



## Towards a model of assessment competence in Finnish as a second language and literature teaching

*Helena Vesaranta*, University of Helsinki 

*Kaisu Rättyä*, Tampere University 

### Abstract

*This article proposes a descriptive model of assessment competence for teachers of Finnish as a Second Language and Literature (FSLL), addressing a research gap in subject-specific language assessment literacy within Nordic contexts. While existing frameworks, such as the teacher assessment literacy in practice (TALiP), provide general principles for teacher assessment literacy, they do not sufficiently account for multilingual environments or the unique challenges of second language learners. Our model integrates pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) with linguistic depth, emphasizing phonology, morphology, and syntax as critical components for FSLL assessment. It also incorporates the concept of assessment culture, highlighting the role of shared practices and collegial support within school communities. Drawing on theoretical foundations (Grossman, 1990; Xu & Brown, 2016) and Finnish curriculum guidelines, the model aligns with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) principles and promotes functional language use. We argue that FSLL teachers require comprehensive subject knowledge and the ability to apply it in assessment practices that support learning, fairness, and equity. The model aims to guide teacher education and professional development, offering a framework for reflective practice and collaborative assessment culture. Future research should examine its applicability in classroom contexts and explore its potential adaptation to other languages.*

**Keywords:** *Language Assessment Literacy, Finnish as a Second Language, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Assessment Competence*

**Language(s) Learned in This Study:** *Finnish*

**APA Citation:** Vesaranta, H. & Rättyä, K. (2026), Towards a model of assessment competence in Finnish as a second language and literature teaching. *Second Language Research & Practice*, 6(1), 123–137. <https://hdl.handle.net/10125/69900>

### Introduction

Teachers' assessment literacy has become a globally relevant field of research and interest (see e.g., Atjonen, 2021; Bøhn & Tsagari, 2021; Popham, 2018; Xu & Brown, 2016; Yildirim et al., 2024). It is considered a key factor in ensuring the reliability of assessments and their connection to student achievement (Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018, p. 426). Inbar-Lourie (2017) defined assessment literacy as the knowledge, skills, and principles that stakeholders need to implement effective assessment practices. This concept has received increasing attention in recent years, as current language assessment literacy (LAL) frameworks tend to focus primarily on general teacher competence in language assessment (Weng & Shen, 2022), while the assessment of specific language skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing in various contexts has been less emphasized. Research has also shown (Juanjuan & Mohd Yusoff, 2022) that teacher training should be context-sensitive and tailored to teachers' specific assessment training needs, allowing them to build an assessment identity through reflective practice. Bøhn & Tsagari (2021) reported

similar findings in their study conducted in the Nordic countries, a comparable setting to the Finnish education system, the focus of this study. Their research highlighted the importance of strengthening subject-specific assessment literacy among teachers.

In the Finnish context, multilingualism is increasingly recognized as a resource in education, and policy changes in Finnish education have emphasized the value of multilingual competencies (Alisaari et al., 2019), which directly influence assessment practices. Teachers working with multilingual students must adapt their assessment strategies to reflect diverse linguistic backgrounds, further underscoring the need for subject-specific assessment literacy. Ylönen (2014) highlights the complex linguistic landscape of Finnish universities, where Finnish, Swedish, and other languages coexist. This multilingual environment requires educators to possess nuanced understanding of language policy and assessment. Such insights are crucial for developing effective assessment models, especially in contexts like Finnish as a second language, where language proficiency varies widely among students.

Language teaching and assessment occur in diverse linguistic environments. Teachers' assessment competence has emerged as a significant focus, both nationally and internationally (Atjonen et al, 2019; Bøhn & Tsagari, 2021; Yildirim et al., 2024), but the development of LAL-competence within the context of second language teaching has not been extensively addressed. For example, Vogt and Tsagari (2014) found that most teachers in European countries lacked sufficient assessment training and developed relevant skills mainly through their own school experiences. Studies from a Nordic context (Fröjdendahl et al., 2025) have shown that teachers face tensions between formative and summative assessment strategies within school assessment cultures. This reflects how local interpretations of regulations can differ (see Sundberg, 2022, p. 82). Atjonen (2021), Brookhart (2011), Grossman (1990), Rättyä (2017), Xu & Brown (2016), have all emphasized the need to broaden the knowledge base of LAL in their respective national contexts. It is also important to recognize that assessment research is evolving dynamically, and global mobility has increased both in Europe and worldwide. Therefore, we need more subject-specific research on language assessment. Although efforts have been made to describe teachers' assessment literacy in detail, unresolved questions remain about how this knowledge is applied in specific, local contexts—such as in the context of Finnish as a second language.

The current study responds to the research need identified by Bøhn & Tsagari (2021) regarding how other studies are positioned within Nordic LAL research, particularly in language education. The proposed model addresses a subject-specific perspective that, in Nordic research, is closely connected to language education. In Northern Europe and Scandinavia, the field of language education is often discussed under the terminology of language didactics, but in this article, we apply the orientation of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK, which we sometimes refer to as pedagogical subject knowledge) and teacher's knowledge areas (Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987). We want to bring a broader perspective to bear on LAL research, especially in the Nordic context. The aim of this article is to construct a model describing the assessment competence of Finnish as a second language teachers, based on previous models related to assessment and language education.

### **Research Context: Finnish as a Second Language and the Literature**

Finnish basic education is increasingly facing the challenges of multilingualism, as the number of students with immigrant backgrounds has grown significantly over the past decade (SVT, 2024). According to PISA 2022 results, a higher proportion of low-performing students are found among those with immigrant backgrounds compared to native students (Pulkkinen et al., 2024). Although PISA does not directly assess curriculum-based learning, it provides insight into how well the goals of basic education are being met, particularly for immigrant-background students. The subject "mother tongue and literature" is divided into Finnish Language and Literature (FLL) for native speakers and Finnish as a Second Language and Literature (FSLL) for learners whose first language is not Finnish (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014).

FSLL aims to support students' growth as active members of both Finnish society and their own linguistic

and cultural communities. Assessment plays a key role in both promoting learning and measuring competence (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020). Studies show that FSLT students' learning outcomes are, on average, weaker than those of native Finnish speakers (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022; Venäläinen et al., 2022). FSLT teachers often find the assessment criteria abstract and seek collegial support for their assessment decisions (Vesaranta, 2022). Alarming, FSLT instruction is sometimes equated with special education, despite being a distinct syllabus with clearly defined goals and criteria (Harju-Autti et al., 2022; Helakorpi et al., 2023; Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020; Vesaranta, 2022).

Significant disparities in FSLT students' language proficiency across schools have been documented (Kalenius, 2020; Leino et al., 2019), and their readiness for further studies is generally weaker (Kalalahti et al., 2017). Concerns about the fairness of assessment (Hildén et al., 2017) have highlighted the importance of teachers' assessment competence, which has gained international attention (Harding & Kremmel, 2016; Popham, 2018; Vesaranta, 2022). Although immigrant-background students show strong motivation to learn, this does not necessarily translate into improved outcomes (Leino et al., 2019), underscoring the need to examine language assessment more closely from the FSLT perspective. In Finland, research on teachers' assessment competence has mainly described existing practices (Atjonen, 2014; Mäkipää & Hildén, 2021; Vesaranta, 2022), but concrete development efforts remain limited. Teacher education plays a crucial role in fostering an assessment culture and enhancing assessment competence (Atjonen et al., 2019; Xu & Brown, 2016). Concepts of language learning and assessment have evolved over recent decades. A shift from error-focused and grammar-translation methods (Mitchell et al., 2013) to a functional theory of language learning (Saville-Troike, 2006; 2012) has influenced how language proficiency is understood and assessed.

In FSLT, language proficiency is increasingly seen as a developing competence, and communicative or functional proficiency has gained prominence (Vesaranta, 2022). As the number of multilingual students grows across all educational levels, scholars have called for a paradigm shift from monolingual to multilingual perspectives (Stathopoulou, 2020). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001; 2018) has shaped language teaching and assessment in Finland since the early 2000s. Its applications—including curriculum-based descriptors (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2004), supplementary descriptors (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018), and the Scale of Developing Language Proficiency (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019)—have influenced second and foreign language education, even though CEFR was not originally designed for assessment purposes (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022).

### **Theoretical Frameworks of Assessment Competence**

The understanding of teachers' assessment work has been evolving for decades, with the first standards of competence associated with student assessment being published in 1990 (AFT, 1990). Since then, numerous foundational models of teachers' assessment competence have been introduced (see e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998; 2010). With increasing research (Atjonen, 2014; Pyle & DeLuca 2013; Volante & Fazio, 2007), attention has turned to teachers' ability to select appropriate assessment methods and use assessment results to improve their teaching practices. According to Brookhart (2011), who presented a twelve-point list of assessment knowledge and skills for teachers, a teacher's assessment competence should be an interactive pedagogical activity.

Fulcher (2012) further developed the concept of assessment literacy. Using results of an empirical study of language teachers, Fulcher (2012) proposed a model that included not only educators' knowledge and skills, but also teachers' understandings of the principles that guide assessments, and their understanding of the social contexts of assessment. Taylor (2013) examined assessment competence within the context of language teaching, identifying eight areas of expertise and profiles for various actors. These components include theoretical knowledge, practical skills, principles and concepts, language teaching, sociocultural values, local practices, personal beliefs, and attitudes, as well as assessment and decision-making. In the teacher profile, pedagogical expertise (language teaching) is paramount, along with practical skills,

sociocultural values, and personal beliefs.

Xu and Brown (2016) developed the TALiP model (Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice: A Reconceptualization, see [Figure 1](#)), which is based on an extensive literature review and presents a hierarchical structure of assessment competence components.

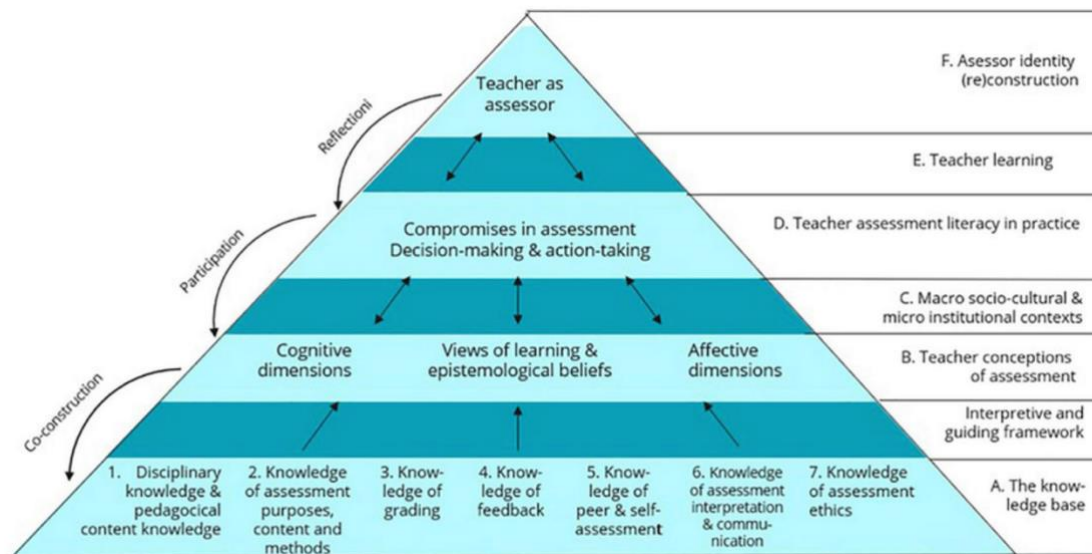


Figure 1. TALiP model (Xu & Brown, 2016)

At the core of the model is the knowledge base, which consists of seven elements: (1) subject-specific and pedagogical content knowledge; (2) knowledge about the purpose, content, and methods of assessment; (3) knowledge of grading; (4) knowledge of feedback; (5) knowledge of peer and self-assessment; (6) knowledge of interpreting and communicating assessment results; and (7) knowledge of assessment ethics. The model describes the development of assessment competence through the interpretive and guiding framework, which shapes teachers' conceptions of assessment. Teachers operate within macro-level sociocultural communities and micro-level institutional contexts, and the context influences the assessment practices that teachers adopt.

Xu and Brown (2016) built on the work of Abell & Siegel (2011), Brookhart (2011), and Shulman (1987), emphasizing disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge as foundational to assessment competence. They argued that, since educational assessment involves measuring curriculum content, subject knowledge and its pedagogy cannot be separated from the assessment knowledge base. Brookhart (2011, p. 7) similarly stressed that effective assessment requires teachers to deeply understand both general principles of learning and the content they teach.

Abell and Siegel (2011) developed a four-part model of science teachers' assessment competence using classifications from Shulman (1987) and Magnusson (1999). Shulman's (1987) framework includes seven domains of teacher knowledge, with pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) combining general pedagogy and subject-specific expertise. PCK was introduced to address the limitations of viewing teacher competence solely through general pedagogy or subject knowledge, and it includes assessment as a tool for promoting learning (Weng & Shen, 2021). Grossman (1990) expanded Shulman's model into four categories: (1) pedagogical knowledge, (2) content knowledge, (3) pedagogical content knowledge, and (4) contextual knowledge. Xu and Brown's (2016) TALiP model highlights that the knowledge base is a necessary but not sufficient condition for teacher assessment literacy. They also referenced Maclellan (2004) and Fulcher (2012), who emphasized that assessment requires both subject matter expertise and assessment-specific knowledge.

The scope of subject content knowledge may be extensive, as in the case of school subject mother tongue and literature, which encompasses areas such as writing, reading, interaction, and linguistic knowledge. This discipline is grounded in various academic fields and branches of knowledge. Theoretical paradigms of the discipline, which Grossman (1990) referred to as substantive knowledge and the processes of knowledge formation within the field, which Grossman called syntactic knowledge. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the diverse theoretical perspectives that have been employed in the study of language structure, as well as the foundational premises associated with these perspectives. Our conception of an assessment model for language instruction applies not only the existing models of assessment competence but also a more detailed framework.

In Finland, teachers' assessment activities are shaped by the national curriculum framework established by the Finnish National Agency for Education, which significantly influences their conceptions of assessment and its implementation. Drawing on research by Atjonen (2021) and Mäkipää & Hildén (2021), three core perspectives—cognitive, affective, and instructional—are identified as central to assessment competence. These perspectives guide teachers' practical actions and decision-making, which are further influenced by the school context and the broader sociocultural environment in which teachers operate.

### Towards a Descriptive Model of Assessment Competence for FSLL Teachers

Building on the theoretical foundations presented above, we constructed a descriptive model (Figure 2) specifically for the teaching and assessment of a Finnish as a second language. Teachers of Finnish as a second language and literature must possess comprehensive content and pedagogical content knowledge of the subject they teach and be capable of translating this knowledge into their pedagogical practice. These knowledge fields form the core of a teacher's assessment competence.

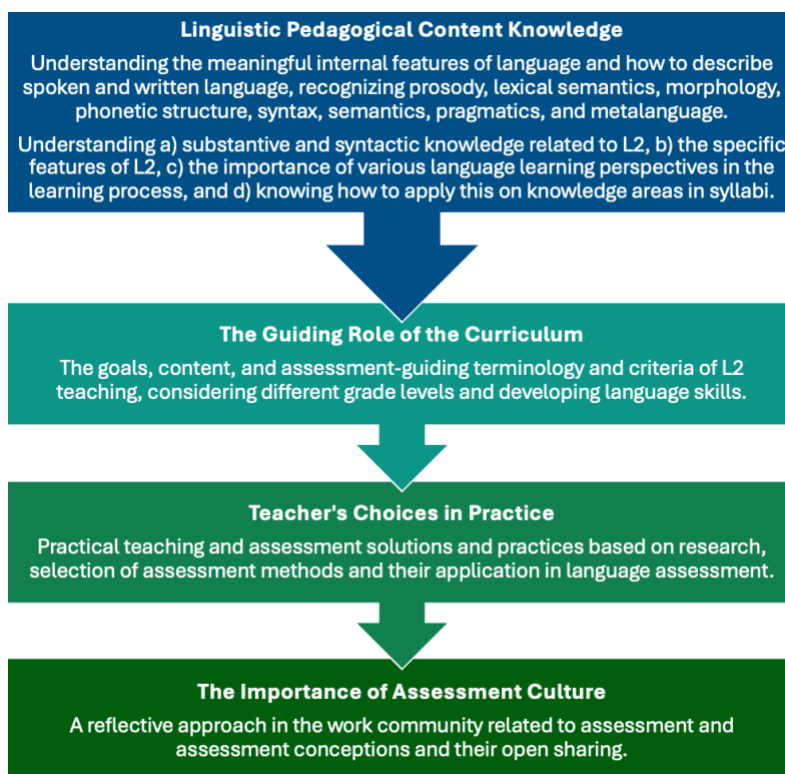


Figure 2. Descriptive model of assessment competence in L2.

Teachers of Finnish as a second language are expected to have a strong command of subject content knowledge, which encompasses theoretical substantive knowledge and the processes of knowledge formation related to the discipline (Grossman, 1990; Rättyä, 2017). We will now elaborate on the

significance of this knowledge within the context of FSLL assessment. While our model focuses on Finnish as a second language, we think the model can be applied to other languages as well. For Finnish as a second language and literature teachers, this means that the work community should first define the assessment conceptions associated with the subject and then discuss them openly at all levels within the workplace.

### Linguistic Pedagogical Content Knowledge in FSLL Teaching and Assessment

Why is it particularly essential for FSLL teachers to master, for instance, the inflectional forms of Finnish compared to teachers of the mother tongue? Finnish as a second language instruction is based on entirely different principles than instruction in Finnish language and literature. The answer lies in understanding the linguistic competence of native speakers and how it develops as part of language acquisition. Linguistic competence is divided into basic language cognition and higher language cognition. Basic-level phenomena, such as essential vocabulary and grammatical structures are part of the linguistic competence of native speakers. In contrast, higher-level phenomena include less common vocabulary and grammatical structures, which may vary among native speakers (Hulstijn, 2011).

A child typically acquires the core of their native language by around age five, after which they gradually begin to understand and produce more complex structures, such as passive voice (Nippold, 2004; Ravid, 2004), with development continuing into adulthood. Vocabulary development does not occur in isolation but in tandem with phonological, morphological, and syntactic growth (Ravid, 2004; 2005). FSLL students, on the other hand, build their linguistic competence simultaneously learning subject content in a new language. For this reason, an FSLL teacher needs more than the relevant subject content knowledge but must also have a thorough understanding of linguistic elements important to that subject knowledge, e.g., morphology and syntax, to facilitate FSLL learners' understanding and development. FSLL teachers, thus, not only have to adjust their instruction to adapt to learners' linguistic development but also consider the timing and manner of assessment in both language proficiency and subject content.

This means that, in practice, the teacher must understand and manage essential aspects and terminology of Finnish phonology, prosody, lexicon, morphology, phonetic structure, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, along with the theories and research directions associated with second (and foreign) language learning. They should also grasp the distinctive features of Finnish for second language learners, comprehend the implications of various language learning perspectives, and apply this knowledge to literature instruction. We will examine the role of pedagogical content knowledge fields in the FSLL context in more detail below, using examples of phonology and morphology.

Language structure is built upon phonemes, which are the sounds that can change the meaning of a word within a language system. Finnish has a unique writing system where nearly every phoneme has a corresponding letter symbol. This systematic nature of Finnish orthography also supports FSLL students in learning to read and write, provided they first become familiar with the phonetic system. For example, a learner can only perceive the ie-diphthong's pronunciation and its symbolic representation (i + e) if they can distinguish the combination within the same syllable when spoken. Because many languages do not include diphthongs (Tainio, 2020), this knowledge is crucial in the FSLL context, in which learners may have varying linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, the mere length of a vowel or consonant completely changes the meaning of the word, as shown in the example words below (see [Table 1](#)).

Table 1. *Length Distinctions of Finnish Words*

Word	Pronunciation (IPA)	Meaning	Phonological Difference
tuli	/'tuli/	Fire	short vowel
tulli	/'tul:i/	Customs	short vowel + long consonant
tuuli	/'tu:li/	Wind	long vowel

The FSLL teacher must understand the problematic phonological phenomenon affecting the understanding

of the message and, in turn, be able to orient the teaching accordingly.

By illustrating the phonological system of the Finnish language, FSLL educators can move learners towards understanding the small units of meaning in the language. Phonemes combine to form morphemes, the smallest meaningful units in a language. Meaning-bearing suffixes and markers attach to word endings in a particular order. When words, whether inflected or not, are combined into meaningful units, this occurs according to syntactic rules. If a student fails to apply these rules, the meaning conveyed by the whole sentence will be as fragmented as its parts. Some unique phonological features of Finnish that we recommend focusing on in FSLL education include a) Length of sounds (vowels and consonants) is significant: tuli – tuuli – tulli, b) Writing closely matches pronunciation, but long sounds and vowel harmony can be challenging for non-native speakers. In assessment, pronunciation errors do not always indicate lack of understanding, therefore we suggest that assessments and instruction distinguish between errors that change meaning (e.g., tuli – tuuli) and others.

Other features essential to pedagogical content knowledge for FSLL educators relate to the syntax and morphology of Finnish. The syntactically central element of a sentence in Finnish is the verb in a personal form, which is essential for sentence formation: without it, a sentence cannot be created, yet a personal form of a verb can constitute a sentence independently (Tainio, 2020). It is important to distinguish between the word level and the sentence level: while the verb as a word carries grammatical information such as person and tense, its role at the sentence level is to structure and anchor the clause syntactically. In the area of morphology, Finnish is an agglutinative language, meaning that words are formed by adding various suffixes and endings. Word length complicates learning Finnish, as the number of linguistic units in a word place demands on working memory, particularly in the early stages of learning (Ahvenainen & Holopainen, 2005). Knowledge of this enables teachers to direct their pedagogical choices towards these specific areas.

Understanding the structural features of the Finnish language, including these examples from phonology and morphology, is crucial for teachers to assess students' language skills fairly and effectively. When assessing FSLL learners' production of these features of the Finnish language, teachers should utilize the assessment information they collect in their lesson planning. Teachers can document assignments, test results, experiments, and record progress during lessons. All of this helps to plan lesson content for where practice is most needed. The detailed examination of a student's output should be contextualized with respect to the student's linguistic background, educational history, and features of the student's native language.

### **Teachers' Choices in Practice**

Practical pedagogical decisions are grounded in the teacher's content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Returning to our example, the information a teacher gains about the specific challenges in Finnish language writing that an FSLL student faces must be addressed in both teaching and assessment.

The relationship between spoken and written language varies across languages depending on their structural and functional proximity. In Finnish, written language is typically more formal and rule-governed than its spoken counterpart. For learners of Finnish as a second language (FSLL), this distinction requires mastery of two parallel yet distinct linguistic systems: spoken language used in everyday communication, and written language that demands precise grammatical control (Ahvenainen & Holopainen, 2005). A notable linguistic feature of Finnish is the phonemic distinction in sound length, which presents specific challenges in writing. Errors in representing long vowels and geminate consonants are common, particularly during the early stages of writing development. These difficulties highlight the importance of explicit instruction and assessment practices that address the unique phonological and orthographic demands of Finnish.

The teacher's practical pedagogical decisions and approaches are tied to their pedagogical content knowledge, encompassing the goals, content, assessment terminology, and criteria of FSLL education, along with suitable teaching methods for different grade levels and levels of language development. This knowledge, combined with an understanding of students' overall Finnish language competence, builds the core of the teacher's assessment competence. In addition to adapting practices to meet observed classroom

phenomena, FSLT teachers' continual engagement with new research, understanding it, assimilating it, and applying it to practice further enhances pedagogical content knowledge (Rättyä, 2017; Vesaranta, 2022), and therefore carries important potential for impacting teaching and assessment practice.

### **The Importance of an Assessment Culture**

Assessment culture has been shown to impact how teachers construct their teaching, assessment, and assessment conceptions (Brown, 2011; Vesaranta, 2022). The school staff, grounded in shared goals and objectives, implements common practices, thus establishing an assessment culture (Ouakrim-Soivio, 2015). In this context, the work community refers to the shared practices, values, and interactions among teachers and staff within the school, whereas the broader assessment culture encompasses national or municipal-level policies, curricular frameworks, and societal expectations regarding assessment.

Schools should have a shared understanding of who within the school community is involved in the assessment culture and what assessment practices are already in place. In the FSLT context, this means that teachers should first define the assessment conceptions related to the FSLT syllabus and understand whether current practices support assessment work. Subsequently, it would be beneficial to discuss how assessment information is used to enhance FSLT teaching (Hellström et al., 2015; Ouakrim-Soivio, 2015; Vesaranta, 2022).

Assessment practices evolve and shape themselves as assessment competence develops, specifically through FSLT pedagogical content knowledge. However, this process does not occur in isolation, rather take place in and are impacted by both the work community and the broader assessment culture. Although the school has its own assessment culture shaped by local practices and staff collaboration, it is also influenced by the broader assessment culture, which includes national curriculum guidelines, educational policy, and prevailing pedagogical discourses. Additionally, guidelines and regulations—along with their specific provisions—shape how the aims and purposes of assessment are understood. Ultimately, a combination of these external frameworks and the school's internal assessment culture influences the assessment decisions made by FSLT teachers. Each school develops its own assessment culture based on its practices, beliefs, and the individuals who shape them. However, assessment culture is not static; it requires continuous development. In Finland, the national curriculum states that creating and developing an assessment culture is a shared responsibility of the entire school community.

Teachers must make choices about when to emphasize formative assessment, when to rely on the information gained from tests, or whether to depend on insights gained from collegial assessment discussions. FSLT teachers should recognize the significance of their assessment practices and beliefs as part of the progression towards more profound assessment competence. Through this reflection, the work community can develop shared assessment practices in FSLT assessment and develop individual and community assessment competence. This requires a reflective approach within the work community, focusing on assessment practices and beliefs and sharing them.

### **A Comparative Discussion of Assessment Literacy Frameworks**

Our proposal for a model provides an extensive overview of what assessment competence means for teachers of FSLT. This is our first compiled description, based on foundational definitions of assessment competence (Xu & Brown, 2016). Our aim was for the model to help FSLT teachers and students of Finnish language education understand the importance of content knowledge in planning and implementing teaching and assessment.

Our model emphasizes pedagogical content knowledge. To present a complete picture, Grossman's (1990) framework supports the understanding of assessment competence, complemented by the key components outlined by Xu and Brown (2016). The impact of paradigm shifts in assessment is particularly evident in understanding the roles and goals of formative and summative assessment. In FSLT assessment, this means that teachers must consider the implications of language proficiency assessments, the types of assessments they lead to, expectations for language proficiency, conceptions of language development, recognition of

individual learners and self-assessment, and the need to re-evaluate the concept of language proficiency.

While models aim to enhance teachers' assessment literacy, they differ significantly in scope, specificity, and pedagogical orientation. TALiP (Figure 1) offers a general framework for teacher assessment literacy, emphasizing a foundational knowledge base that includes subject-specific knowledge, assessment methods, grading, feedback, and ethics. It integrates cognitive, affective, and instructional perspectives and situates assessment within sociocultural and institutional contexts. However, it does not explicitly address multilingual environments or the unique challenges of second language learners. In contrast, our model (Figure 2) is tailored specifically for FSLL education and includes language aspects, which are not explicitly written into TALiP-figure:

- It introduces new dimensions that are critical for assessing language learners in a multilingual educational environment.
- We emphasize the need for FSLL teachers to master phonology, morphology, and syntax of Finnish, highlighting a deeper linguistic requirement in FSLL assessment competence.
- It includes the concept of assessment culture within the work community, emphasizing shared practices and collegial support.
- It aligns closely with the FSLL curriculum and its specific goals, content, and assessment criteria.
- We prioritize functional language use and communicative competence, reflecting the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

In summary, while the TALiP model provides a broad foundation for assessment literacy applicable across disciplines, the FSLL model offers a specialized, context-driven framework that addresses the unique needs of second language learners. Its integration of linguistic depth, multilingualism, curriculum alignment, and assessment culture make it a more comprehensive tool for FSLL educators.

## Conclusions

Our research (Rätyä, 2017; Vesaranta, 2022) and the resulting proposed model of assessment competence meet the identified need (Bøhn & Tsagari, 2021) to understand how other studies are positioned within the Nordic context, particularly in the field of language assessment literacy (LAL) in language education. Additionally, our model acknowledges the significance of assessment culture as part of a teacher's assessment competence, a point also emphasized by Bøhn and Tsagari (2021). Current studies show that many language teachers are unable to define which assessment skills or knowledge they need to improve (Bøhn & Tsagari, 2021). This model addresses that need by focusing specifically on the development of assessment competence among teachers of Finnish as a second language. Researchers have also highlighted the need for practical approaches to theory, national regulations, and CEFR recommendations to be better integrated into teacher education (Fröjdendahl et al., 2025). This would equip novice language teachers with tools for assessment in various school contexts and across different proficiency levels. Since this is still a theoretical model, further empirical research is needed to explore how it applies to practical assessment work and how it can be adapted to other contexts.

We have aimed to demonstrate the importance of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, transferring it in detail to the FSLL context. This was not an easy task, as second language assessment involves more than just defining language proficiency. It is also essential to clarify and distinguish between assessing language development and assessing subject content knowledge. The purpose of assessment is to support FSLL students' learning, provide feedback, set new goals, promote language development, and help students achieve these goals. Assessment always includes the teacher's understanding of language proficiency and how it is measured. At its broadest, assessment competence involves reflecting on one's own teaching. FSLL teachers' beliefs are part of the assessment culture, its traditions, and norms. Therefore, constructing a descriptive model of assessment competence for FSLL teachers is an important step in developing the teaching and assessment of the subject.

The fact that most teachers reported frequent use of at least three linguistically responsive practices reflects

an understanding of the demands faced by multilingual Finnish language learners and further suggests that Finnish teachers demonstrate a degree of linguistic responsiveness (Heikkola et al., 2022). Our model aligns with findings of Hildèn et al. (2024), who emphasized the risk of inequitable treatment in student assessment. A comparative study of pre-service teachers in Finland and Sweden revealed that assessment decisions are inherently social and influenced by personal values and experiences. Finnish pre-service teachers demonstrated heightened awareness of assessment principles, likely due to the timing and content of their pedagogical studies and the detailed nature of the national curriculum (Hildèn et al., 2022).

These insights reinforce the importance of reflective practice and contextual understanding in developing assessment competence, supporting our model's emphasis on the interplay between knowledge, dispositions, and institutional frameworks. Finally, it is our hope that this model may contribute to the development of assessment practices that can both determine learners' competencies while considering ethical issues, such as grade fairness, a tension illustrated in existing assessment research (Yildirim et al., 2024). As we work with FSL educators to apply this model in practical contexts, we will conduct research, developing our model further and contributing to the LAL skills of language teachers. In the future, we will consider whether certain areas require more focused attention and continue refining the model accordingly. We will also evaluate whether the first component could be more clearly distinguished. Research on assessment competence remains highly relevant, and it will be interesting to observe how recent studies in L2 assessment and language assessment literacy (LAL) contribute to this field, both nationally and internationally.

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## About the Authors

University lecturer Helena Vesaranta (PhD in Education 2022) works at the Faculty of Education at the University of Helsinki. She is responsible for various study modules in special education. Vesaranta's research has focused on the assessment of Finnish as a second language and the development of teachers' assessment skills.

**E-mail:** [helena.vesaranta@helsinki.fi](mailto:helena.vesaranta@helsinki.fi)

University lecturer Kaisu Rättä (Docent in Literary Education, PhD in Philosophy 2007, PhD in Education 2017) works at the Faculty of Education and Culture at Tampere University. Faculty of Education and Culture (EDU) at the University of Tampere, where she is leading the research group Subject Matter Didactics (SMD). She is PI for consortium project Growing into Literature – Advancing Theories and Practices in Literature Education (Research Council of Finland, 2025-2029).

**E-mail:** [kaisu.rattya@tuni.fi](mailto:kaisu.rattya@tuni.fi)