



**Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board**

***Redesigning English Language Pedagogical Practices: Expanding Assessment Constructs To Broaden Students' Learning***

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**Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference 2015**

**3 June 2015**

# Overview



- ❖ Research gap
- ❖ Research methodology
- ❖ Findings of study – four ways in which teachers expanded learning and assessment constructs

# Reference



- ❖ Sellan, R. (2012). *English Language assessment in the context of policy innovation: A case study of how teachers interpret and manage assessment practices*. PhD thesis. University of South Australia, Australia. Unpublished.

# Research gap



- ❖ Understanding how teachers interpret and manage their classroom assessment practices from their own perspectives
- ❖ A growing concern in the field of educational assessment, including EL assessment

# Teacher-based assessment



- ❖ Invokes a more teacher-mediated, context-based, classroom-embedded assessment practice
- ❖ Considers not only *who* is doing the assessing but also has implications for the *what, where, how* and most importantly, the *why* of assessment
- ❖ Both the agency of teachers and their educational contexts become important

(Davison & Leung, 2009)

# Research question

***How do teachers interpret and manage English Language assessment practices in the context of the policy innovation of the Integrated Programmes in Singapore?***

A descriptive study on teachers' lived assessment experiences

**'interpret'**



conceptual aspects  
(what teachers think)

**'manage'**



practical aspects  
(what teachers do)

# Research context: The Integrated Programmes in Singapore



I

## INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES

### Year 12 (Junior College 2)

*Students sit the GCE A-Level examination at the end of Y12.*



### Year 10 (Secondary 4)

*Students are exempted from the GCE O-Level examination at the end of Y10, and proceed directly to Y11 for their junior college education.*



### Year 7 (Secondary 1)

*Students begin their Integrated Programmes, which offer secondary/junior college education without GCE O-Levels.*

## MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

### Year 12 (Junior College 2)

*Students sit the GCE A-Level examination at the end of Y12.*



### Year 10 (Secondary 4)

*Students sit the GCE O-Level examination at the end of Y10. They need to do well in the examination to proceed to Y11 for their junior college education.*



### Year 7 (Secondary 1)

*Students begin secondary education.*

# Methodology



DATA COLLECTION METHODS/DATA SETS	RATIONALE
<p><b>Semi-structured interviews with teachers</b> to gain in-depth insights into the rationale for their decisions and choices (8 X 3 = 24 interviews.) (Each interview lasted between 50 and 90 minutes.)</p>	<p>To elicit teachers' perspectives on assessment practices: what they have done in terms of assessment and how they interpret it</p>
<p><b>Stimulated recall</b> to get teachers to describe how they assessed two students' essays</p>	<p>To elicit teachers' perspectives on how they actually judged writing pieces</p>
<p><b>Lesson observation</b> of two lessons taught by each teacher and taking field notes</p>	
<p><b>Document analysis</b> of teacher-developed assessment plans, procedures and graded students' work (The full year's work of six students per teacher-participant was collected.)</p>	
<p><b>Document analysis</b> of policy documents related to IP, the MOE English curriculum, the GCE examinations, the EL curriculum in IP</p>	<p>To understand the policy changes and the context of the school programmes, and to relate them to teachers' account of their assessment practices</p>



# Findings



- ❖ Distilling the data analysis reveals a significant expansion of teacher-based EL assessment practices to increase students' learning in the discipline.
- ❖ This expansion is manifested in the teacher-participants' interpretation and management of assessment processes that emphasise assessment for learning (AfL) in their local contexts.
- ❖ Expansion is evident in divergent assessment practices that were conceptualised and implemented by teacher-participants.

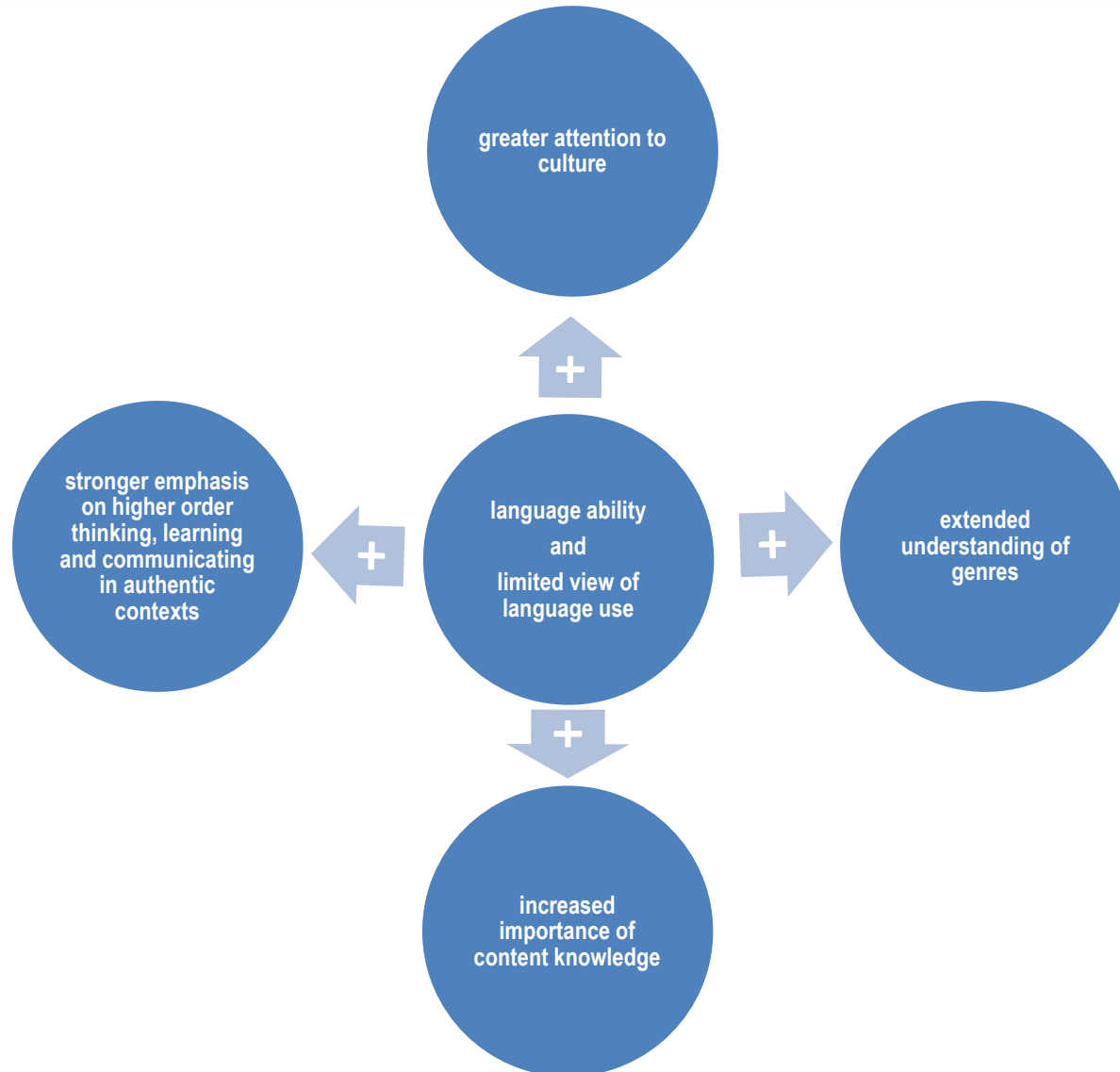
# Findings



They did this in four ways:

- ❖ paying greater attention to culture
- ❖ building on an extended understanding of genres
- ❖ giving increased importance to content knowledge
- ❖ placing a stronger emphasis on higher-order thinking, learning, and communicating in authentic contexts

# Findings



# Language and culture



- ❖ Integration of literary texts into the EL curriculum and assessment
- ❖ Promotes an aesthetic view of language, where style and substance blend to produce a heightened appreciation of sensation and emotion in students as compared to the cultivation of pure functionality of language use

# Language and genre

- ❖ Making exposition and persuasive genres compulsory
- ❖ Deepening their understanding of exposition
- ❖ Persuasion can be in narrative writing
- ❖ Understanding that genres can cut across traditional modes

# Language and content knowledge



- ❖ An increased emphasis on content knowledge in essays
- ❖ Disjunction in practices between mainstream schools and participating school reflects the different views on topical knowledge in the field of language testing

# Language and higher-order thinking, learning, and communicating in authentic contexts



- ❖ Emphasising logical and argumentative skills
- ❖ Discussing a given quotation in oral examinations
- ❖ Greater proportion of inferential questions in assessment of reading comprehension
- ❖ Introduction of Stimulus Response Question

# Language and higher-order thinking, learning, and communicating in authentic contexts



- ❖ Including the learning process as part of the construct
- ❖ Situational writing based on real world experience
- ❖ Increasing variety of oral tasks and looking out for social-interactive dimensions in oral assessment
- ❖ Different conception of summary writing



# Conclusion



- ❖ The four areas of expansion serve to illuminate and illustrate how English language teachers in general can develop their assessment literacy to expand beyond the assessment constructs examined in high stakes tests to increase students' learning in their local contexts

# Conclusion



- ❖ The findings also show that innovative school-based assessment is possible in an educational system even where an external authority has had such a long-standing influence on school assessment practices, provided that there is a highly supportive policy context that values and facilitates teachers' professional autonomy