



Research Article

The Effect of Learning-oriented Assessment on Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore the impact of learning-oriented assessment (LOA), specifically peer assessment (PA) and self-assessment (SA), on the reading comprehension scores of Iranian EFL learners. The research focused on determining whether these alternative assessment strategies could lead to significant improvements in reading comprehension compared to traditional assessment methods. To ensure a consistent level of English proficiency among participants, 75 female EFL students, aged 18-35 and at an intermediate level, were assessed using the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The students were then divided into three groups: one utilizing peer assessment (N=25), another employing self-assessment (N=25), and a control group using traditional assessment methods (N=25). The study utilized a pretest-posttest design to evaluate the participants' performance before and after the intervention. A reading comprehension exam from the Headway series at the intermediate level was administered for both the pre-test and post-test. Statistical analyses, including paired samples t-tests and independent samples t-tests, were conducted to assess the significance of any changes in scores. Results indicated that all three groups showed improvements in reading comprehension scores. Notably, the paired samples t-test revealed significant enhancements in the posttest scores of the treatment groups (SA and PA) compared to their pretest scores, confirming the effectiveness of LOA on reading comprehension. The findings also suggest that LOA can meaningfully enhance reading comprehension among EFL learners. Consequently, the study advocated for a shift from conventional teacher-centered assessment methods to more learner-centered approaches, encouraging both teachers and students to embrace these innovative assessment strategies.



Introduction

One of the key elements influencing both student learning and teacher practice is classroom assessment (McDaniel et al., 2007). According to Tsagari and Vogt (2017), classroom assessment significantly affects instruction and student attainment. Language education and learning have long been acknowledged to require assessment (Derakhshan, 2020). There are two main uses for language assessment in a language classroom. Language assessments can be used as a summative tool to gauge students' language competency, determine their ultimate performance, classify them into various proficiency levels, and identify their language issues. Furthermore, language assessments can be used as a formative tool to help students track their progress, pinpoint their areas of strength and weakness, and find the best ways to improve their chances of learning (Katz, 2014; Leung, 2013).

The shift from measurement-oriented to learning-oriented facets of assessment in the classroom suggests a shift toward classroom assessment for prompting student learning effectiveness. The learning culture and the succeeding moves have laid the foundation for other kinds of assessments, including self, peer, portfolio, and dynamic assessments, as well as diary studies (Lee, 2017; Leung et al., 2018). Despite slight differences, all alternative assessment methods are based on the idea of incorporating assessments and rules to enhance learning (Davison, 2019). Learning-oriented assessment (LOA) is a theoretical model that presupposes a learning culture (Carless, 2007; Purpura & Turner, 2014). As Keppell and Carless (2006) note, LOA stands out in comparison to other related concepts, such as assessment for learning, because it can be used in any form of assessment practice as long as the goal is to encourage learning. In particular, it should be noted that LOA should be viewed as

distinct from other alternative assessment approaches, such as dynamic and diagnostic assessments, despite their similarities (Poehner, 2011).

Moreover, Self-evaluation, as the second main principle of LOA of the reading process, can help individuals monitor their understanding (Ditzel, 2010). This indicates that learners might become more aware of their own reading processes through self-assessment (SA). In addition, peer-assessment (PA), as the second main principle of LOA, is the process of having students' classmates evaluate their work within the confines of predetermined standards (Tunagür, 2021). By utilizing PA, students are able to demonstrate a variety of behaviors, such as writing with greater care, becoming more dynamic and self-assured when learning and being assessed, and reflecting on their own performance (Yurdabakan, 2012). Moreover, PA can improve pupils' interpersonal abilities, sense of responsibility, self-assurance, and ability to negotiate. Additionally, it can turn inactive learning into active one in a way that spurs students' attention (Esfandiari & Tavassoli, 2019).

Reading, according to Baker and Beall (2009), is an assessing process as because the reader must determine whether the content being read is cohesive and serves the intended purpose. Reading is a method of passing information between the writer and the reader (Cahyono, 2011). Thus, comprehension is the primary objective of reading, and all other goals are just pre-requisite means to that (Goldenberg, 2011). It is the most important ability that learners, especially those who are studying a foreign language and want to advance their knowledge and language acquisition, must acquire (Ritonga et al., 2022). Monitoring comprehension including planning, monitoring, and assessing reading techniques, is essential for success in reading (Estacio, 2013; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2012). Furthermore, reading comprehension offers

students the best opportunity to interact with English as a foreign language and gain knowledge that can be applied outside of the classroom. This has been linked to high academic achievement and the quality of learning (Garcia et al., 2018). Additionally, students' motivation, particularly their interest in reading-related activities and their adherence to learning methodologies, can greatly affect their ability to grasp what they read (Bzunceck & Boruchovitch, 2016).

The central hypothesis of the study was that by enhancing students' assessment skills and promoting engagement with feedback through interactions with teachers, PA, and SA opportunities, learner autonomy and reading strategies could be fostered. This would ultimately lead to a reduction in reading comprehension difficulties and improve students' overall comprehension of reading. The researchers aimed to investigate how LOA would affect Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension and gather empirical evidence to support this effect.

Literature Review

Assessment in General

Assessment as a crucial aspect of teaching has been emphasized by several researchers and experts. According to Backman (2015), the term assessment refers to a wide range of techniques used to evaluate and reach judgments regarding the progress students have made in their academic work. Brown (2003) defined assessment as a process that is distinct from testing; while testing occurs at a specific point in time, assessment is an ongoing process that takes place regularly. Similarly, Chong (2023) described assessment as any action, inside or outside the classroom that attempts to gather data on language learners' performance, competency, knowledge, and skills. In fact, removing obstacles to learning is the primary objective of any kind of education.

Moreover, assessment is utilized to analyze students' performance, promote learning, and alter instruction (Ghahderijani et al., 2021).

In this regard, there are two main types of assessment, including formative and summative. Large-scale proficiency exams or end-of-term summative assessments designed to offer external evaluations of L2 performance have historically been the mainstays of L2 or foreign language assessment (Turner & Purpura, 2015). Additionally, according to Glazer (2014), summative exams typically provide students with a score and little to no feedback. As a result, summative assessments are rarely used for learning purposes and are mainly used to measure learning. At this point, most formal learning has ended, with the possible exception of any incidental learning that may occur from completing tasks and assignments (Wuest & Fisette, 2012).

Furthermore, according to Ahmed et al. (2019), formative assessments are the processes used to regularly evaluate students' growth and comprehension in order to identify their needs and modify teachers' instruction accordingly. These assessments are conducted throughout a course, rather than just at the end of it. There are various formats for formative assessments, including qualitative methods such as offering observations and comments, and quantitative methods such as quizzes and grades. The primary goal of formative assessments is to aid students in expanding their knowledge (Buyukkarci & Sahinkarakas, 2021). According to Ozan and Kınca (2018), formative assessments are crucial and legitimate components of integrating assessment and instruction.

While summative assessments measure learning, formative assessments provide feedback to improve learning. Students who participate in formative assessments receive comments on how to improve their work, which can help them understand the assessment process more deeply.

However, summative and formative assessments produce different kinds of evidence that are complementary to one another. The dual aims of these two dimensions are to produce better learning outcomes as well as improved measurement and explanation of those results (Jones, & Saville, 2016).

Alternative Assessment

Although most instructional contexts still use teacher-centered evaluations, concerns about the shortcomings and possible drawbacks of traditional assessment have led to the gradual development of alternative assessments (Al-Rashidi et al, 2023). The creation of alternative assessments was mostly a response to critiques of the teacher-centered evaluations, claim Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2018). The emphasis on long-term retention of material, which frequently comes at the expense of students' creativity and autonomy in various learning activities, is one of the most obvious shortcomings in traditional education (Bourke & Mentis, 2011). Stated differently, conventional teacher-centered evaluation techniques do not encourage students to think critically about topics beyond what is being considered or to develop effective solutions when faced with unfamiliar problems.

Therefore, this highlights the need for alternative assessment strategies that prioritize the learner and contrast with the traditional teacher-oriented approach that undervalues the role of the student. The importance of students' participation in assessment procedures as well as their decision-making in learning and teaching is emphasized by learner-centered assessment methods (Coombe et al., 2007). Over the past 20 years, various alternative assessment methods have grown in popularity in English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) classrooms (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018).

Consequently, learning oriented assessment (LOA) was created by the standards-based education that emerged in the course of time, and tried continually to balance and blend the three assessment categories (Zeng et al., 2018). LOA has emerged as a new trend in language assessment to overcome the drawbacks of language assessment, which focuses on centered teaching and memorization.

Learning-oriented Assessment (LOA)

LOA intends to stimulate students' learning by locating the learning focus of assessment. The concept of learning-oriented (LOA) was first introduced in the field of education (Carless, 2006) and has since been applied to language instruction and assessment (Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2015) with the goal of maximizing the effectiveness of various assessment methods in a language classroom to ensure that learning has taken place (Ploegh et al., 2009). Purpura and Turner (2014) claimed that evaluation is regarded as a crucial component of learning in LOA and guides instructional choices. According to Carless et al. (2006), LOA does not strive to replace existing assessment strategies, but rather to create a culture of assessment that is informed by learning, with a greater emphasis on the learning components than on the measuring ones.

In view of this, LOA highlights the learning process in an integrated manner, reflecting the formative assessment (Carless, 2007). Theoretically, LOA is typically practiced in the context of formative classroom assessment (Jones & Saville, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2015). Nevertheless, both formative and summative assessments seek to quantify learning results. Both kinds of assessments can be regarded as serving the objective of encouraging learning when they are created to support suitable student development (Carless, 2007). Summative assessments can also

be learning-oriented under specific circumstances, such as by fostering a high degree of cognitive engagement during the test and encouraging in-depth rather than surface-level strategies (Carless, 2015). Thus, through LOA, the idea of assessment was reexamined (Estaji & Safari, 2023).

According to Jones and Saville (2016), LOA can be seen as a response to conventional assessment models. Many educators held the general opinion that conventional testing could distort education because it required students to memorize material from books and regurgitate it during exams (Purpura & Turner, 2014). Consequently, it can be said that conventional testing ignored the practicality of knowledge (Carless, 2007). The shift from summative to formative and autonomous assessment is emphasized by the LOA as a comprehensive assessment strategy (Gao, 2017).

Reading Comprehension Skill

Reading comprehension, according to Seymour (quoted in Pallathadka et al., 2022), is the ability to decipher information from texts. The importance of reading comprehension for academic achievement cannot be overstated. Learning to read has a significant impact on one's life (Alawajee & Almutairi, 2022). It is the key to expanding one's knowledge and excelling at work (Castles et al., 2018). According to Guo (2008), reading comprehension is a cognitive ability that requires interaction between the reader, the text, and the task.

Additionally, Papalia (2004) argued that comprehending the meaning of a text is essentially the same as understanding how the text is structured, particularly in terms of training and psychology. According to Wallace and Wray (2015), reading is a unitary and selective process in which the reader actively engages with the text in order to gain knowledge. Additionally, background knowledge plays a crucial role in forming

situational or contextual understanding (Thoyyibah, 2022). Fatemopour and Hashemi (2016) assert that reading in English, as an L2, is essential to academic success. There are several reasons for such a claim. Firstly, the majority of interactions between foreign language learners and the target language occur through reading, as they have limited direct access to and exposure to it outside of the classroom (Boss, 2002, as cited in Altamimi, 2006). Secondly, according to Renandya et al. (1999), reading is particularly important for foreign language learners who want to be able to read for pleasure, gather information, advance their career, and for academic purposes.

The Current Study

Traditional approaches to assessment, which primarily focus on tasks, rubrics, criteria, and scales, are inadequate for fully capturing the complexity of evaluating language learning. Additionally, there is a growing recognition of the importance of aligning teaching, learning, and assessment (Poehner & Inbar-Lourie, 2020). Language acquisition, teaching, and evaluation have often been treated as separate and disconnected components, rather than as interconnected and interdependent aspects. (Figueras, 2021).

In many cases, teachers, whose primary role is to teach, assess, provide feedback to, and make decisions about their students, are often asked to provide external and standardized tests that have been prepared and scored externally (Figueras, 2021). Unfortunately, the use of large-scale standardized tests has led to a systematized approach to assessment that may not effectively promote learning (Jones, & Saville, 2016). This type of test-based assessment has several negative consequences, such as prioritizing test preparation over actual learning, increasing pressure on

students and teachers, and limiting the scope of the curriculum (Gebriel, 2021).

Meanwhile, as Herman et al. (2020) stated, English reading has long been acknowledged as one of the main objectives of English teaching since it may partially evaluate the students' ability to grasp the language. In addition, the written word still serves a variety of important purposes, including informing, amusing, and entertaining, codifying social, economic, and legal customs (Brown, 2018).

Previous research has shown that LOA can enhance students' pronunciation (Navaie, 2018), reading (Kim, 2022), speaking (Hamp-Lyons, 2017; May et al., 2020; Wu & Miller, 2020), and writing (Estaji & Safari, 2023). However, there is a dearth of research specifically focusing on the application of LOA in Iranian EFL reading classes. Additionally, there has been little attention given to how LOA influences the development of L2 reading ability in Iran's EFL contexts. This study aimed to address this gap in the literature by addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: Does SA have any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension scores?

RQ2: Does PA have any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension scores?

RQ3: Does LOA have any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension scores?

Methodology

Participants

The participants of the study were selected from a group of English language students aged 18-35 at an institute in Tehran, Iran. Specifically, the study included 75 lower intermediate-level female EFL students. All 105 participants were evaluated using the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to ensure consistency in their English proficiency. It is worth

noting that only 75 students who scored within the range of 28-36, corresponding to the B1 (Lower-intermediate) proficiency level, were included in the study. Based on their results, the students were randomly divided into three groups: PA (N=25) and SA (N=25) as experimental groups, and conventional assessment (N=25) as the control group. All groups were presented with the same content.

Instruments

Learning-oriented Reading Assessment Model

A learning-oriented reading assessment model was developed based on the second and the third LOA frameworks (Carless, 2006) with respect to the concepts of reading ability, reading instruction and reading assessment. The model consisted of four learning modules. At the first meeting with the participants of the experimental groups, the teacher introduced the idea of PA and SA, the purpose, components, and the procedures of these evaluations for each experimental group. The control group, on the other hand, received a conventional (i.e., teacher) rating. The PA and SA processes were then implemented in each experimental group. The instructional process used in this study focused on the concept of learner-centered assessment. It included pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities, all of which were essential for the development and completion of the reading process.

Oxford Placement Test

An efficient method for determining a person's current level of language proficiency is the OPT. Institutions and organizations utilize it extensively for recruitment, selection, as well as placement of students in the right language course. The 2001 OPT version has 60 items total. Because the test is adaptive, the questions' degree of difficulty changes

based on the test-takers' responses. The exam took between sixty and ninety minutes to finish.

The exam results offer a trustworthy indicator of the person's degree of language proficiency, which could direct their language learning process. OPT divided students according to their competency level using a scale known as the Oxford Level Descriptors. There are 19 levels on this scale, starting at A1 (beginner) and going up to C2 (proficient). A variety of adjectives that explain a learner's ability in various language abilities, such as grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, and listening, are included with each proficiency level. These descriptors provide a thorough summary of the skills of the students at each level and provide a foundation for training and language acquisition.

Reading Comprehension Test

To evaluate the learners' reading skills and answer the research questions, a reading comprehension exam was administered to the homogeneous participants. This exam aimed to confirm or reject specific sections of the null hypotheses. The exam, which consisted of 27 items worth 40 points, was adopted from the Headway series intermediate level. Participants were given 60 minutes to complete the exam and were asked to rate each item of the reading comprehension skills as multiple-choice. It is important to note that the reading comprehension exam was administered twice: once as a pre-test before incorporating the learning-oriented reading assessment model, and once as a post-test after implementing the model. The objective was to determine if the students' reading skills had improved following the implementation of the model.

Self-assessment Checklist for Reading Comprehension

The SA checklist was adopted from Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al. (2023), was employed as a formal

self-evaluation tool within the study to gauge students' engagement with specific reading strategies. Its primary purpose was to help participants monitor their use of key reading methods—such as background knowledge brainstorming, questioning, summarizing, and making predictions—thereby fostering metacognitive awareness and enhancing reading comprehension. The checklist was administered periodically to the SA treatment group, with participants indicating 'Yes' or 'No' to each item based on their recent reading experiences. Data collected from this checklist provided insights into students' self-perceived strategy use. These findings were then integrated into the overall analysis of the study, allowing researchers to evaluate the relationship between SA strategy use and reading outcomes and to determine the effectiveness of the SA approach in promoting strategic reading behaviors.

Peer-assessment Checklist for Reading Comprehension

The peer-assessment checklist served as a formal assessment tool within the study to evaluate students' reading comprehension skills. Its primary purpose was to facilitate structured PA by providing clear criteria aligned with effective reading and reflective practices, such as elaborating on questions, supporting arguments with evidence, and offering constructive feedback. The checklist was administered systematically during peer-assessment sessions, with students independently rating their peers' work based on the rubric's categories, which ranged from effectiveness in question formulation to the quality of feedback provided. Data collected through the checklist allowed the researchers to analyze patterns of PA quality and student development over time. These scores were incorporated into the study's findings to assess the impact of PA on reading comprehension.

Design and Context of the Study

This study was a quasi-experimental study with a pretest-posttest control group design. To answer the research questions, this study utilized quantitative methods and focused on four main variables: LOA, including PA and SA as the independent variables, and EFL learners' reading comprehension scores as the dependent variable.

Data Collection Procedure

In the first phase of this study, all participants completed the OPT to attain an acceptable and appropriate level of English proficiency. As a result, the number of students decreased from 105 to 75. The researchers then divided the participants into three groups: a control group and two experimental groups, each consisting of twenty-five participants.

In the second phase, all students in both the control and experimental groups were given a copy of the reading comprehension test to evaluate their basic reading comprehension skills before being assessed and treated. In the third step, PA and SA strategies were implemented to assess reading comprehension over a period of four weeks, with two sessions per week, in the experimental treatment groups. It is important to note that the participants in the control group attended classes without any special interventions for a duration of four weeks. In the final phase, a reading comprehension test was administered as a post-test to determine if there was improvement in the experimental groups after the treatment.

To further explain the steps of teaching reading in the PA experimental group, reading aloud was used as a warm-up activity to provide the students with the necessary information. This included background knowledge, key vocabulary, and lessons on potentially problematic sentence structures. During the reading activities, students read the text and completed reading comprehension activities. They were encouraged

to discuss their responses in groups and provide evidence from the text to support their claims.

The class then heard from each group's responses. Additionally, Students in the audience group gave feedback using a rubric suggested by Viengsang and Wasanasomsithi (2022). The researchers explained each element and demonstrated how to respond to the questions in their rubrics. Participants were instructed to complete their rubrics immediately after each reading session. These activities, which were based on the concept of the LOA (Carlee, 2007), were specifically designed to enhance students' assessment skills and promote students' engagement with feedback through interactions with teachers, PA, and SA opportunities. Lastly, the review activities allowed students to re-evaluate what had been covered in class since the beginning of the module. The learning-oriented reading assessment model was designed to improve learners' reading abilities, based on the conceptual framework of learning-oriented assessment (Viengsang & Wasanasomsithi, 2022). The model followed reading instructional procedures suggested by Anderson (2003, 2008, 2012) and Nunan (1999). These procedures include three major teaching steps: pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading.

In the SA experimental group, the researcher explained the criteria for the SA activities to prepare the participants for the treatment. The participants were instructed on reading strategies and how to track their progress in reading. Each learner read the passage individually and answered comprehension questions that focused on identifying the main idea and supporting details. Over the course of eight sessions, participants in the experimental group were required to finish four reading comprehension texts and a SA checklist of reading methods. The self-assessment checklist used by Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al. (2023)

included all of the reading strategies. This checklist was only used in the experimental groups to provide feedback to their teacher on their application of these reading strategies during comprehension tasks.

Results

Results of the First Research Question Analysis

To address the first research question, the main focus was to examine the impact of SA on the reading comprehension scores of Iranian EFL learners. The primary objective was to determine if learners' involvement in evaluating their own performance led to measurable improvements in their reading comprehension abilities. The descriptive data for the SA group's pretest and posttest results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Self-Assessment Group

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Assessment (Pretest)	25	12.00	21.00	16.0800	2.90000
Self-Assessment (Posttest)	25	28.00	37.00	30.6000	2.90115
Valid N (listwise)	25				

As presented in Table 1, the mean of pretest scores was 16.08, with a standard deviation of 2.9. Scores ranged from 12 to 21, indicating some variability in the participants' starting knowledge or self-perception. The average post-test score was 30.6, with a standard deviation of 2.9. Scores ranged from 28 to 37, suggesting an overall increase

in scores after the intervention or learning experience. Table 2 presents the results of the paired samples t-test, which was conducted to determine whether the improvement in the SA group's reading comprehension scores was statistically significant.

Table 2

Paired Samples T-test Between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of Self-Assessment Group

		Paired Samples Test						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Paired Differences				Lower	Upper			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
Pair 1	Self-Assessment (Posttest) - Self-Assessment (Pretest)	14.52000	4.32165	.86433	12.73611	16.30389	16.799	24	.000	

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate a mean difference of 14.52 between the posttest and

pretest scores. The t-test result reveals a t-value of 16.799 with 24 degrees of freedom, and the p-value

(Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.000, indicating that the increase in reading comprehension scores after SA was statistically significant. These findings confirm that SA had a meaningful and positive effect on the

reading comprehension abilities of the participants in this group. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for the SA and control groups' posttest results.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Posttest Scores of Self-Assessment and Control Groups

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control (Posttest)	25	18.00	26.00	21.2000	2.04124
Self-Assessment (Posttest)	25	28.00	37.00	30.6000	2.90115
Valid N (listwise)	25				

The SA and control groups' posttest results were compared using an independent samples t-test. In order to provide evidence of SA's possible influence on reading comprehension, the analysis

set out to determine whether the observed difference in posttest means between the two groups was statistically significant. Table 4 displays the findings.

Table 4

Independent Sample T-test between Posttest Scores of Self-Assessment and Control Groups

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.412	.301	18.417	48	.000	9.4000	.29877	9.58529	12.13471
	Equal variances not assumed			18.417	46.641	.000	9.4000	.29877	9.58433	12.13567

The mean difference between the two groups' posttest scores was 9.4000, with a standard error difference of 0.29877. This result indicated that, on average, the SA group outperformed the control group by approximately 9.4 points. According to the findings, the SA group outperformed the control group on the posttest by a significant

margin. This finding provides strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of SA as a strategy for enhancing reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. The substantial mean difference of 9.4 points underscores the potential of SA to foster improved learning outcomes compared to traditional assessment approaches.

Results of Research Question Two Analysis

The second research question explored whether PA had any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension scores. This question aimed to determine whether involving learners in evaluating their peers' work would lead to noticeable improvements in their own reading

comprehension abilities. The scores from both the pretest and posttest for the group that underwent PA were examined, allowing a comparison of their performance before and after the intervention. Descriptive statistics for the pretest and posttest scores of the PA group are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Peer-Assessment Group

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer-Assessment (Pretest)	25	12.00	21.00	15.6800	2.42762
Peer-Assessment (Posttest)	25	28.00	38.00	33.5200	2.53509
Valid N (listwise)	25				

The PA group's mean pretest score was 15.68, with a standard deviation of 2.43, indicating moderate variability among the learners. The minimum pretest score was 12.00, and the maximum was 21.00. In contrast, the mean posttest score significantly increased to 33.52, with a standard deviation of 2.54, indicating substantial improvement after the PA intervention. The posttest scores ranged from 28.00 to 38.00, showing a higher level of performance compared to

the pretest. A paired samples t-test was performed to analyze the pretest and posttest scores of the learners who participated in PA. The goal was to determine whether the observed improvement in scores after the intervention was statistically significant. The results of the paired samples t-test, which evaluates the difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the PA group, are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Paired Samples T-test Between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of Peer-Assessment Group

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference						
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Peer-Assessment (Posttest) - Peer-Assessment (Pretest)	17.84000	2.59294	.51859	16.76969	18.91031	34.401	24	.000

The findings revealed that the mean difference between the posttest and pretest scores is 17.84, indicating a substantial increase in reading comprehension performance following PA. The standard deviation of 2.59 reflects the variability in score differences among participants, while the standard error of the mean is 0.52, suggesting a relatively precise estimate of the mean difference. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from 16.77 to 18.91, confirming that the true mean difference lies within this range.

The results of t-test results indicate a t-value of 34.401 with 24 degrees of freedom, and a highly significant p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000. This finding suggests a statistically significant improvement in posttest scores, thereby affirming that PA had a substantial positive effect on the reading comprehension scores of the learners. The outcomes demonstrate that PA was an effective method for enhancing the participants' reading comprehension abilities. Table 7 displays descriptive statistics for the PA and control groups' posttest results.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Posttest Scores of Peer-Assessment and Control Groups

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control (Posttest)	25	18.00	26.00	21.2000	2.04124
Peer-Assessment (Posttest)	25	28.00	38.00	33.5200	2.53509
Valid N (listwise)	25				

The posttest scores of the PA and control groups were compared using an independent samples t-test in order to determine whether the observed difference in posttest means between the

two groups was statistically significant, thereby providing evidence of PA potential impact on reading comprehension. The results of this analysis are provided in Table 8.

Table 8

Independent Sample T-test between Posttest Scores of Peer-Assessment and Control Groups

		Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower	Upper
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.552	.168	19.34	48		.000	12.32	.2365	10.4832	13.2012
	Equal variances not assumed			19.34	46.641		.000	12.32	.2365	10.4832	13.2012

According to the findings, the PA group outperformed the control group on the posttest by a significant margin. The large mean difference of 12.32 points and the highly significant p-value ($p < .05$) provide strong evidence of the positive impact of PA on improving reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. These findings highlight the potential of PA as an effective alternative to traditional assessment methods.

Results of Research Question Three Analysis

The third research question aimed to determine the impact of Learning-Oriented Assessment

(LOA) on the reading comprehension scores of Iranian EFL learners. This was achieved by comparing the reading comprehension performance of the SA and PA groups before and after the intervention, through analysis of their pretest and posttest results in research questions 1 and 2. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were used to compare the reading comprehension scores on the pretest scores across the PA, SA, and control groups, in order to assess their comparability and homogeneity at the pretest stage. Table 9 displays the pretest scores of the PA, SA, and control groups.

Table 9

Descriptive statistics for reading comprehension pretest scores across groups

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer-Assessment (Pretest)	25	12.00	21.00	15.6800	2.42762
Self-Assessment (Pretest)	25	12.00	21.00	16.0800	2.90000
Control (Pretest)	25	12.00	19.00	15.4400	2.21886

As shown in Table 9, the mean of pretest scores was 15.68 for the PA group, 16.08 for the SA group, and 15.44 for the control group. To determine whether any statistically significant

differences existed between the three groups at pretest, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. Table 10 shows the findings.

Table 10

One-way ANOVA comparing pretest reading comprehension scores across groups

Pretest	ANOVA				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.227	2	2.613	.408	.667
Within Groups	461.440	72	6.409		
Total	466.667	74			

The ANOVA results in Table 10 indicated no significant differences in pretest scores among the PA, SA, and control groups ($F = 0.408$, $p = .667 > .05$). This proved that all the groups were

statistically equivalent at pretest. Descriptive statistics were computed to compare the posttest reading comprehension scores among the PA, SA, and control groups. Table 11 represents the results.

Table 11

Descriptive statistics for reading comprehension posttest scores across groups

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer-Assessment (Posttest)	25	28.00	38.00	33.5200	2.53509
Self-Assessment (Posttest)	25	28.00	37.00	30.6000	2.90115
Control (Posttest)	25	18.00	26.00	21.2000	2.04124

Table 11 shows that the group that received PA feedback had the highest mean posttest score ($M = 33.52$), followed by the group that received SA feedback ($M = 30.60$). The control group obtained a mean score of 21.20, significantly lower than the treatment groups. These results suggest

improved performance in both treatment groups compared with the control group. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the observed differences in posttest scores across the three groups were statistically significant. Results are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

One-way ANOVA comparing posttest reading comprehension scores across groups

ANOVA					
Posttest	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2072.240	2	1036.120	163.512	.000
Within Groups	456.240	72	6.337		
Total	2528.480	74			

As shown in Table 12, there was a statistically significant difference in posttest reading comprehension scores among the three groups ($F = 163.51, p < .05$). This indicated that the type of assessment condition had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension performance.

Since the ANOVA test showed significant differences among the groups, the post-hoc Scheffé tests were performed to identify which specific group differences accounted for the overall significant ANOVA results. Table 13 displayed the outcomes.

Table 13

Scheffé multiple comparison results for posttest reading comprehension scores

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Posttest						
Scheffé						
(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Peer-Assessment	Self-Assessment	-2.92000 [*]	.71199	.001	-4.6997	-1.1403
	Control	9.40000 [*]	.71199	.000	7.6203	11.1797
Self-Assessment	Peer-Assessment	2.92000 [*]	.71199	.001	1.1403	4.6997
	Control	12.32000 [*]	.71199	.000	10.5403	14.0997
Control	Peer-Assessment	-9.40000 [*]	.71199	.000	-11.1797	-7.6203
	Self-Assessment	-12.32000 [*]	.71199	.000	-14.0997	-10.5403

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results indicated that all group differences were statistically significant. The PA group scored significantly higher than the SA group (mean difference = -2.92, $p = .001$) and the control group (mean difference = 9.40, $p < .001$). Similarly, the SA group significantly outperformed the control group (mean difference = 12.32, $p < .001$). These findings demonstrate that both treatment groups achieved significantly higher posttest scores than the control group, with the PA condition outperforming the SA condition.

The results of the study showed a significant improvement in posttest scores for both experimental groups compared to their pretest scores, indicating the effectiveness of the LOA approach in promoting better reading comprehension outcomes. Furthermore, comparing the posttest scores of all three groups showed that both treatment groups significantly outperformed the control group, with PA showing the greatest gains. These findings confirmed the effectiveness of the LOA approach, including PA and SA, in improving learners' reading comprehension. Therefore, these results suggested that implementing the LOA approach could significantly enhance learning outcomes.

Discussion

This discussion will present an in-depth analysis of the findings related to each research question, followed by a comparison of these results with prior research, highlighting key similarities and differences.

Discussion on Research Question One

The initial research question addressed the effect of SA on reading comprehension scores. The results of the paired samples t-test indicated that the posttest scores of the SA group were considerably higher than those of the control group. This suggests that SA had a positive and statistically

significant impact on learners' reading comprehension. By engaging in SA, learners can assume responsibility for their learning by reflecting on their strengths and areas for improvement. This reflective practice promotes metacognitive awareness, allowing students to monitor their reading strategies and adjust their approaches to better comprehend the material. As a result, the SA process encourages deeper engagement with reading tasks, leading to improved performance.

In line with these findings, prior research also highlights the value of SA. For instance, Kenza (2021) found that SA improved the reading comprehension skills of EFL learners by helping them refine their reading techniques and develop metacognitive strategies. The qualitative data from Kenza's (2021) study indicated that SA enabled students to organize, monitor, and assess their reading processes, leading to higher exam scores. Similarly, Al-Rashidi et al. (2023) demonstrated that SA, along with PA and portfolio-based assessments, improved reading comprehension, vocabulary learning, and grammatical accuracy among Afghan English learners. These studies, in conjunction with the current findings, underscore the value of SA in fostering learner autonomy and improving reading comprehension.

Discussion on Research Question Two

The second research question focused on the impact of PA on reading comprehension scores. The analysis of descriptive statistics and paired samples t-test revealed a significant enhancement in the reading comprehension scores of the PA group compared to those of the control group. This demonstrates that PA was highly effective in improving learners' reading comprehension abilities. The effectiveness of PA can be attributed to its collaborative and reflective nature. By providing learners with opportunities to critically evaluate their peers' work, PA enhances their own

understanding and reinforces reading strategies. Through giving and receiving feedback, students become more engaged in the learning process and more attuned to their own areas for improvement.

These results align with previous studies that examined the role of PA in EFL learning. Ritonga et al. (2022) explored the impact of peer evaluation on Iranian EFL learners and found that the experimental group outperformed the control group in reading comprehension, reading motivation, and vocabulary learning. Similarly, Wu and Miller (2020) showed that using mobile-assisted peer feedback improved speaking skills by giving students real-time feedback and helping them assume the role of evaluators. These findings reinforce the idea that PA not only enhances learners' reading comprehension but also fosters greater learner autonomy and engagement.

Discussion on Research Question Three

The third research question aimed to investigate the impact of LOA on the reading comprehension scores of Iranian EFL learners. The results showed a significant positive effect of LOA on the participants' reading comprehension skill, as evidenced by the comparison of post-test and pre-test scores in both the SA and PA groups. This can be attributed to the core principles of LOA, which prioritize formative feedback, peer collaboration, and SA, all of which encourage students to actively participate in their own learning. The collaborative nature of LOA likely provided learners with more opportunities to deeply engage with reading materials, reflect on their comprehension, and receive constructive feedback, ultimately leading to improved performance.

Notably, these findings are consistent with previous studies, including those conducted by Almalki (2019), Estaji and Safari (2023), Kim (2022), Viengsang and Wasanasomsithi (2022), Navaie (2018). For example, Almalki (2019)

showed that LOA had a positive effect on learners' critical thinking, self-evaluation, and overall language proficiency, which is consistent with the results of the current study. Furthermore, Kim (2022) conducted a study in Korean secondary schools that focused on LOA in reading comprehension and found that student-generated reading tests within an LOA framework created a learning-oriented environment and led to improved reading comprehension.

There have also been studies examining the impact of LOA on other skills. In 2020, Yang conducted a study examining the effects of a high-stakes standardized English as a foreign language test on instruction and acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, employing the framework of LOA. The findings indicated that both educators and learners perceived the test as a valuable opportunity to integrate LOA principles into their preparation efforts, actively employing recognizable LOA strategies throughout the process. A deeper analysis of these strategies revealed that LOA was a dynamic and multidimensional concept in grammar and vocabulary test preparation, encompassing classroom interactions, involvement in assessment, learner autonomy, and feedback mechanisms. Nevertheless, both educators and learners encountered difficulties in effectively applying LOA principles in their test preparation. Similarly, Estaji and Safari (2023) found that LOA is a useful learning strategy for enhancing the writing skills and performance of Iranian EFL learners. These results, together with the present findings, emphasize the potential of LOA to enhance language proficiency by making students active participants in the assessment process.

In sum, when comparing the results of the current study with those of previous research, several key similarities and differences emerge. First, the positive impact of LOA on reading comprehension aligns with studies conducted in

other contexts, such as Almalki's (2019) investigation of Saudi EFL learners and Kim's (2022) study in Korean classrooms. Both studies, like the present one, highlighted the importance of formative feedback, student engagement, and collaborative learning in improving language proficiency. However, while the current study focused exclusively on reading comprehension, previous research has explored other language skills, such as speaking and pronunciation (Navaie, 2018), demonstrating the broader applicability of LOA across different areas of language learning. Similarly, the effectiveness of PA in improving reading comprehension in the current study is consistent with findings from Ritonga et al. (2022) and Wu and Miller (2020), who found that peer evaluation enhanced reading comprehension and speaking skills, respectively. The present study, however, goes a step further by emphasizing the substantial mean increase in reading comprehension scores, underscoring the method's potential to significantly impact learners' performance. The results related to SA also resonate with previous research, such as Kenza's (2021) study, which found that SA increased exam scores and enhanced reading strategies. The current study provides further evidence that SA is an effective tool for developing metacognitive skills and promoting reading comprehension in the EFL context.

Conclusion

The findings of the study could provide clear evidence of the effectiveness of these assessment methods. In regards to the first research question, the results demonstrated that SA significantly improved the reading comprehension scores of learners in the experimental group compared to those in the control group. SA encourages learners to reflect on their own progress, enhancing their ability to monitor and improve their reading

comprehension over time. As for the second research question, PA was found to have a significant positive impact on learners' reading comprehension. The improvement in scores following PA highlights the value of collaborative learning and peer feedback in enhancing students' understanding and processing of reading materials. This method fosters critical thinking and allows learners to engage with reading texts in a more interactive and reflective manner.

In relation to the third research question, the results demonstrated that LOA had a significant impact on the reading comprehension scores of learners in both experimental groups. This finding aligns with existing literature and confirms that LOA, with its emphasis on formative feedback and active learner involvement, is an effective strategy for improving reading comprehension in EFL settings. The collaborative aspect of LOA likely allowed learners to engage more deeply with the reading materials, reflect on their understanding, and receive constructive feedback, ultimately leading to improved performance. In conclusion, the study successfully demonstrated that all three alternative assessment methods—LOA including PA, and SA—had significant and positive effects on the reading comprehension scores of Iranian EFL learners. The findings of this study may provide a solid foundation for further exploration of alternative assessments in language learning and emphasize the importance of shifting towards more interactive and reflective assessment models in EFL classrooms.

The results of this study carry important consequences for EFL teachers, learners, and policymakers. For teachers, the results indicate a shift is needed from traditional, teacher-centered assessment methods to learner-centered approaches such as LOA including PA and SA. These methods promote deeper engagement, critical thinking, and the development of

metacognitive skills, all essential for effective language learning. LOA helps teachers provide formative feedback that supports continuous learner development, while PA and SA encourage students to take more responsibility for their learning. These approaches can also lighten the grading workload for teachers, as students actively participate in evaluating their own work and that of their peers, fostering collaboration and improving learning outcomes.

In addition, for learners, these alternative assessment methods create valuable opportunities to take an active role in their own learning process. SA allows learners to reflect on their reading strategies, monitor their progress, and identify areas that need improvement. PA helps students critically analyze the work of others, which strengthens their analytical skills and improves their comprehension.

Finally, the limitations of this study highlight several areas that can serve as the foundation for further research in the field of EFL assessment, particularly regarding LOA including PA and SA. These limitations suggest the need for more comprehensive investigations to address gaps in knowledge and ensure that findings are generalizable across a wider range of contexts and learner profiles. The first limitation of this study is that it was conducted within the confines of an English course curriculum, limiting the focus to content that the course was required to cover. Future research could explore the application of LOA including PA and SA across different EFL contexts, including courses with diverse content, such as academic writing, business English, or communicative language teaching. Future research should aim to include a more diverse sample of learners, including students of varying ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds, as well as those from different proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced). Expanding the study

to include participants from public schools, universities, or language institutes in different geographical regions would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how LOA, including PA, and SA, impact learners with diverse characteristics.

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