelf. The hand is in the foreground, slightly out of focus, reaching towards a row of books. The books are on a shelf, and their spines are visible. The background is a plain wall.

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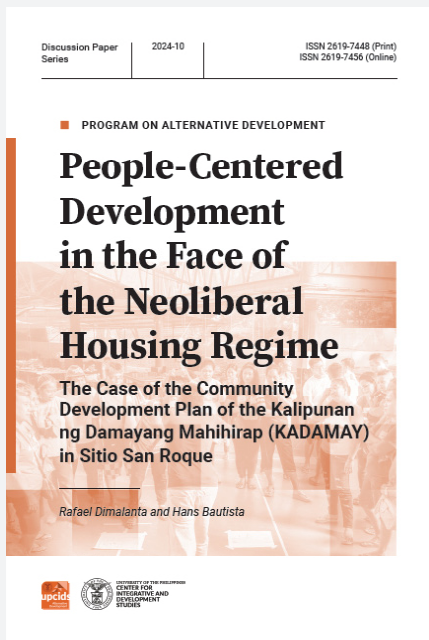
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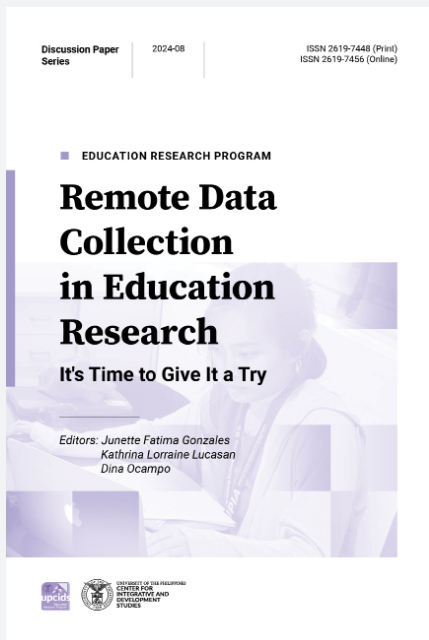
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DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

for the Multiliteracy Assessment of
Multilingual Adolescent Learners

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HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ This study proposed a multiliteracy assessment framework for multilingual adolescent learners that a) emphasizes the role of language competency, context, and background of the learners; b) identifies the literacy skills they need to develop; and c) considers external factors and conditions that affect literacy assessment outcomes.
- ▶ One of the major findings of this study shows that knowledge and proficiency in the target language are better predictors of multilingual learners' assessment performance. Moreover, an equitable literacy assessment has to consider the personal and cultural background of the learners as well as the other contextual factors and conditions that they bring into the assessment process. More importantly, designing a multiliteracy assessment will help identify the literacy skills that adolescents are competent at and those that they are still struggling at.
- ▶ Finally, while content literacies are targeted at literacy assessment for adolescent learners, it is the basic literacies that provide support in developing the former. Thus, these essential literacies have to be integrated in the literacy assessment design. examines the increasing importance of industrial policy in addressing persistent market failures and structural disadvantages in developing economies, with a particular focus on the Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment gives direction to literacy teaching and learning process (International Literacy Association [ILA] 2020; Dray et al. 2019; Childress, Backman, and Lipson 2019; Hostetler, Luo, and Stefaniak 2018; Duke and Roberts 2010). It informs instruction in many ways. Assessment results guide teachers to make important instructional decisions regarding the nature of student learning. They help identify the conditions that allow learners to succeed or that adversely affect their learning performance (Risko and Walker-Dalhouse 2010). Without effective assessments that can provide meaningful and trustworthy information about the specifics of the learners' strengths and limitations, we risk missing the opportunity to plan a truly responsive instruction (National Institute of Literacy [NIL] 2007; Gillet, Temple, and Crawford 2012; Russel 2013).

In literacy education, the role of assessment in the development of learners is crucial. ILA (2016) defines literacy as “the ability to identify, understand, interpret, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines,” (p. 1). This definition suggests that literacy is multidimensional, dynamic, and complex. It mirrors the nature of assessment required to guide learners in developing advanced literacy skills, become functionally literate, and competent in multiple modes of learning (Cloonan, Hutchison, and Paatsch 2016).

However, literacy learning among adolescent multilinguals is influenced by several complex factors. Successful reading in the primary grades does not necessarily translate into successful reading in the intermediate grades and beyond (Moore et al. 1999; Siebert et al. 2016). At each stage of reading development, learners must build new skills to develop while strengthening the foundational ones acquired in the primary grades. As content learners, adolescents should develop both general comprehension and discipline-specific skills to interrogate various types and genres of texts, enabling effective content acquisition (Noguerón-Liu 2020; Butvilofsky et al. 2020; Fisher and Frey 2015). Yet content learning assessment seldom goes beyond evaluation of content knowledge (Afflerbach 2017; NIL 2007).

Moreover, language forms and features further complicate reading, writing, and communicating for second language (L2) learner, such as Filipino students who are learning English or other foreign languages. For many students learning English as a second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL), lack of or limited language knowledge is often the primary source of text comprehension difficulties (Collins et al., 2021). While their interaction in the literacy learning process has been widely explored, less attention has been given to how they predict learners' literacy assessment performance.

Multilingual adolescents may struggle with multiple aspects of literacy learning due to the interaction among language competence, content literacy learning, and other related factors. These have significant implications for the type of assessment we provide. By designing assessments sensitive to learners' literacy needs and the nature of their literacy development, we can help adolescent learners progress along the learning continuum (Childress et al. 2019).

This paper reviewed and evaluated various studies on the literacy assessment among adolescent learners. By examining evidence from these studies on effective ways to assess adolescent literacy competence, this paper intends to identify, analyze, examine, and evaluate the factors that inform the planning, designing, and constructing of relevant and appropriate assessment tools for multilingual learners.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This paper aims to provide in-depth information on the study and practice of developing assessment tools for multilingual adolescent learners. We hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature and types of assessments that are responsive to, and sensitive to, the literacy needs of this group, as well as the processes involved in developing such assessments. We approach this inquiry using the literature review method, which allowed us to integrate and synthesize research findings and perspectives from empirical data (Tranfield et al. 2003). To identify, collect, and analyze relevant research evidence and traditions in literacy assessment, we chose the semi-systematic approach

among other literature review methods (Witell et al. 2016). This approach also allows flexibility in both article selection and data analysis procedures, as both quantitative and qualitative investigations were reviewed.

Instrumentation and Procedure

In a literature review method, the most important instruments are the researchers. Macinnis (2011) pointed out that key characteristics of literature review researchers include advanced skills, such as superior conceptual thinking, and transparency in documenting the analysis process. We, the researchers, have many years of experience in teaching, training, conducting research, and developing literacy assessments for adolescent learners.

The steps in the literature review process followed those for a semi-systematic review (Snyder 2019). First, we determined the inclusion criteria for the studies to be reviewed, including both quantitative and qualitative studies. Regardless of the publication date, studies yielding relevant results were considered. Relevant topics pertained to the assessment of different literacy skills among multilingual learners in literacy and content subjects. Thus, studies on EFL and ESL learners were generally selected. We also reviewed works that, although not directly involving multilingual learners, provided results essential for developing assessments for adolescent learners. Some of these studies focused on the alignment between assessment and instruction and test item analysis. After identifying the articles to be included, the review process proceeded. A qualitative approach was used in data analysis, which involved identifying, analyzing, and reporting similar patterns in terms of problems investigated, participants involved, and themes, among other factors.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literacy Skills

The development of foundational skills is an ongoing process for multilingual adolescent learners, especially in their second language (Van Gelderen et al. 2007). This process is particularly challenging because learners must also acquire content literacy skills simultaneously. Well-developed key literacy skills are prerequisites for meaningful content learning. Unfortunately, both key and content literacy skills are rarely considered in assessments (NIL 2007;

Afflerbach 2017). Studies on predictors of literacy assessment performance among adolescent and multilingual learners have found that open-ended foundational language and literacy skills, such as vocabulary knowledge and academic language skills, are major and consistent predictors of literacy assessment performance (Collins, Lindstrom, and Sandbank 2021). Each of these skills continues to contribute to learning, even at the intermediate and secondary levels, which are primarily focused on content area learning (Fisher and Frey 2019; Shanahan and Shanahan 2008). Assessments are valuable when they provide information that guides the teachers in making the necessary instructional adjustments to the skills that are being developed (Afflerbach 2017).

Decoding

Adolescent learners are expected to be proficient decoders, as decoding—the ability to decipher words out of a group of symbols and sounds—should have been acquired in the early grades (NIL 2007). For additive bilinguals, such as Filipinos, decoding in the second language like English, might not develop simultaneously with their first language during the early literacy stage (Lemhöfer et al. 2008; Van Gelderen et al. 2007). However, by the time they reach intermediate grades, Filipino students should be proficient in decoding English, as most textbooks are written in this language.

It is quite challenging when adolescents' phonological and phonemic awareness, along with other decoding-related constructs, do not develop well, as these are major prerequisites for reading (Perfetti and Stafura 2014; Perfetti and Hart 2001). In the context of second language reading, decoding extends beyond simple word identification skills. Students who are knowledgeable of grapho-phonetic relationships of the target language are more likely to succeed as content learners (Perfetti and Statura 2014). Conversely, those who lack this knowledge will struggle to read and comprehend content-area texts and build content vocabularies.

Fluency—the ability to engage in accurate, automatic, and prosodic reading—contributes to proficient reading (Kuhn and Schwanenflugel 2019; Schwanenflugel and Kuhn 2016; Samuels 2013; Benjamin and Schwanenflugel 2010; Kuhn, Schwanenflugel and Meisinger 2010; Rasinski 2006). Fluent readers automatically recognize words and their meanings, allowing them to

read with fluidity and understand the deeper meaning of the text (NIL 2007). This in turn, enables readers to focus more on the higher-order process of reading (Samuels 2013; Samuels 2006). Although automatic reading does not guarantee comprehension, spending more cognitive resources on higher-order processes increases the likelihood of arriving at the most plausible interpretation of the text.

However, there are concerns regarding fluency instruction and assessment among multilingual learners in Grades 4 to 12. Foremost among these is the perception of fluency as a foundational skill for learning to read, but not for intermediate and secondary levels (Rasinski et al. 2016; Rasinski, Rikli, and Johnston 2009). The increasing complexity of texts in content areas demands sophisticated fluency skills. Bilingual adolescent readers may have acquired proficiency in the word recognition accuracy and automaticity, but this alone is insufficient for proficient reading (Reoperez 2018; Rasinski et al. 2016). Prosodic reading, the most complex fluency component, is largely influenced by language knowledge and continues to develop until the end of high school (Reoperez 2018).

Another concern is on the use of oral reading fluency data to predict the overall reading performance of English language learners and its potential for misidentifying reading problems, which has not been well-documented (Quirk and Beem 2012). The functional relationship between fluency and reading comprehension among second language learners requires further investigation. Additionally, the common practice of measuring oral reading fluency in relation to comprehension skills overlooks the possibility that silent reading fluency may be more closely related to comprehension processes needed in the upper grades (Spichtig et al. 2022; Quirk and Beem 2012; Hiebert et al., 2019).

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as the process of constructing meaning by integrating one's prior knowledge with the information in the text to arrive at a meaningful interpretation (NIL 2007; Samuels 2006). It is definitely not a simple process. Grantham et al. (2022, 1) describes reading comprehension as “a multifaceted, dynamic, and interactive process that involves characteristics of the reader and the text that is situated within a larger sociocultural context

that interacts with both textual and extra-textual information, such as background knowledge and experience.”

At the intermediate and secondary levels, content, style, syntax, topics, and text structure contribute to difficulties of text comprehension (NIL 2007; Samuels 2006). Even collegiate learners, whose ages still fall within the definition of adolescence, find it hard to comprehend text and answer questions that require inferential and interpretative comprehension—particularly (and surprisingly) when the text is a narrative (Yanilla Aquino 2021). Many high school and intermediate students will encounter all these variables that make reading comprehension difficult as they get to read different types of texts with varying genres and level of difficulty (Dray et al. 2019). For example, unfamiliarity with expository text structures and a lack of appropriate skills to interrogate these texts contribute to reading difficulties (Duke & Roberts 2010). The complex nature of reading comprehension makes it challenging to construct and interpret assessments.

Writing

Writing, just like reading, is a process that cuts across the curriculum. Improving writing skills leads to an increased capacity to learn (Butvilofsky et al. 2020; NIL 2007). Student use writing as a means to communicate what they have read, listened to, and comprehended. It allows them to think about the text, organize their thoughts, and pay attention to details. Experts identify critical writing skills needed to write about complex academic texts in English as significant twenty-first century skills (Gándara, and Escamilla 2016; Olson, Scarcela, and Matuchnak 2015).

The connection between reading and writing has been demonstrated extensively in research across grade levels. Many of the skills required in writing are similar to reading, such as grammatical, vocabulary, and semantic skills (NIL 2007). Shanahan (2006) pointed out that reading and writing serve as basis for learning in the content areas, where students have to write on topics related to various genres and materials they are required to read.

Since the reading-writing connection has been clearly established in different empirical studies that test various kinds of alternative assessments (Gioia et al. 2023), it is clear that writing plays an important role in the assessment of

literacy competence. Writing is a tool that can support reading comprehension development and content knowledge improvement, making its inclusion in assessment quite significant.

For multilingual beginning readers, writing assessments can be used to understand biliteracy development (Butvilofsky et al. 2020; Hopewell 2011). For adolescent readers, writing can be used to assess content knowledge, core academic skills, and English language literacies (Olsen et al. 2015; NIL 2007).

Vocabulary Knowledge

Word knowledge by itself is a process that includes word analysis, syntactic awareness, and pragmatic awareness (Afflerbach 2017; NIL 2007). Unlike decoding, which can be mastered at a certain stage, vocabulary knowledge is an open-ended process that predicts reading comprehension at each key stage of literacy development (Singer 2004). A lack of or limited understanding of the meaning and use of words will lead to comprehension gaps (Spencer, Quinn, and Wagner 2014; Perfetti and Stafura 2014; Allington 2014). On the other hand, extensive vocabulary benefits readers in many ways. Studies show that, aside from facilitating word integration and indices of lexical access, vocabulary knowledge also facilitates silent reading performance and comprehension monitoring of elementary and high school students (Biseko 2023; Spichtig et al. 2022; Guerra and Kronmüller 2020; Hiebert et al. 2019; Hayden, Hiebert, and Trainin 2019). This implies that an expansive academic vocabulary positively affects comprehension and silent reading performance. In contrast, the probable consequences of low vocabulary include a decline in reading stamina and a lack of interest in monitoring reading comprehension, because a vocabulary deficit does not inspire extended reading (Ucceli et al. 2015; Nagy et al. 2006, 134).

Furthermore, among second and foreign language learners, the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge strongly predict textual comprehension in the second language (Dagnaw 2023; Nagy and Townsend 2012). Between the two, the explanatory power for vocabulary breadth is stronger and unique. This means that the students' knowledge of spoken and written words, word associations, word concepts, referents, grammatical functions, collocations, and constraints affects their textual comprehension.

Content Literacies

Grades 4 to 12 are predominantly focused on content literacy learning, which is further categorized into general content area literacy and disciplinary content area literacy. Since Grade 4 marks the start of content area reading, the focus is on the developing general comprehension skills that intermediate students need to read across the curriculum (Shanahan and Shanahan 2008; Fisher and Frey 2015). In high school, students are expected to acquire discipline-specific literacies that they need to be able to participate in different disciplines (Dray et al. 2019; Siebert et al. 2016).

Content area reading complicates reading comprehension and writing among adolescent learners. They must read and learn specialized vocabulary, understand content-specific language, and acquire the appropriate thinking skills for the different disciplines (Armstrong, Ming, and Helf 2018; RAND Reading Study Group 2002). Given the extent and the demands for new comprehension skills required in the content areas, assessments should address the content literacy needs of adolescent learners (Hiebert et al. 2019; Fisher and Frey 2015; Curwen et al. 2010). Drawing from this, Dray et al. (2019, 3) suggest that “assessments should define an underlying construct of comprehension, map out its development, and outline its composite skills so that a teacher can guide a student along a trajectory of learning.”

Language Knowledge and Proficiency

Literacy experts contend that reading comprehension is not a separate process that can only be associated with written materials, as it is a process applicable to both written and oral forms (Yang 2021; Russel 2013). The linguistic view of reading posits that reading is “the construction and reconstruction of a spoken message or some internal representation of it” (Carroll, [2010] in Russel 2013, 3). Therefore, reading, as a linguistically-based process entails the use of processes that require language comprehension skills (Ruddell and Unrau 2013; Grabe 2009).

Even among monolingual readers, language skills are some of the main predictors of reading comprehension in the intermediate and high school levels (Uccelli et al. 2015; Fillmore and Fillmore 2012). Collins et al. (2021) concluded that, regardless of response formats and text types, students

with low or emerging language knowledge demonstrated the same level of proficiency on reading comprehension assessments. According to Kintsch (1988, 163) L2 reading is a complex process consisting of lower-level linguistic construction and higher-level semantic integration. Among L2 adolescent learners, lower-level processes may still pose difficulty in reading, especially when they interfere with higher order processes.

Academic Language

In addition to vocabulary knowledge, schema, and text-processing strategies, discipline-specific language skills are said to be better predictors of reading comprehension in the content areas (Uccelli et al. 2015). This is true not only with English as a second language (ESL) learners but also for monolingual English learners. This is because language use in the academe is context-dependent (Dolosic 2018). Hence, it is suggested that there should be a close alignment between the language skills being assessed and those required for successful academic reading.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment should provide opportunities for students to learn and reflect on using different literacy skills (Childress et al. 2019; Briceño and Klein 2018). Formative assessments, in particular, can inform us about how our students are learning and what they are learning while they are learning. On the other hand, summative tests can give us a bigger picture of where our students are in terms of the progress they are making (Afflerbach 2017). These classroom-based assessments have more potential to inform the direction of literacy instruction compared to standardized tests (ILA 2018; Toyama, Hiebert, and Pearson 2017; Kontovourki 2012). While the latter can help identify how students are performing based on grade-level standards, redesigning instruction based on standardized tests results alone may be problematic (Dennis 2009). First, they do not provide specific information about students' strengths and limitations (Dray et al. 2019; Toyama, Hiebert, and Pearsons 2012; Rupp and Lesaux 2006). Second, results from standardized tests often categorize students based on levels of skills usage (Buly and Valencia 2002). Because of this, ensuing instruction may overemphasize the teaching of basic literacy skills (Childress et al. 2019; Toyama, Hiebert, and Pearson 2017).

Afflerbach (2005) pointed out that standardized test results are not good indicators of literacy growth, as they may only provide an approximation of the students' actual achievement level, whereas effective classroom-based assessments provide feedback that can clarify and understand learning goals (William and Thompson 2007). General background knowledge, abilities, and cultural background affect assessment performance (Butvilofsky et al. 2020; Coombe et al. 2020; Dagostino et al. 2013). Viewing assessment as something based on a general idea of a target proficiency or standards overlooks the differences in abilities and needs among learners (Childress et al. 2019).

TESTING METHODS

According to Alderson (2000), a reliable assessment is one that incorporates a variety of methods. This ensures a comprehensive and statistically-reliable evaluation of individual student's reading abilities. Several studies have reported that, when it comes to assessment of literacy skills such as reading comprehension, no single response format can yield accurate results (Liao 2021; Collins et al. 2021; Dolosic 2018). Additionally, the process of selecting testing methods must include determining which skills to evaluate and how to conduct test-item analysis. However, studies exploring the latter are uncommon. Coggins, Kim, and Briggs (2017) found out that employing item response theory (IRT) in analyzing test results can provide more precise and detailed item-level information, helping to identify test items and response formats suitable for learners' individual abilities.

Moreover, the changing nature of literacy learning means that assessment should not be treated as a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. The addition of new literacies demands that new approaches to assessment must be explored (Wyatt-Smith and Kimber 2009), as multimodal learning requires new methods and new tools for providing feedback and defining success criteria (Yeatman et al. 2021; Cloonan et al. 2016).

TYPES OF TEXTS

Several studies have reported that genres of text cause differences in reading comprehension performance (Chiu 2007; Duke and Roberts 2010; Yanilla Aquino 2021). Although it is widely acknowledged that using varied types and genres of texts would benefit assessment, there is little understanding of the implications of text structure in second language reading (Dolosic 2018; Cloonan et al. 2016). The presence of cultural conventions in texts is predictive of assessment performance. Familiarity with and experience in the language of the text facilitate processing capacity, thereby reducing difficulties in dealing with cultural conventions in the text (Chu, Swaffar, and Charney 2002).

RECURRING “THEMES” IN THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In summary, all aspects, components, and factors discussed above may collectively or individually predict the literacy performance of multilingual adolescent learners. The following section discusses the themes and patterns drawn from the literature review.

A review of studies on literacy assessment yielded several recurring themes, some of which are implied by the results of the studies themselves. In developing a theoretical framework for the multiliteracy assessment of multilingual learners, three themes are echoed in the studies: (1) the need to determine the profile of the target learners, (2) the need to define literacy assessment for adolescent multilingual learners, and (3) the need to identify the qualities of multiliteracy assessment.

THE GRADE 4 TO 12 STUDENTS: A PROFILE

Filipino students in Grades 4 to 12 usually range in age from 9 to 19 years old. Because they know at least two languages—the one that they speak at home (mother tongue or L1) and the one they learn in school (their second language or L2)—and because they have had at least four years of formal schooling, they are usually somewhat literate in at least one language (usually their L1) and may also be literate in two (their L1 and L2). These students come from

varied cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, which can pose a challenge in designing a multiliteracy assessment tool for them. The tool must account for these differences in background.

In terms of required literacy skills, this group transitions into more difficult content-area reading. As discussed in the literature review, their levels of competency vary a lot, and it is possible that some may not yet be fluent readers, even in their L1. One insight from the literature review is that literacy itself is a socio-cultural activity that occurs in a specific context. Since the learners come from different contexts, those who design the literacy assessment tools must ensure that no particular group of learners is given an undue advantage due to the tool favoring a specific cultural or socio-economic background.

DEFINING MULTILITERACY ASSESSMENT

There is a need to provide an operational definition of multiliteracy assessment to guide the people who will design the assessment tools. The review of literature showed that both the terms “*multiliteracy*” and “*assessment*” can be defined differently depending on the purpose or objectives of the study. Thus, an operational definition can help clarify the scope and limitations of the term. For instance, would assessment be confined to the four macro-skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) or would it also involve other types of literacy, such as visual and digital literacies?

Moreover, it is important to decide on the main purpose of the assessment tools (e.g. appraise achievement) and the ways by which relevant information regarding the literacy of Grade 4 to 12 students will be collected, measured, analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted. It is also crucial to identify the predictors (which have been identified in the review of literature) of literacy among this group of learners and determine if the predictors remain the same even when this group of learners is divided into subgroups based on age or grade level. Likewise, it is important to set the specific standards or criteria that will serve as evidence of achievement for each predictor.

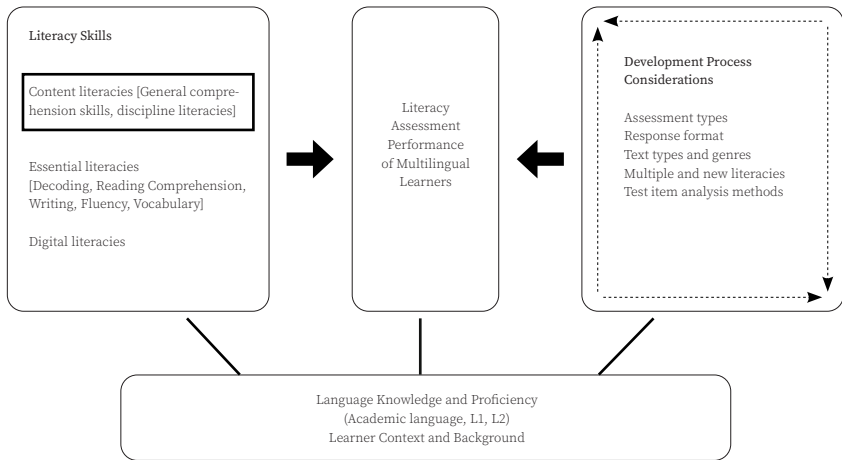
QUALITIES OF MULTILITERACY ASSESSMENT: WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD MULTILITERACY ASSESSMENT?

The review of related literature points to some common qualities among the assessment tools: holistic (able to measure knowledge, values, and macro skills—thus covering both cognitive and affective aspects of literacy learning); multilingual (including the learners' mother tongue, as well as the other two languages used as mediums of instruction in schools—Filipino and English); contextualized, authentic, and balanced; inclusive and multimodal; traditional and nontraditional (alternative methods); able to identify both the literacy strengths and weaknesses of learners; uses varied genres of texts and nontexts; multi-level in terms of hierarchy and utilizing both top-down (from policy makers to classroom teachers) and bottom-up (from classroom teachers to policymakers) processes; identifies valued learning outcomes; and includes both formative and summative assessments—of learning and for learning.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR MULTILITERACY ASSESSMENT OF MULTILINGUAL ADOLESCENT LEARNERS

Based on the recurring themes presented earlier, multiliteracy assessment for multilingual learners should consider a number of factors and conditions affecting literacy assessment performance. Figure 1 presents these and shows the interaction between and among these elements.

Foremost among these considerations are the literacy skills to be assessed. Successful learning requires knowledge of using several literacy skills simultaneously. Through multiliteracy assessment, we can identify the specific literacy skills that our multilingual adolescent learners are already adept at and those that they are struggling with. Boxing the content literacy skills indicates that these should be the main focus of assessment, as they are the immediate needs of adolescent learners. Content learning requires the efficient use of literacy skills, such as reading and writing. However, the essential literacies, being prerequisites for effective content learning, should also be highlighted, especially in formative assessments.



■ **Figure 1.** Framework for Multiliteracy Assessment of Multilingual Adolescent Learners

The framework shows, through the broken arrows, that assessment types, methods, text types and genres, and the changing mode of literacy learning interact between and among each other. Consequently, this interaction influence literacy assessment performance. This implies that in the development process, careful and thoughtful planning is needed to ensure the following:

- Appropriate response formats must be identified. Not only do different literacy skills require different assessment processes, but the complexities and relevance of each literacy skill demand more than one response format.
- Many adolescents of the present generation have acquired new literacies because of the advent of computer mediated communication. Traditional assessments may miss evaluating or may miscalculate these new skills. This calls for rethinking the development process of literacy assessments, as well as the tools to be used.
- While standardized tests provide general information about the learners' literacy skills and abilities, it is the use, selection, and development of classroom-based assessments that should be highlighted. The information that the latter can provide is more precise in designing a responsive literacy instruction.

- Multiliteracy assessment calls for test item analysis that will not only evaluate level of difficulty or inappropriateness of test items, but can also provide information on the level of competence that literacy learners possess.

- There are many factors to consider in choosing text types and genres to use for literacy assessment. These include (1) using both language-based and representational texts; (2) alignment between the text types and genres and the skills to be measured; (3) language comprehension skills of the learners; (4) background of the learners; and (5) reading comprehension skills of the learners.

Lastly, the framework emphasizes the centrality of language knowledge and proficiency, as well as learner context and background, in literacy assessment for adolescent learners. As shown in the diagram, they are connected to all the components. This means that these two factors interact either directly or indirectly with assessment factors and what readers bring to the assessment process. For instance, no multilingual/bilingual adolescent possesses the same level of language comprehension skills in their first and second languages. Hence, their literacy assessment performance may be the result of the level of their language comprehension skills rather than their literacy skills. Second or foreign language proficiency could be a more reliable predictor of literacy skills among ESL and EFL learners. Consequently, language competency can be used as a basis for categorizing multilingual adolescents' learners in terms of literacy assessment performance. On the other hand, adolescents' background and context may determine their response to types of texts, response formats, types of literacy assessment, and literacy skills being assessed. These emphasizes that assessments for these learners have to be sensitive and cognizant of diversities in their culture and experiences.

In summary, the framework posits that a multiliteracy assessment that emphasizes the role of language proficiency and knowledge, and recognizes what adolescent learners bring, may truly inform the direction of literacy instruction.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Designing literacy assessments that truly guide the direction of any literacy instruction for multilingual adolescents require thoughtful consideration of the subprocesses involved and the factors and conditions relevant to the learners. For one, the development of a theoretical framework for the multiliteracy assessment of Grade 4 to 12 multilingual learners must take into consideration at least three important things: the profile and background of the students, the operational and contextualized definition of literacy assessment, and the qualities of a multiliteracy assessment. Although it must involve both bottom-up (i.e., the teachers in the classroom) and top-down (i.e., policymakers and institutions) processes, emphasis must be on the former to ensure that it will be more authentic and based on the actual needs and experiences of the learners.

One very significant conclusion derived from this paper pertains to the role of bilingual competence in literacy assessment performance. Bilingual competence strongly and consistently influences literacy assessment outcomes among multilingual adolescent learners. It is, therefore, suggested that we rethink our view of framing assessments through a monolingual lens. Multilingual adolescents always rely on their linguistic resources when using literacies to learn about anything. If using both languages gives them an advantage in producing knowledge, they should also be provided with the same choice during assessments.

Finally, this study posits that adolescent literacy assessments should reflect the multifaceted nature of literacy. Although literacy characteristics change at each key stage, the nature of literacy learning remains complex all throughout. Adolescents can only become functionally literate when they can decode expertly, comprehend proficiently, read fluently, use general comprehension skills to read different content, and employ appropriate discipline literacies when reading. Adolescent educators must integrate all of these elements in assessment.

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