MAPPING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND METHODOLOGICAL COHERENCE IN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT LITERACY RESEARCH IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This conceptual systematic literature review examines the use of theoretical frameworks and methodological coherence in studies on English Language Assessment (ELA) in Pakistan. Drawing from 15 empirical studies published between 2009 and 2024, the review investigates the extent to which language assessment literacy (LAL) research is grounded in explicit theoretical models and how these frameworks influence research design. Findings reveal that only a small fraction of studies explicitly articulate their theoretical stance, with most relying on inferred paradigms such as constructivist, socio-cognitive, and psychometric traditions. Nonetheless, a pattern of implicit epistemological coherence emerges, as methodological choices often reflect underlying conceptual assumptions. This review highlights the need for greater theoretical transparency and alignment in LAL scholarship in Pakistan to foster cumulative knowledge building and policy-relevant impact. Recommendations are offered for more deliberate integration of theory in future research to strengthen its validity, interpretive depth, and pedagogical relevance.

Keywords: Language Assessment Literacy (LAL), English Language Assessment (ELA), Theoretical Frameworks, Pakistan, Methodological Coherence, Conceptual Systematic Review.

Introduction

A critical component of any research endeavor is a well-structured and theoretically grounded literature review. As Boote and Beile (2005) argue, the literature review not only contextualizes the study within existing knowledge but also demonstrates the researcher's analytical engagement with the field, identifies conceptual and methodological gaps, and provides a rationale for the study's contribution. In contemporary applied linguistics, especially in areas like language assessment and pedagogy, literature reviews are increasingly expected to move beyond summarization to offer thematic synthesis, theoretical mapping, and methodological critique (Mackey & Gass, 2016). The present study follows this integrative approach by combining the introduction and literature review into a single, conceptually rich section that sets the foundation for mapping the theoretical and methodological landscape of language assessment literacy (LAL) research in Pakistan.

Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) has emerged as a pivotal construct in language education, especially as the assessment of English language proficiency becomes intertwined with educational quality, accountability, and professional development worldwide. Originating from the broader construct of educational assessment literacy (Stiggins, 1991), LAL has evolved to encompass more discipline-specific set of knowledge, skills, and critical understandings that language teachers need to design, implement, and interpret assessments effectively (Fulcher, 2012;

Inbar-Lourie, 2008). The increasing use of English as a global lingua franca has brought renewed focus to how language educators are trained in assessment, especially in multilingual and post-colonial contexts such as South Asia. Researchers such as Taylor (2013) and Yan and Fan (2021) have emphasized that LAL is multidimensional—combining technical assessment knowledge with sociocultural awareness, ethical considerations, and reflective judgment.

Development of LAL has gone in various directions worldwide. LAL frameworks are also being implemented in various teacher education programs in the Global North, with mixed levels of success (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014; Lam, 2015); in the Global South, including Pakistan, systematic attempts to adopt LAL are similarly unsystematic and poorly researched. Although there has been an upward trend in the number of local studies that delved into English language assessment practices in both schools and higher education (Ashraf & Zaki, 2019; Fazli et al., 2024), there are very limited investigations that have articulated their research explicitly in the context of theoretically or conceptually sound body of knowledge. Such research is limited in terms of generalizability and depth given that context-bound and frequently atheoretical research is relied on. According to Giraldo (2021), the absence of a guiding theoretical lens in the study of LAL may lead to fragmented research findings and pedagogical implications.

The methodical incorporation of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks is essential to the creation of the consistent and explainable research projects. A strong theoretical basis allows the researcher to evaluate empirical information analytically coherently as well as relate the findings to broader epistemological structures. Of the three models that are often put forward in LAL research, Fulcher (2012) competency-based model, Inbar-Lourie (2008) socio-cultural approach, and the layered model of LAL development by Taylor (2009) are the most common. Other complementary theories like Constructivist Assessment Theory (Shepard, 2000), that encourages learner-centered and formative assessment practices, and the Socio-Cognitive Theory (Khalifa & Weir, 2009) which attributes linguistic performance to contextual and cognitive variables have also been used in developing and validating language tests to be used in high-stakes tests as well as in teaching situations. Finally, psychometric models, especially the Classical Test Theory (CTT) and Item Response Theory (IRT), still supply the statistical foundation of large-scale standardized tests and have become even more common in teacher preparation programs to develop statistical literacy (Alderson et al., 2009; Fan & Yan, 2020).

The present-day research in the Language Assessment Litreacy (LAL) environment in Pakistan hardly ever employ or critique the theoretical resources of the domain. Even though some studies of assessment practices in universities and schools indeed consider the concept of constructivism in formative assessment (e.g., Ashraf & Zaki, 2019), they often lack alignment with the known theoretical paradigms, which constrains conceptual rigor. Besides, research that uses psychometric tools like item analysis is common but rarely explains the theoretical basis of such operations (e.g., Fazli et al., 2024). According to Giraldo (2021) and Yan and Fan (2021), systematic incorporation of theory in LAL research leads to improved interpretability, comparability, and significance of research results. A thorough overview of the ways in which the previously existing literature in Pakistan has used or neglected these main frameworks is, therefore, essential to understand the degree of methodological soundness and theoretical richness of local LAL studies in Pakistan.

The present study addresses this gap through a systematic mapping of theoretical and methodological soundness involved in published studies on LAL in Pakistan. It examines how literature in the area has conceptualized LAL, determines the extent to which it is congruent with

the theoretical models and also evaluates the extent to which the methodological choices adopted support or undermine the conceptual orientations. In this way, the study not only throws light on the current trends, but it also reveals the epistemological assumptions of LAL research in Pakistan. Considering the increasing calls to research on culturally responsive and theoretically sound assessment scholarship (Davison & Leung, 2009), the present contribution fills the gap of the emerging need to draw locally based yet globally located reflections on the topic of language assessment literacy. The research questions that are guiding this study are:

1. What theoretical frameworks are used or implied in studies on English Language Assessment in Pakistan?
2. How do the identified theoretical frameworks influence the choice of research methodologies in studies on English Language Assessment in Pakistan?

2. Review Methodology and Analytical Framework

This study employed a systematic literature review approach to investigate the use of theoretical and conceptual frameworks and their alignment with research methods in empirical studies on English Language Assessment (ELA) practices in Pakistan. The primary objective was to map the epistemological orientations and methodological coherence of teacher-centric LAL research, particularly in secondary and tertiary education. The rationale for focusing on these education levels stems from their demand for specialized English language teaching qualifications, and the increasing expectation that such educators demonstrate assessment literacy aligned with national and international standards.

This review is subject to several **limitations**. First, the analysis was based on fifteen studies, and while these represent a substantial corpus of LAL research in Pakistan, they may not capture all relevant work, particularly grey literature, unpublished theses, or conference papers. Second, in many cases, frameworks were inferred from the language, instruments, or methodological patterns in the absence of explicit statements by the authors, which introduces an element of interpretive subjectivity. Third, the review did not include statistical meta-analysis or effect size comparison, as the primary focus was conceptual and methodological alignment rather than empirical outcomes.

The delimitations of this review were intentionally set to enhance conceptual depth rather than breadth. The selection was limited to studies focusing on Pakistani contexts and involving English language assessment literacy or adjacent practices in ELT. Moreover, this work chooses to emphasize the mapping of theoretical frameworks and their relationship to methodological choices. It does not present a synthesis of empirical findings on assessment outcomes.

2.1 Selection Criteria and Data Sources

The review targeted empirical research conducted between 2009 and 2024, a period during which language assessment literacy (LAL) emerged as a recognized area of scholarly inquiry both globally and within Pakistan. The timeline reflects the growing international discourse on LAL (e.g., Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2008) and its diffusion into local educational settings. The review focused on studies involving English language teachers working in Pakistani higher secondary schools, colleges, and universities, as these contexts demand assessment expertise embedded within subject-specific pedagogy.

An initial pool of 38 documents was identified through systematic searches in Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus repositories using keywords such as *"language assessment literacy Pakistan"*, *"English language teachers"*, *"assessment practices"*, and *"theoretical framework"*. After abstract

screening and full-text review based on inclusion criteria, 15 studies were retained for final analysis. Eligible studies met the following conditions:

a. Empirical focus on ELA practices by English language teachers in Pakistan
b. Inclusion of a theoretical or conceptual framework, either explicitly stated or implied
c. Use of primary data (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods)
d. Publication in peer-reviewed journals or recognized institutional reports

Exclusion criteria filtered out theoretical essays, purely editorial commentaries, instrument reviews, or studies unrelated to teacher assessment literacy.

2.2 Analytical Framework

To evaluate theoretical grounding and methodological coherence, the study applied a CSR-based coding protocol. Each study was examined for the presence, nature, and integration of theoretical frameworks, as well as the degree of alignment between epistemological orientation and research methods.

A. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework Identification

Each study was reviewed to determine whether it used an explicit named framework (e.g., socio-cognitive theory, reflective practice, assessment literacy models) or an implied or inferred framework, determined through terminology, cited literature, and research focus.

When explicit references were absent, theoretical orientation was inferred using cues such as:

i. Terms like *validity*, *backwash*, *test-task interaction* (suggesting socio-cognitive theory; see Weir, 2005)
ii. References to criterion-referenced testing, benchmarking, or CEFR (implying psychometric paradigms like Classical Test Theory or IRT)
iii. Emphasis on teacher beliefs, pedagogical reflection, or formative practices (indicating constructivist or reflective-practice orientations)
iv. Language related to policy critique, power structures, or discourse (associated with critical-interpretivist traditions)

Each identified framework was mapped against the study's methodological orientation (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods) to assess the degree of theoretical-methodological coherence (see Table 2: Framework-Methodology Alignment).

B. Conceptual Classification and Epistemological Mapping

In the second analytical layer, studies were categorized using CSR-based epistemological coding, which classified each article based on its implicit conceptual stance. Labels such as *"Constructivist-Quantitative," "Critical-Interpretivist," "Positivist-Curricular,"* and *"Benchmarking-Psychometric"* were assigned based on Methodological tools (e.g., surveys, discourse analysis, classroom observation) and framework references and citations.

This classification enabled the generation of a conceptual map (Table 1: CSR-Based Conceptual Coding Matrix), which illustrates broader trends in Pakistani LAL research and how theoretical assumptions shape methodological choices.

2.3 Reflexivity and Researcher Positioning

Given the researcher's positionality as a language education scholar within the Pakistani context, this review is informed by both insider knowledge of local educational constraints and a critical lens shaped by global assessment scholarship. The interpretation of "coherence" and "framework alignment" is therefore shaped by the dual objective of honoring local realities while advocating for theoretical transparency, epistemological clarity, and research integrity. This reflexive stance

is particularly important in postcolonial educational contexts where inherited assessment systems intersect with evolving pedagogical reforms and global quality benchmarks.

3. Data Analysis

Conceptual Systematic Review (CSR) was carried out manually. CSR-Based Coding was done to categorize each study by its inferred epistemological stance and related research method.

Only two studies defined theoretical frameworks explicitly. Four more studies only mentioned the conceptual frameworks with no detailed orientation towards their research. Where frameworks are not named, inference is possible based on research focus, terminology, and cited literature. For instance, a study using terms like "backwash," "validity," and "test task interaction" likely draws from socio-cognitive theory (Weir, 2005), while references to norm-referenced versus criterion-referenced testing hint at psychometric or constructivist assessment paradigms.

As given below, Table 1 features epistemological categorization of all 15 research articles and Table 2 presents alignment of framework and methodology.

Table 1

Conceptual Coding Matrix

Study	Coding Category	Methodological Orientation
Gul et al. (2024)	Critical-Interpretivist	Discourse analysis of assessment policy
Ashraf & Zaki (2019)	Traditional-Norm-referenced	Test structure analysis, interview coding
Khan et al. (2019)	Constructivist-Reflective	Survey and descriptive statistics
Fazli et al. (2024)	Constructivist-Quantitative	Survey of ELT instructors, descriptive stats
Hidri et al. (2024)	Sociocognitive-Quantitative	SEM with validated instrument
Khan (2011)	Reflective-Classroom Based	Questionnaire, teacher logs
Irshad & Kiani (2023)	Contextual-Constructivist	Qualitative interviews, survey data
Shahzad et al. (2019)	Functional-Qualitative	Interview and curriculum analysis
Raza (2009)	Postpositivist-Evaluative	Classroom observation, teacher interviews
Husan & Shakur (2023)	Reflective-mixed-methods	questionnaire, interviews
Mahmood et al. (2021)	Comparative-Quantitative	Reading survey in public/private schools
Sartaj et al. (2019)	Formative-Constructivist	questionnaire+ teacher feedback
Shahzadi & Ducasse (2022)	Reflective-Sociocultural	Mixed methods, classroom discourse

Siddique et al. (2013)	Positivist-Curricular	Document analysis of exam papers
Umar & Noreen (2021)	Positivist-Curricular	Checklist validation, SLO mapping

The Conceptual Coding Matrix in Table 1 applies the Conceptual Systematic Review (CSR) model to classify each study's epistemological stance based on its research questions, analysis type, and theoretical orientation. The coding categories—such as "Constructivist-Quantitative," "Critical-Interpretivist," or "Positivist-Curricular"—make visible the implicit knowledge frameworks that guide inquiry. This matrix reveals trends in how Pakistani LAL research is situated within broader traditions of educational inquiry. For example, while several studies adopt reflective or socio-cognitive frames aligned with practice-based reform, a sizable number continue to reflect positivist tendencies, especially in document-driven evaluations of curriculum or testing. This classification deepens the review's analytical lens, demonstrating how conceptual commitments (even when unspoken) shape what is researched and how findings are interpreted.

Table 2

Theoretical Framework-Methodology Alignment Table

Study	Stated/Implied Theoretical Framework	Methodological Orientation
Gul et al. (2024)	Critical Discourse Analysis (Explicit)	Discourse analysis of assessment policy
Ashraf & Zaki (2019)	Summative Assessment Paradigm (Implied)	Test structure analysis, interview coding
Khan et al. (2019)	Assessment Literacy Awareness (Implied)	Survey and descriptive statistics
Fazli et al. (2024)	Assessment Literacy (Explicit)	Survey of ELT instructors, descriptive stats
Hidri et al. (2024)	Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment – TCoA (Explicit)	SEM with validated instrument
Khan (2011)	Reading Assessment Techniques (Implied)	Questionnaire, teacher logs
Irshad & Kiani (2023)	Washback Theory (Implied)	Qualitative interviews, survey data
Shahzad et al. (2019)	Communicative Competence Model (Explicit)	Interview and curriculum analysis
Raza (2009)	Backwash and Validity Theory (Explicit)	Classroom observation, teacher interviews
Husan & Shakur (2023)	Teacher Proficiency & Beliefs (Implied)	Pre/post assessment, interviews
Mahmood et al. (2021)	Assessment Awareness Framework (Implied)	Reading survey in public/private schools

Sartaj et al. (2019)	Classroom-Based Assessment Theory (Implied)	Observation + teacher feedback
Shahzadi & Ducasse (2022)	conceptual framework of CBLA and LAL (Explicit)	Mixed methods, classroom discourse
Siddique (2013)	Curriculum–Assessment Misalignment (Implied)	Document analysis of exam papers
Umar & Noreen (2021)	Curriculum Evaluation Framework (Implied)	Checklist validation, SLO mapping

The Theoretical Framework-Methodology Alignment given in Table 2 presents a concise mapping of each reviewed study's theoretical orientation, whether explicitly stated or inferred, against the research methods employed. This table highlights the degree to which authors demonstrated coherence between their conceptual grounding and methodological execution. For instance, studies grounded in psychometric or functionalist paradigms (e.g., those invoking Assessment Literacy Models or CEFR benchmarks) predominantly employed structured survey instruments and statistical analysis. In contrast, papers informed by reflective, socio-cognitive, or critical paradigms favored qualitative or mixed-methods designs, such as interviews, classroom observations, content analysis, or discourse analysis. By organizing studies this way, the table allows readers to quickly identify whether and how theoretical assumptions influenced the selection of tools, data types, and analytic strategies.

4. Findings:

This section presents the findings in the light of the research questions.

Research Question 1:

What theoretical frameworks are used or implied in English Language Assessment research in Pakistan?

The findings for the 1st research question were quite surprising. This review examined the theoretical grounding of sixteen LAL studies in Pakistan. A clear finding is the scarcity of explicitly stated frameworks: 6 out of 15 studies including Hidri et al. (2024), Fazli et al. (2024), Shahzadi & Ducasse (2022), and Gul et al. (2024) openly declared the use of established models such as Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment (TCoA), Assessment Literacy Models, Communicative Competence Model, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The remaining studies did not name a theoretical framework but were interpreted to align with familiar paradigms. These include Assessment Literacy Models, Washback Theory, CEFR-aligned benchmarking approaches, Reflective Practice, Curriculum Policy frameworks, and Validity Theory. This inference was drawn from indirect indicators such as research objectives, terminology, the nature of instruments used (e.g., LAKS, TPAS), and patterns in cited literature. The prevalence of implicit rather than explicit theoretical grounding indicates a broader issue in the field—namely, a tendency to prioritize procedural or outcome-based inquiry over conceptually framed investigation. This finding underscores the need for greater theoretical transparency in LAL research within the Pakistani context.

Research Question 2:

How do the identified theoretical frameworks influence the choice of research methodologies in studies on English Language Assessment in Pakistan?

The relationship between theoretical orientation and methodological choice revealed a noteworthy degree of epistemological coherence. Studies that implicitly or explicitly adopted psychometric or assessment literacy frameworks commonly employed structured, quantitative methodologies such as surveys, Likert-scale diagnostics, and statistical analysis. Shahzad et al. (2019), who anchors their work in the CEFR, constructs questionnaire items that mirror the framework's communicative-competence descriptors and then subjects the resulting data to statistical reliability checks and factor analyses. Siddique (2013), operating within the National Curriculum (2006), likewise translates curricular objectives into quantitative checklists against which exam papers and teacher practices are benchmarked. In both cases, the norm-referenced, criterion-oriented logic of the frameworks pushes the studies toward numeric instrumentation and inferential statistics.

Similarly, studies aligned with reflective or sociocognitive paradigms tended to use mixed methods or qualitative techniques—including interviews, classroom observations, and thematic discourse analysis. Raza (2009) and Shahzadi & Ducasse (2022) invoke socio-cultural theory; each relies on classroom observations, stimulated-recall interviews, and thematic coding to illuminate how assessment practices are co-constructed in situ.

Research engaging with critical or policy-oriented frameworks leaned on discourse critique, textual interpretation, or curriculum mapping. Curriculum-based evaluations primarily utilize document analysis, policy review, and checklist-based instruments. However, a substantial portion of these studies did not clearly justify their methodological design in theoretical terms, even when their chosen tools were epistemologically consistent. These findings suggest an underutilization of theory as an organizing lens for empirical research. It reinforces the argument that while many researchers intuitively align method with paradigm, formal theoretical articulation remains a critical step in ensuring the conceptual coherence and interpretive depth of ELA studies in Pakistan.

5. Discussion:

This section of the paper reports on the identified theoretical frameworks and aligned research methodologies used in the sample studies under two sub-sections below.

5.1 Theoretical Frameworks

Throughout the sample of recently published empirical studies under scrutiny, the prevalence of a common factor of inconsistent or nonexistent discussion of the theoretical frameworks being followed on the research is noticed. Out of the 15 reviewed investigations, six explicitly name the models they use: the Teachers Conceptions of Assessment (TCoA), Language Assessment Literacy Models, Communicative Competence Model, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The other studies, though placed within familiar paradigms like socio-cognitive theory, psychometric models, or assessment literacy frameworks, do not clearly identify these constructs. These frameworks are categorized as follows:

Assessment Literacy Models: Several studies (e.g., Fazli et al., 2024; Shahzadi & Ducasse, 2022) align with Fulcher's (2012) dimensions of LAL and Xu and Brown (2016) models, and they cited them directly.

Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment (TCoA): Hidri et al. (2024) explicitly use Brown's (2006) validated inventory, rooted in a socio-cognitive framework, to measure teachers' beliefs about assessment.

Socio-cultural and Reflective Practitioner Models: In studies like Shahzadi & Ducasse (2022) and Husan & Shakur (2023), the framing of teacher cognition and belief is situated in reflective teaching paradigms, pointing to socio-constructivist underpinnings.

Critical and Ideological Lenses: Gul et al. (2024) use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the politics of assessment, drawing on language ideology and gatekeeping theories.

Psychometric Models (CTT/IRT): While rarely named, these underpin critiques of exam-driven systems (Raza, 2009) and point to traditional test validation paradigms.

Curriculum and Objective Alignment Models: Used implicitly in Siddique et al. (2013) and Umar & Noreen (2021), which examine how assessments reflect prescribed SLOs and curricular goals.

5.2 Methodological Alignment with Theoretical Frameworks

The reviewed studies indicate that frameworks have a central role in determining methodological choices through the following ways:

Socio-cultural and Constructivist Influence: Teacher beliefs (or assessment conceptions) studies (e.g., Shahzadi & Ducasse, 2022; Hidri et al., 2024) prefer a mixed method to collect both elements of the belief system (quantitative) and classroom practice (qualitative).

Critical Theory and Discourse-Oriented Frameworks: Gul et al. (2024) use the Critical Discourse Analysis as the method that is suitable to explore the issues of power and ideological constructs.

Assessment Literacy Frameworks: These tend to result in quantitative studies that rely on survey instruments such as LAKS (Language Assessment Knowledge Scale) which was applied in research articles, such as that by Mahmood et al. (2021) to determine the level of theoretical and practical understanding of LAL in the mind of a teacher. The other instrument TPAS (Teacher Perception of Assessment Scale) applied in Mahmood et al., 2021; Fazli et al., 2024 was an example of a psychometric tradition of measuring knowledge.

Curriculum Alignment and Policy Designs: Siddique et al. (2013) and Umar & Noreen (2021) conducted document analysis and content mapping to investigate the match between the assessments and curricular goals.

Washback and Validity Frameworks: Studies that explore classroom implications of assessments (e.g., Raza, 2009; Irshad & Kiani, 2023) apply interviews and classroom observation, resting on the theories of test impact and backwash.

Hence, although the plurality of frameworks leads to the plurality of methods, there is a powerful trend in the epistemological consistency where the worldview that is embedded in the theoretical orientation dictates the instruments of investigation. This is an insight that is very important in comprehending not just what is known about ELA and LAL in Pakistan, but the way in which it is known.

The findings of this review provide great understanding into the present situation of theoretical and methodological integrity of Pakistani research on English language Assessment (ELA) and Language Assessment Literacy (LAL). One of the most obvious findings is that only two of the fifteen studies clearly mention a theoretical framework. Although most of the others exhibit some form of conceptual overlap, their theoretical assumptions remain implicit to a large extent. This trend indicates that literature is inclined toward paying attention to assessment practices and outcomes without always referring such inquiries to specific theoretical paradigms. These

omissions pose the danger of impairing the analytical depth and cumulative possibilities of the study.

The Framework Methodology Alignment analysis helps to demonstrate that despite the absence of declarations of theoretical frameworks in research, methodological choices tend to indicate the existence of paradigms. Indicatively, research that implicitly relied on psychometric or functionalist orientations leveraged structured survey designs and often had instruments like the LAKS or TPAS scales. Conversely, researchers who were inclined towards reflective or socio-cognitive orientations preferred qualitative interviews, classroom discourse analysis and narrative inquiry. This tendency reflects a certain consistency in epistemology, according to which researchers, possibly in an intuitive way, coordinate their methodological decisions with theoretical orientations, even when these were not clearly expressed.

Similarly, the CSR-Based Conceptual Coding Matrix categorizes studies into broader epistemological and methodological groupings, such as constructivist-quantitative, critical-interpretivist, or positivist-curricular. This categorization not only highlights the diversity of theoretical approaches in the corpus but also underscores the relative dominance of certain orientations—particularly positivist and constructivist approaches—in LAL research. The matrix reveals that while some studies demonstrate thoughtful integration of conceptual and empirical design, others suffer from a lack of theoretical transparency, making it difficult to situate findings within broader academic conversations.

In conclusion to the discussion, the analysis indicates that, although most of the LAL studies in Pakistan have portrayed the tacit form of the theory-method congruence, the lack of explicit statements of the theoretical framework is still identified as a major gap. This divide not only restricts the capacity of the field to develop a common conceptual vocabulary but also weakens the reproducibility and quality of individual studies. The lack of explicit theoretical articulation in most of the studies can be regarded as a wider problem in the research on ELA and LAL to join the conceptual rigor with empirical research. Strengthening this relationship can be used to develop the quality and significance of the research to be conducted in the Pakistani situation.

In the future, researchers should be clearer about their positions of theoretical orientation and should align them with their methodological strategies. This will enrich the cognitive strength and cumulative value of LAL research in Pakistan.

6. Conclusion

This study positions itself as a contribution to LAL scholarship that highlights not only what is being studied in Pakistan but also how—and under what conceptual lens. It calls for clearer and more deliberate alignment between theoretical paradigms and research strategies in order to strengthen the cumulative impact of LAL inquiry in the region.

The landscape of ELA research in Pakistan reveals an emerging but uneven engagement with theory. While some studies demonstrate high levels of theoretical grounding (e.g., Hidri et al., 2024), others rely on practical or policy-based rationales without connecting explicitly to foundational paradigms. This variability limits the generalizability and theoretical development of Language Assessment Literacy as a field.

Future researchers should be more deliberate in declaring and justifying their theoretical frameworks and ensuring alignment with methodology. Doing so not only strengthens internal validity but also supports cumulative theory-building—an essential step for institutionalizing ELA and LAL research in the Global South.

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Future research should focus on theory-informed interventions that explore how Pakistani researchers and English language teachers interpret and enact these assessment paradigms across diverse institutional and geographic settings. Only through such a shift can assessment serve not merely as a measure of performance, but as a transformative tool for language learning in Pakistan.

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