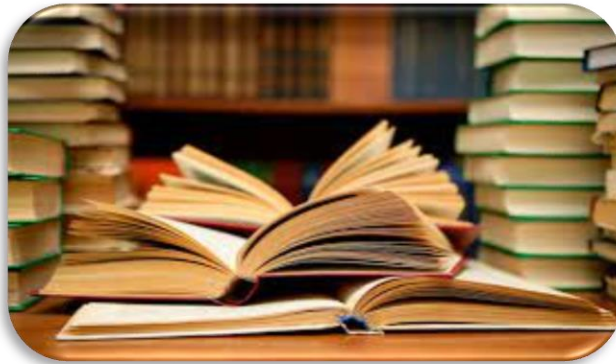## Research Paper

Effect of Learner-Oriented Assessment through Peer and Self-assessment on EFL learners' Perceptions of Self-Assessment Practices: A Phenomenographic Study

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ABSTRACT

Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA), challenging traditional assessment methods, emphasizes feedback and adaptation, fostering higher-order learning and improved student-teacher interactions. This research seeks to address the gap in existing literature regarding alternative assessment approaches in EFL contexts. Therefore, this study investigated the effect of LOA through peer and self-assessment on Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of self-assessment practices. To this end, this study utilized a phenomenographic approach to explore Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) among 32 EFL learners engaged in LOA, peer assessment (n=17) and self-assessment (n=15). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, ensuring ethical standards and participants' consent. Analysis followed Marton's methodology, employing rigorous coding, member checking, and respondent validation to guarantee reliability and credibility. The findings revealed that enhanced self-awareness, goal-centered learning, intrinsic motivation, focused improvement, and a shift in assessment perception were central themes within self-assessment. Additionally, themes such as enhanced peer interaction, empowerment for evaluation, quality of feedback, growth mindset, transparency, fairness, motivation, and engagement emerged within the realm of peer assessment, which emphasized the collaborative nature of peer assessment, the development of evaluative competence and ownership of learning, the importance of high-quality feedback, the cultivation of a growth-oriented mindset, and the promotion of motivation and engagement among learners. The findings suggest that integrating LOA in language education fosters deeper engagement, critical thinking, and a positive mindset toward learning and assessment.

Keywords: *EFL learners; Learning-Oriented Assessment; Peer-assessment; Phenomenographic Study; Self-assessment*

ارزشیابی مبتنی بر یادگیری، با به چالش کشیدن روش‌های سنتی ارزشیابی، بر بازخورد و انطباق تأکید دارد و یادگیری در سطوح بالاتر و تعامل بهتر میان دانش‌آموز و معلم را تقویت می‌کند. این پژوهش به دنبال پر کردن خلأ موجود در ادبیات تحقیق درباره روش‌های جایگزین ارزشیابی در زمینه آموزش زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی است. بنابراین، این مطالعه تأثیر ارزشیابی مبتنی بر یادگیری از طریق ارزشیابی همتایان و خودارزشیابی را بر ادراک زبان‌آموزان ایرانی از خودارزشیابی بررسی کرده است. در این راستا، این پژوهش از رویکرد پدیدارنگاری برای بررسی سواد ارزشیابی زبان در میان ۳۲ زبان‌آموز که در ارزشیابی مبتنی بر یادگیری شرکت داشتند، شامل گروه‌های ارزشیابی همتایان (۱۷ نفر) و خودارزشیابی (۱۵ نفر) استفاده کرده است. داده‌ها از طریق مصاحبه‌های نیمه‌ساختاریافته جمع‌آوری شدند و استانداردهای اخلاقی و رضایت شرکت‌کنندگان رعایت گردید. تحلیل داده‌ها بر اساس روش مارتون انجام شد و کدنویسی دقیق، بازبینی اعضا و تأیید پاسخ‌دهندگان برای تضمین قابلیت اعتماد و اعتبار به کار گرفته شد. یافته‌ها نشان داد که افزایش خودآگاهی، یادگیری هدف‌محور، انگیزه درونی، بهبود متمرکز و تغییر در ادراک ارزشیابی از موضوعات مرکزی در خودارزشیابی بودند. همچنین، در حوزه ارزشیابی همتایان، موضوعاتی مانند افزایش تعامل همتایان، توانمندسازی در ارزیابی، کیفیت بازخورد، ذهنیت رشد، شفافیت، عدالت، انگیزه و مشارکت به چشم می‌خورد که ماهیت مشارکتی ارزشیابی همتایان، توسعه شایستگی ارزیابی و مالکیت یادگیری، اهمیت بازخورد باکیفیت، پرورش ذهنیت رشدگرا و تقویت انگیزه و مشارکت در میان زبان‌آموزان را برجسته می‌کردند. نتایج این مطالعه نشان می‌دهد که ادغام ارزشیابی مبتنی بر یادگیری در آموزش زبان، باعث تعامل عمیق‌تر، تفکر انتقادی و نگرش مثبت به یادگیری و ارزشیابی می‌شود.

واژگان کلیدی: زبان‌آموزان؛ ارزشیابی مبتنی بر یادگیری؛ ارزشیابی همتایان؛ مطالعه پدیدارنگاری؛ خودارزشیابی

INTRODUCTION

Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) is a relatively new approach in education and evaluation, introduced by Turner and Purpura (2015). It primarily seeks to integrate the domains of assessment, language, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). According to Jones and Saville (2016), LOA represents a shift from traditional assessment frameworks, challenging established practices (Beikmohammadi et al., 2020; Nurjamin et al., 2023). Historically, education systems have relied heavily on standardized tests, which often disrupted the learning process (Alibakhshi, 2013; Alibakhshi & Sarani, 2014). These tests emphasized memorization and rote learning, often neglecting the practical application of knowledge. LOA was developed to address these shortcomings by redefining the concept of assessment (Rezai et al., 2021).

As outlined in the literature, LOA diverges from traditional norm-based and criterion-referenced assessment models (Purpura & Turner, 2014). Instead, it emphasizes providing feedback and sharing grading responsibilities. Unique to LOA, feedback is delayed and delivered after a few sessions, enabling students and instructors to better understand educational goals and expectations (Derakhshan & Ghiasvand, 2022). This allows teachers to tailor their instruction to address specific student needs, helping learners focus on areas where they lack knowledge.

Carless (2007), along with Yan and Carless (2022), identified three core components of LOA. First, assessment tasks are designed to encourage higher-order learning outcomes. Second, various activities help students evaluate and enhance their performance. Finally, dialectic feedback involves engaging students in discussions about their progress (Pitt & Carless, 2022). These components create a robust framework that enables teachers to assess and support students' learning outcomes, providing valuable insights into their progress.

LOA has gained considerable momentum, with its integration into both general education and language teaching. Carless (2015) highlighted studies across disciplines show LOA fosters meaningful interactions between students and teachers, improving both the quality and frequency of such exchanges. Its goal is to advance language development and provide educators with tools to make informed assessments of student performance, bridging the gap between formative and summative evaluation to enhance learning outcomes (Carless, 2015, p. 711). Research confirms the successful implementation of LOA in diverse educational contexts, delivering positive results (Nurjamin et al., 2023; Plakans & Gebril, 2015).

LOA manifests in various forms, including peer assessment (PA) and self-assessment (SA). PA involves students evaluating their peers' work, offering feedback, and sometimes assigning grades collaboratively with teachers (Falchikov, 2001; Liu & Carless, 2006). This process strengthens teacher-student relationships and equips students with critical skills for academic and professional growth (Spiller, 2012). In contrast, SA, as defined by Paris and Paris (2001), is a learner's ability to evaluate their work. It provides insights into students' perceptions of their abilities, progress, and areas needing improvement (Blanche & Merino, 1989). Such self-awareness is crucial in language learning.

Given the emphasis on reading in foreign language classes, exploring effective teaching methods and evaluation approaches is essential. Reading assessments not only measure students' abilities but also reflect the broader effectiveness of the educational system, helping to address deficiencies (Huot, 2003). However, reading in EFL contexts presents unique challenges, as linguistic elements familiar to native
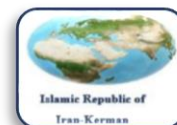
speakers become significant obstacles for learners, who must piece together their knowledge to express basic ideas (Weigle, 2002). To improve EFL students' reading skills, teachers need to adopt effective teaching strategies and assessment methods, balancing their strengths and weaknesses.

Febriyanti (2019) noted that reading is a multifaceted skill requiring the simultaneous use of numerous abilities. Among the four core language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—reading is particularly complex. Both reading and listening are receptive skills involving advanced cognitive processing (Nunan, 2015). However, EFL learners often struggle with reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary, reliance on their native language, and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom (Febriyanti, 2019). Additional barriers include difficulties with the alphabetic principle, challenges in transferring oral comprehension skills to reading, and low motivation to read (Grassinger et al., 2024). Effective reading requires perceptual, linguistic, cognitive, and practical abilities, making it a demanding process (Derakhshan & Ghiasvand, 2022).

Birjandi and Siyyari (2016) argued that teachers and administrators are concerned with high-stakes decisions driven by test results. However, the primary focus in educational assessment should be on learning itself. One method proposed to enhance learning while assessing language proficiency is academic assessment, realized through self-assessment and peer assessment. Despite substantial support for these approaches in the literature (e.g., Blanche, 1988; Oscarson, 1989), self- and peer-assessment, along with dynamic assessment, have emerged as effective tools for developing various skills and sub-skills, including writing (Seyed Erfani & Agha Ebrahimiyan, 2013), speaking (Hill & Sabet, 2009), reading (Guterman, 2002), listening (Ableeva, 2010), grammar (Kovacic et al., 2012), and vocabulary (Saeidi & Hosseinpour, 2013).

In the Iranian context, teaching and learning reading have largely relied on traditional methods, with limited exploration of alternative strategies. This trend is not unique to Iran, as alternative approaches remain under-researched in various educational systems. Over the past two decades, classrooms have increasingly incorporated learner-driven assessments, such as self- and peer-assessment, to evaluate language skills (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

For L2 reading skills, experienced educators have employed LOA strategies, such as teacher-student conferences and peer assessments, but these practices have not been widely adopted. Furthermore, research has seldom examined LOA's holistic application to reading comprehension, which integrates pedagogy, assessment, student learning, and teacher-student interaction (Al-Rashidi et al., 2022; Lee, 2007,). In many EFL contexts, including Iran, the curriculum is dominated by exams, and teacher-led assessments prevail, making LOA implementation a significant challenge.

Reading comprehension has gained prominence as a critical language skill because students need to understand both explicit and implicit meanings in texts (Yalin & Sozen, 2015). Mastery of reading and comprehension is essential for EFL learners' success (Ciarrochi & Mayer, 2007). However, some students can read fluently yet struggle to comprehend the content, a problem often linked to a lack of awareness about their learning styles (Soltani et al., 2015).

Reading comprehension poses considerable challenges because it requires familiarity with vocabulary, grammar, lexico-semantic features, and contextual meanings. In EFL classrooms, it has been observed that learners can read with proper pronunciation and intonation but fail to grasp meaning due

to mismatched teaching approaches and learning styles (Soltani et al., 2015). Teachers must adapt their methods to accommodate cognitive differences among learners (Ghapanchi & Dashti, 2011). However, in Iran, traditional teaching methods remain dominant, and few teachers recognize the potential of learner-driven assessments, such as self- and peer-assessment, to enhance reading comprehension and related strategies.

In the last two decades, research on reading in L1, L2, and FL has focused on strategies that readers employ to process texts. Cohen (1990) described reading strategies as mental processes consciously applied to complete reading tasks, while Garner (1987) emphasized their role in constructing meaning. These strategies range from traditional methods like skimming and inferring to more advanced techniques like activating schemata, recognizing text structures, generating questions, and monitoring comprehension (Block, 1986; Zhang et al., 2008). While strategies themselves are neutral, their effectiveness depends on how readers use them and their metacognitive awareness of the process (Cohen, 2007; Hudson, 2007).

In summary, reading comprehension remains a significant challenge due to students' limited ability to analyze texts effectively. Teachers need to employ strategies that address this issue, yet traditional assessments are still the norm in university English classes. Students often lack familiarity with self- and peer-assessments, limiting their ability to evaluate their reading performance, strategies, and progress. Additionally, teachers need to clarify the role and benefits of these methods for students. To address these challenges, the present study aims to investigate how self- and peer-assessment influence EFL learners' reading comprehension, strategy development, and self-evaluation accuracy. The findings will provide valuable insights and practical benefits for educators and learners.

This study's novelty lies in integrating LOA within EFL contexts, specifically focusing on reading comprehension. It highlights innovative assessment methods like peer and self-assessment, shifting away from traditional frameworks. Despite its valuable insights, there are gaps: a lack of empirical evidence on LOA's long-term effectiveness, challenges in teacher training, limited student perspective, and insufficient comparative and cultural context studies. Addressing these gaps could provide a more comprehensive understanding of LOA's impact and practical implementation.

Research Questions

In line with the research gap and objectives, the following questions are stated:

How does LOA through self-assessment affect EFL learners' perception of self-assessment practice?

How does LOA through peer assessment affect Iranian EFL learners' perception of self-assessment practice?

METHOD

Research Framework Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) is acknowledged as a multifaceted and intricate phenomenon susceptible to diverse interpretations across various individuals and contexts. To comprehensively capture this diversity, this study adopted a phenomenographic approach for data collection. Phenomenography, as elucidated by Creswell and Poth (2018), is a fitting qualitative methodology for unveiling a collective perspective on a specific phenomenon. Marton (1986) defines phenomenography as exploring the qualitatively distinct ways individuals experience, conceptualize,

perceive, and comprehend various aspects and phenomena in their surroundings (p. 31). Marton (1986) further notes that it strives to discover and systematize ways of thinking that synthesize how people interpret different aspects of reality.

Participants

A purposive sampling method was employed to select a sample of 32 EFL learners exposed to LOA, peer assessment (n=17) and self-assessment (n=15). Purposive sampling was chosen as it enables researchers to pinpoint, select, and categorize data-rich cases within the qualitative paradigm. Notably, data collection persisted until data saturation, signifying the time the information became repetitive and participants no longer contributed new insights. The participants comprised 18 male and 16 female EFL learners.

Ethical Considerations

It is imperative to highlight the ethical considerations observed throughout the study. Before conducting the semi-structured interviews, participants were apprised of the study's objectives. Assurance was provided that their privacy would be safeguarded, ensuring the confidentiality of their identities and responses during the interviews. Participants expressed their consent by signing an informed consent form in Chinese. The research team endeavored to establish a positive and warm atmosphere during the interviews, facilitating participants in expressing their perceptions comfortably. Moreover, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. The researchers diligently tried to present participants' perceptions, avoiding biases and misinterpretations accurately.

Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

A phenomenographic semi-structured interview, as outlined by Marton and Booth (1997), was employed to gather requisite data, inviting participants to reflect on their perceptions of test consequences. Initially, an interview checklist was developed through a comprehensive review test of impact, washback, and consequences literature, examining existing theories, frameworks, and instruments for measuring relevant constructs. Two language assessment specialists from X University validated the checklist, revolving around fundamental concepts of test consequences. Vague or problematic items were revised or eliminated based on their feedback.

Having designed and validated the checklist, semi-structured interviews commenced with an open-ended question: "What does test consequence mean to you?" Subsequent questions in the checklist were posed by the first researcher, occasionally supplemented with additional relevant queries to elicit more comprehensive responses. Conducted in both English and Persian to facilitate participants' expression, the interviews were recorded and transcribed for meticulous analysis. Interviews were conducted in diverse temporal and spatial contexts to enhance participant perspective variation. The informants were interviewed face-to-face in their offices. Each interview took about 40 to 60 minutes.

Data Analysis

The collected data underwent a multi-stage analysis following Marton's (1986) phenomenographic approach. Initially, researchers identified preconceived conceptions by reviewing the data and drafting an initial set of perceptions. Pre-categories were then derived from participants' actual words. In the subsequent stages, researchers compared and contrasted participants' words, identified regularities, and created larger pre-categories. Analysis based on principles of frequency, position, and pregnancy was conducted, leading to the selection of representative excerpts for each category. The final categories were established through individual and cross-sectional examination of meaning pools, adhering to a strict multi-stage approach for quality assurance and transferability.

Reliability and Validity Measures

Two researchers coded data concurrently to enhance reliability, yielding an inter-reliability coefficient of 0.90. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. For accuracy and credibility, member checking and respondent validation strategies were employed. Extracted constructs and concepts underwent review by three analysts, and participants were provided copies for approval, comments, and validation of meanings. Feedback and modifications ensured that the extracted constructs accurately represented participants' intended conceptions, establishing credibility by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) member-checking strategy.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

This question explores the impact of LOA through self-assessment on EFL learners' perceptions regarding self-assessment practices. Through a qualitative analysis, eight central themes have emerged, shedding light on the intricate relationship between self-assessment and learners' perceptions. Each theme is explained and exemplified as follows:

Enhanced Self-Awareness:

Enhanced self-awareness is a central theme that emerges from the impact of LOA through self-assessment. This theme highlights the transformative effect of LOA on learners' ability to reflect on their language learning journey, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

For instance, Student 1 stated, "Self-assessment has made me more reflective. I can now see where I excel and what I need to work on." This quotation underscores how LOA promotes introspection and a clearer self-perception, helping learners recognize their areas of proficiency and areas that require improvement.

Similarly, Student 2 stated, "It's like I've developed a mirror to my progress. Self-assessment helps me understand my language skills better." This student's statement further supports the central theme by emphasizing that LOA acts as a reflective tool, allowing learners to see their language learning journey more clearly, akin to looking in a mirror and gaining insights into their development.

Goal-centered learning

Through self-assessment, goal-centered learning emerged as another central theme within LOA. This theme accentuates the pivotal role of LOA in encouraging learners to establish well-defined language learning objectives, guiding their efforts. For instance, Student 1 stated, "I used to wander aimlessly in my studies. Now, self-assessment guides me to clear language learning goals." This quotation emphasizes how LOA, through self-assessment, enables learners to overcome the ambiguity that often accompanies language learning, empowering them to set precise and achievable language learning goals.

Similarly, Student 5 stated, "It's like I've found my North Star. Self-assessment helps me set the course for my language improvement." This statement complements the central theme by illustrating how LOA acts as a guiding light, helping learners establish a clear direction for their language learning journey, much like a mariner navigating by the North Star. It underscores the transformative power of goal-centered learning.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is another central theme within LOA through self-assessment. This theme underscores the profound effect of LOA in cultivating learners' internal drive and enhancing their sense of investment in the learning process.

For instance, Student 7 stated, "I used to study because I had to. Self-assessment has made it enjoyable. I want to learn." This quotation vividly illustrates how LOA, through self-assessment, transforms the nature of learning from an obligation to a source of genuine enjoyment. It highlights the emergence of intrinsic motivation.

Similarly, Student 9 stated, "It's like a spark inside me. Self-assessment ignites my motivation to keep learning." This student's words reinforce the central theme by portraying how LOA acts as a catalyst, sparking motivation within the learners. They paint a picture of the transformative power of intrinsic motivation in the context of self-assessment and LOA.

Focused improvement

Through self-assessment, focused improvement emerges as a central theme within the LOA context. This theme underscores the significant role of LOA in directing learners' attention to specific areas needing improvement, ensuring efficient and targeted learning. For instance, student 10 stated, "With self-assessment, I concentrate on what truly matters. It's like a GPS for my language skills." This quotation vividly portrays how LOA serves as a guiding tool, helping learners channel their efforts into areas of language learning that are most significant for their improvement.

Similarly, Student 11 stated, "Self-assessment acts as a filter, showing me where to channel my efforts for the most improvement." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme by describing LOA as a filtering mechanism, enabling learners to discern and prioritize the aspects of language learning that require their focus, thereby optimizing their learning process. It emphasizes the role of LOA in fostering focused improvement.

Shift in Assessment Perception:

The central theme of a shift in assessment perception is illuminated in the context of LOA through self-assessment. This theme underscores how LOA transforms learners' perception of assessment from a judgmental process to one focused on growth and development. For instance, Student 8 stated, "Assessment used to feel like a final verdict. Now, it's a journey of self-improvement." This quotation reflects the transformative power of LOA, which reshapes assessment as a continuous journey of self-improvement rather than a final judgment.

Similarly, Student 8 stated, "I used to fear assessment. With self-assessment, it feels like a ladder to climb, not a pit to fall into." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme by conveying how LOA reimagines assessment as a ladder to progress, dispelling the fear associated with traditional assessment methods.

Holistic Language Understanding:

The central theme of holistic language understanding emerges within the context of LOA through self-assessment. This theme underscores the role of LOA in helping learners connect language components, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the language. For example, Student 1 stated, "I used to see words in isolation. Self-assessment helps me see the bigger picture." This quotation vividly portrays how LOA enables learners to transcend the isolated view of language components, promoting a more holistic perspective. For example, student 2 stated, "It's like a puzzle coming together. Self-assessment connects the pieces of the language." This student's viewpoint aligns with the central theme by illustrating how LOA acts as a unifying force, piecing together language components to create a more interconnected and comprehensive understanding of the language.

Improved Confidence:

The central theme of improved confidence arises as another essential theme related to LOA. This theme highlights how LOA bolsters learners' confidence in their language abilities, fostering a more positive self-concept. For instance, Student 9 stated, "After self-assessing, I felt more confident in my English. It's like I attracted success." This quotation underscores the transformative power of LOA, which enhances learners' self-perception and imbues them with a sense of accomplishment and confidence. This finding also aligns with a quotation from student 13, who stated, "Self-assessment made me see my progress, and it attracted more motivation to improve." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme by depicting how LOA boosts confidence and ignites a drive for continuous improvement, resulting in a more positive self-concept.

Research Question 2:

This question explores the impact of LOA through peer assessment on Iranian EFL learners' perception of peer assessment practice. Through a qualitative analysis, eight central themes have emerged, shedding light on the intricate relationship between self-assessment and learners' perceptions. Each theme is explained and exemplified as follows:

Enhanced Peer Interaction:

The first emerged theme was "Enhanced Peer Interaction," a central aspect of LOA through peer assessment. This theme encapsulates two open themes, "Collaborative Learning" and "Constructive Feedback," which are pivotal in reshaping learners' perceptions and experiences in peer-assessment practices.

Collaborative Learning: Within the theme of enhanced peer interaction, "Collaborative Learning" represents the idea that LOA, through peer assessment, fosters increased peer interaction, creating a collaborative learning environment where learners actively engage with their peers.

For instance, Student 1 stated, "Peer-assessment has brought us closer. We discuss learning from each other, and it feels like a team effort." This quotation vividly illustrates the transformative power of peer assessment in building a sense of camaraderie among learners. It emphasizes how collaboration and teamwork have become integral to the learning process.

Similarly, Student 2 stated, "Learning from peers is enriching. We exchange ideas and correct each other, and it makes learning more interactive." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme by highlighting the enrichment derived from peer assessment. It underscores the notion that learning is dynamic and interactive when peers actively participate and engage with one another.

Constructive Feedback: Another integral component of the "Enhanced Peer Interaction" theme is "Constructive Feedback," which emphasizes how LOA encourages learners to provide and receive constructive feedback from peers. This practice enhances the quality of input and creates a supportive learning atmosphere.

For instance, Student 1 stated, "Peer feedback is honest but gentle. It's more about helping each other improve, not pointing out flaws." This quotation reflects feedback'sfeedback's positive and supportive nature within the peer-assessment framework. It underscores the idea that feedback is a means to facilitate improvement rather than criticize shortcomings.

Similarly, Student 2 stated, "Knowing my peers have my back boosts my confidence. We build each other up through feedback." This student's viewpoint aligns with the central theme by emphasizing the sense of support and camaraderie that constructive feedback fosters. It underscores the idea that peer assessment is about individual growth and collective support and encouragement.

Empowerment for Evaluation:

The second prominent theme that emerged is "Empowerment for Evaluation," which is central to LOA through peer assessment. This theme encompasses two key open themes, "Evaluative Competence" and "Ownership of Learning," highlighting the transformative impact of peer assessment on learners' perception and engagement with evaluation processes.

Evaluative Competence: The open theme "Evaluative Competence" underscores how LOA empowers learners to develop the ability to assess their peers' and their work critically. It enables them to move beyond surface-level judgments and engage in a deeper understanding of the evaluation process.

For instance, Student 1 expressed, "I've learned to evaluate objectively. It's not just about saying it's right or wrong; it's about understanding why." This quotation emphasizes how peer assessment equips

learners with the competence to provide constructive and objective evaluations beyond mere identification of correctness.

Similarly, Student 2 shared, "Peer-assessment makes me feel like a mini-teacher. I get to analyze, evaluate, and help my friends." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme, highlighting that peer assessment empowers learners to adopt a role similar to that of a teacher. It emphasizes their ability to critically analyze and evaluate their peers' work, promoting deeper learning.

Ownership of Learning: The second open theme, "Ownership of Learning," signifies the transformative impact of LOA, shifting the ownership of the learning process from the instructor to the learners. This empowerment makes learners active participants in shaping their educational experience.

For instance, Student 1 stated, "We have a say in our learning. It's not just about following rules; it's about owning our progress." This quotation underscores the idea that learners are no longer passive recipients of instruction but active contributors to their educational journey.

Similarly, Student 2 noted, "Peer-assessment gives us a voice. We're not just passive learners; we're shaping our education." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme by highlighting how peer assessment grants learners a voice in their educational experience. It emphasizes their active role in shaping and influencing the direction of their learning.

Quality of Feedback:

The "Quality of Feedback" theme represents a fundamental aspect of LOA through peer assessment. This theme encompasses two pivotal open themes, "Specific and Targeted Feedback" and "Balanced Feedback," highlighting the significant impact of peer assessment on the quality and comprehensiveness of feedback.

Specific and Targeted Feedback: The open theme "Specific and Targeted Feedback" underscores how LOA encourages peers to provide precise and focused feedback, ensuring learners receive actionable improvement advice.

For instance, Student 1 shared, "Peer feedback is precise. I know exactly what to work on, and it accelerates my progress." This quotation emphasizes the transformative power of peer assessment in providing learners with clear and specific guidance for their improvement, enhancing the quality of feedback.

Similarly, Student 2 noted, "It's not vague comments. It's like having a roadmap for improvement in front of me." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme, highlighting how peer assessment equips learners with specific and targeted feedback that serves as a roadmap for their educational journey.

Balanced Feedback: The second open theme, "Balanced Feedback," reflects how LOA promotes a balance in feedback, with peers addressing strengths and improvement areas. This approach fosters a fair and comprehensive assessment.

For instance, Student 1 stated, "Peers highlight what's good and what needs work. It's balanced and motivates us to do better." This quotation underlines the importance of balance in feedback, motivating learners to excel in their areas of strength while addressing areas requiring improvement.

Similarly, Student 2 articulated, "We're not just hearing about our mistakes. Peers also recognize our achievements, and it feels fair." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme by

emphasizing that peer assessment provides learners with a comprehensive view of their performance, acknowledging their strengths and areas for development.

Growth Mindset:

The theme "Growth Mindset" encapsulates the transformative impact of LOA through peer assessment, emphasizing a shift from grades to a mindset focused on growth and development. This theme comprises two integral open themes: "Shift from Grades to Growth" and "Resilience and Adaptability."

Shift from Grades to Growth: The open theme "Shift from Grades to Growth" underlines how LOA prompts learners to focus from grades to a growth mindset. Learners begin to value the learning process more than the result. For instance, Student 1 stated, "It's not about the grade; it's about getting better. Peer assessment reminds us it's a journey." This quotation emphasizes the transformative shift in perspective, where learners no longer view assessment as a mere grading process but as a journey of continuous improvement.

Similarly, Student 2 shared, "We're no longer just chasing grades; we're chasing progress, and it's more fulfilling." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme, highlighting the fulfillment of valuing progress and growth over grades.

Resilience and Adaptability: The second open theme, "Resilience and Adaptability," highlights how LOA nurtures resilience and adaptability in learners, making them more open to feedback and eager to adapt to enhance their performance.

For instance, Student 1 expressed, "We're less afraid of making mistakes. It's about learning from them and growing stronger." This quotation underscores the resilience developed through peer assessment, where learners perceive mistakes as opportunities for growth.

Similarly, Student 2 noted, "Peer feedback doesn't break us; it builds us. We're more resilient and eager to improve." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme by emphasizing that peer assessment fosters resilience and a willingness to adapt and improve based on feedback.

Transparency and Fairness:

The theme "Transparency and Fairness" highlights the essential role of LOA through peer assessment in promoting transparent evaluation criteria and fostering a sense of equality and inclusivity. This theme comprises two key open themes: "Open Evaluation Criteria" and "Equality and Inclusivity."

Open Evaluation Criteria: The open theme "Open Evaluation Criteria" underscores how LOA encourages transparency by providing learners with open evaluation criteria. This transparency ensures that learners understand how they are assessed, eliminating uncertainty.

For instance, Student 1 stated, "We know what's expected. It's not a mystery. We're all on the same page." This quotation emphasizes the importance of clear and open evaluation criteria, which enable all learners to have a common understanding of assessment expectations.

Similarly, Student 2 noted, "The criteria are clear. We know how we'll be judged, and it feels fair." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme, highlighting how transparent criteria contribute to a sense of fairness in the assessment process.

Equality and Inclusivity: The second open theme, "Equality and Inclusivity," signifies how LOA promotes equality and inclusivity by allowing all learners to provide feedback and be heard, regardless of their background.

For instance, Student 1 expressed, "It doesn't matter where we come from. In peer assessment, everyone's opinion counts." This quotation underscores that peer assessment values each learner's perspective, regardless of background or origins.

Similarly, Student 2 shared, "We're all equal assessors. It's not about who you are; it's about your input." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme, emphasizing the equality and inclusivity fostered by peer assessment, which focuses on the quality of input rather than personal characteristics.

Motivation and Engagement:

The theme "Motivation and Engagement" underscores the pivotal role of LOA through peer assessment in enhancing intrinsic motivation and active participation and promoting learners' engagement in learning. This theme encompasses three central open themes: "Intrinsic Motivation," "Active Participation," and "Enhanced Critical Thinking."

Intrinsic Motivation: The open theme "Intrinsic Motivation" emphasizes how LOA underpins intrinsic motivation, encouraging learners to engage more in learning. Learners are motivated to give their best as they see the value of peer feedback.

For instance, Student 1 stated, "We're motivated to give our best. Knowing peers will evaluate us pushes us to excel." This quotation highlights how peer assessment acts as a motivating factor, compelling learners to strive for excellence in their work.

Similarly, Student 2 noted, "Peer feedback fuels our desire to do better. It's not just an assignment; it's a chance to improve." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme by underscoring how peer assessment transforms assignments into opportunities for improvement, motivating learners intrinsically.

Active Participation: The second open theme, "Active Participation," signifies how LOA promotes active involvement. Learners become more engaged in assignments when they know their peers will evaluate their work.

For instance, Student 1 expressed, "Peer assessment makes us more involved. We want to contribute and help our peers." This quotation highlights that peer assessment encourages learners to actively participate in learning by contributing to their peers' assessments.

Similarly, Student 2 shared, "We're not passive learners. It's interactive and engaging. We want to excel in front of our peers." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme, emphasizing how peer assessment transforms learners into active participants, striving for excellence in a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

Enhanced Critical Thinking: The third open theme, "Enhanced Critical Thinking," reflects how LOA enhances learners' analytical skills and fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Learners critically assess their peers' work, leading to more comprehensive comprehension.

For instance, Student 1 articulated, "We're like detectives, spotting what needs improvement. It's made us better critical thinkers." This quotation underlines how peer assessment is a platform for learners to develop their analytical skills and become more proficient critical thinkers.

Similarly, Student 2 noted, "Peer assessment is a challenge for our brains. We analyze, identify, and it boosts our thinking skills." This student's perspective aligns with the central theme by highlighting that peer assessment enhances critical thinking and broadens learners' perspectives, resulting in a more profound understanding of the subject matter.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the transformative impact of LOA through self-assessment and peer assessment on EFL learners' perceptions. These assessments provide valuable insights into students' language learning journey and reshape their attitudes towards assessment practices and the learning process. The first research question investigated the influence of LOA through self-assessment on learners' perceptions. The emerging themes elucidate several critical aspects of this impact. Enhanced self-awareness was a central theme, highlighting how self-assessment fosters reflection and a deeper understanding of one's language learning strengths and weaknesses. This finding resonates with the literature, which emphasizes the role of self-assessment in promoting metacognitive awareness and self-regulated learning (Carless, 2007; Dörrenbächer-et al., 2023; Nurjamin et al., 2023; Paris & Paris, 2001). It can also be in accord with what Siegesmund (2017) postulated, expressing that learner achievement is often challenged by an absence of metacognition and the capability of automated learning. Thus, employing self-assessment to enhance learners' metacognition positively affects their learning and self-regulation.

Moreover, goal-centered learning emerged as another prominent theme, emphasizing the role of self-assessment in guiding learners to set clear language learning objectives. This finding underscores the importance of goal setting in language learning, as learners who establish specific goals are likelier to demonstrate higher levels of motivation and achievement (Locke & Latham, 2002). To put it differently, motivation inspires learners to function vigorously and establish an optimum self-image, which assists them (Çakmak et al., 2023). Thus, learning-oriented assessment motivates learners and leads to successful second language acquisition (Al-Hoorie et al., 2022; Dörnyei et al., 2016).

Intrinsic motivation also emerged as a central theme, highlighting how self-assessment transforms learning from a compulsory task to a source of enjoyment and personal fulfillment. This finding aligns with research suggesting that intrinsic motivation is crucial for sustained engagement and achievement in language learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985). It further aligns with Grassinger et al. (2024), asserting that feeling well in the learning context is crucial for both learners' healthy self-development and intrinsic learning motivation.

Furthermore, the themes of focused improvement and a shift in assessment perception underscored the role of self-assessment in directing learners' attention to areas needing improvement and reshaping their perception of assessment as a journey of continuous improvement rather than a final verdict. These findings corroborate previous research indicating that self-assessment promotes a growth mindset and a positive attitude toward learning (Dweck, 2006).

The second research question examined the impact of LOA through peer assessment on learners' perceptions. The emerging themes elucidate how peer assessment fosters collaboration, empowerment, and motivation among learners. Enhanced peer interaction emerged as a central theme, highlighting how

peer assessment promotes collaborative learning environments where learners actively engage with their peers. This finding aligns with research suggesting peer interaction enhances learning outcomes and supports social cohesion (Vygotsky, 1978). It resonates with what was argued by concluding that learners' perception of their contribution to teamwork promotes engagement and increases their learning (Adesina et al., 2022). Also, it can be inferred from this emerging theme that learners' perception and the overall experience of assessing their peers' work influence their involvement within a group.

Moreover, empowerment for evaluation emerged as another prominent theme, emphasizing how peer assessment empowers learners to evaluate their and their peers' work critically. This finding underscores the importance of peer assessment in developing evaluative competence and ownership of learning as learners become active participants in the assessment process (Topping, 1998, 2017).

The themes of quality of feedback and growth mindset further underscored the transformative impact of peer assessment on learners' perceptions. Peer assessment enhances the quality of feedback and promotes a shift from grades to a mindset focused on growth and development. These findings align with research suggesting that peer assessment promotes a deeper understanding of the subject matter and fosters a sense of agency. This is reflected in research by Shen et al. (2020), who believe peer assessment promotes learners' autonomy. Peer assessment can remarkably decrease learners' dependence on the instructor and enhance their confidence in learning ability. It is also associated with resilience among learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study illuminate the transformative impact of LOA through both self-assessment and peer assessment on the perceptions and experiences of EFL learners. Several central themes emerged through qualitative analysis, highlighting how LOA influences learners' attitudes toward assessment practices and their language learning journey. Enhanced self-awareness, goal-centered learning, intrinsic motivation, focused improvement, and a shift in assessment perception were identified as central themes within self-assessment. These themes underscored the profound effects of self-assessment in promoting reflection, goal setting, internal motivation, targeted improvement, and a positive mindset toward assessment. Similarly, themes such as enhanced peer interaction, empowerment for evaluation, quality of feedback, growth mindset, transparency, fairness, motivation, and engagement emerged within the realm of peer assessment. These themes emphasized the collaborative nature of peer assessment, the development of evaluative competence and ownership of learning, the importance of high-quality feedback, the cultivation of a growth-oriented mindset, and the promotion of motivation and engagement among learners. Together, these findings highlight the transformative potential of LOA in promoting meaningful and empowering learning experiences for EFL learners.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching for language educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Firstly, incorporating LOA principles into language teaching practices can enhance the effectiveness of assessment strategies and promote more meaningful learning outcomes. By emphasizing self-assessment and peer assessment as integral components of the learning process, educators can empower learners to take ownership of their learning journey, cultivate intrinsic motivation, and develop critical thinking skills. Additionally, fostering collaborative learning environments where peers provide constructive feedback can enhance social cohesion, communication skills, and intercultural competence among learners. Moreover, promoting transparency and fairness in

assessment practices can help reduce anxiety and promote a positive attitude towards assessment. Secondly, these findings underscore the importance of providing professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their understanding and implementation of LOA principles. Educational institutions can promote more student-centered and empowering learning environments by equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement self-assessment and peer-assessment strategies effectively. Finally, policymakers can be crucial in advocating for integrating LOA principles into language education policies and curriculum frameworks. By recognizing the importance of assessment as a tool for learning rather than just evaluation, policymakers can support initiatives that promote student engagement, autonomy, and achievement in language learning contexts. Overall, the findings of this study highlight the transformative potential of LOA in fostering meaningful and empowering learning experiences for EFL learners, with important implications for educational practice and policy.

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