The Relationship Between Iranian EFL Teachers' Assessment Literacy and Their Attitudes Toward Dynamic Assessment

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Abstract. Even though teachers' Assessment Literacy (AL) is of high importance, it has been a Cinderella in Iran as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Moreover, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, the relationship between AL and attitude toward Dynamic Assessment (DA) has not been studied so far. To this end, 104 EFL teachers were selected from 12 English language institutes across Shiraz. The Assessment Literacy Questionnaire (Campbell & Mertler, 2003) including 35 items was used to find the level of assessment knowledge of the participants. Moreover, the Attitudes towards Dynamic Assessment Questionnaire (Gholamalian et al., 2015) was used to measure the participants' attitudes toward DA. The results of Multiple Regression Analysis revealed a strong and significant relationship between the participants' scores on the AL and attitudes toward DA. Moreover, there were significant and positive relationships between EFL teachers' attitudes toward DA and the five subcomponents of AL. Amongst the five subcomponents of AL, Choice of Methods had the highest correlation with EFL teachers' attitudes towards DA. Accounting for about 45% of the variance in the attitudes toward DA scores, Choice of Methods had the highest Beta value, suggesting a stronger contribution to the dependent variable, i.e., attitudes toward DA. The results may have

implications for practitioners in the field of education, in general, and teaching EFL, in particular.

1. Introduction

Assessment Literacy (AL) is defined as a person's understanding of the essential concepts regarding assessment and evaluation practices that might affect educational decisions (Popham, 2011). Research has shown that teachers, including language teachers, spend about half of their time on activities related to assessment; hence the need to prepare assessment literate teachers (Plake,1993). Since the amount of time devoted to assessment is relatively high, teachers' literacy in assessment seems to be crucial to the success of teachers and students (Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003).

To help students learn more efficiently, teachers need to develop proper types and levels of AL (Stiggins, 1995). Despite the convincing arguments for AL (Brookhart, 2011), many teachers are often involved in assessment-related evaluation without satisfactory preparation in assessment (Lam, 2015). To address this problem, evidence has been gathered concerning the knowledge and skills that teachers need to be considered assessment literate, their training requirements, efficacy in assessment, as well as a contextualized understanding of AL (e.g., DeLuca & Klinger, 2010).

However, previous reviews of the literature on AL measures have shown that teachers are not well trained to use assessment in the classroom (e.g., standardized tests), with the majority of teachers engaging in inappropriate practices of teaching test items, increasing time limits, giving hints, and changing students' answers (Zhang & Burry-Stock, 1997).

The problem with the traditional static assessment was that it could not help testees become independent problem solvers. Despite many reforms which have been attempted, only simple alterations have been made to the existing language tests. Accordingly, Poehner and Lantolf

(2008) claim that the room for the development of entirely new models of assessment is still open. Grigorenko and Sternberg (2002) believe that Dynamic Assessment (DA) is good enough to fill this gap because it helps the assessor gain a more valid view of learner's abilities, even those abilities which are still developing. Unlike traditional psychometric approaches to assessment, DA capitalizes on instruction during the assessment itself; it taps into the pedagogical function of assessment in providing opportunities for learning and development to occur (Abbasi, 2015).

For decades, teaching English in Iran has been dominated by a teacher-centered, examination-oriented, grammar-based method (Zohrabi, Torabi, & Baybourdiani, 2012). According to Abbasi (2015), teachers explain grammar rules in detail, and students are busy taking notes and have few opportunities for meaningful practice. Memorization and rote learning are used as basic acquisition techniques. Another problem is that plenty of teachers feel that teaching through a test is an inappropriate and useless job while some teachers believe that teaching through testing can be completely communicative and enjoyable for learners even if achieving this can sometimes be quite demanding of our creativity as teachers (Poehner & Lantolf, 2008).

The most distinguishing feature which differentiates the traditional assessment methods and DA is the process of providing feedback (Brookhart, 2011). In the traditional methods, there was usually no specific plan for giving feedback during the process of assessment meanwhile in DA the process of assessment is mediated. Only a limited number of studies on this topic implies that more studies are needed in the field of language learning to better understand the effects of DA on language learning, and to provide more guidance to language teachers who wish to use DA in their language classrooms.

Although a bulk of research has recently been done in the area of DA and some regarding AL, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, few pieces of research have ever investigated these two issues in a single study. Furthermore, although teachers' AL is of high importance, it has been a Cinderella in Iran as an EFL context. Therefore, more research is needed to investigate the relationship between teachers' AL and their

attitude toward DA. To this end, the present study sought to study the viewpoints of Iranian EFL teachers on the applicability of DA in the Iranian context, and its relationship with AL.

2. Literature Review

Some teachers' AL studies have focused on teachers' assessment knowledge and their perspectives on assessment literacy (e.g., Coombe et al., 2012; Wang & Liou, 2008). This is not surprising as teachers' assessment knowledge and perceptions are widely believed to impact their classroom practices (Alkharusi et al., 2012; Popham, 2011). Unfortunately, most research that has investigated teachers' assessment knowledge and language teachers' assessment knowledge has consistently reported limited levels of teacher assessment/language AL (e.g., Mertler, 2004). Unfortunately, similar results have been found even in the recent literature.

In a study, Alkharusi et al. (2012) assessed 167 teachers' assessment knowledge and reported weak results (an average of 12.42 of 32 items answered correctly). On a larger scale, Xu and Brown (2016) used an adapted version of the TALQ to examine EFL teachers' (N = 891) assessment knowledge in Chinese universities. The results also showed insufficient AL levels. The authors suggested language-teaching organizations to provide their teachers with professional development programs regarding assessment.

Similarly, Sheehan and Munro (2017) used classroom observations, interviews, and focus group interviews on EFL teachers with little training on assessment expressed their lack of confidence when it came to producing assessment materials. Again, they expressed a pressing need for classroom-based assessment training even though the researchers stated that the participants used a range of assessment practices successfully despite their lack of training.

In an EFL context, z and Atay (2017) studied the AL of 12 teachers of the English Preparatory Program at a Turkish university using semi-structured interviews. The results of the study showed a mismatch between teachers' assessment perceptions and in-classroom practices. Although teachers believed that assessment was very important, their practices were found to lack good assessment principles. Therefore, they

showed some AL knowledge, but how that knowledge was reflected in practice calls for concern.

Several studies in EFL contexts reported that teachers' assessment practices were mostly based on their experiences, as they had little formal education or training on assessment. Most of them expressed the need for training regarding assessment (Berry et al., 2019; Sheehan & Munro, 2017).

According to Gardner and Rea-Dickins (2001), at many English language teachers had an inadequate set of language assessment terms. Results of Hasselgreen, Carlsen, and Helness' (2004) endeavor to uncover the assessment training needs of teachers in Europe revealed that language teachers needed training in areas such as portfolio assessment, peer and self-assessment, preparing classroom tests, item writing, interviewing and rating.

Volante and Fazio (2007) collected data from 69 pre-service teachers in all four years of their concurrent programs within a large Canadian urban setting. They found that most participants preferred only summative assessment and lacked other forms of assessment knowledge. To improve their AL, the pre-service teachers significantly felt the need for the development of specific courses focusing on classroom assessment (Yamtim, & Wongwanich, 2014).

Vogt and Tsagari (2014) explored foreign language teachers' testing and AL across Europe by focusing on the training needs of foreign language teachers, their current background in the different areas of AL, and the extent to which they had received training in testing and assessment domains during their pre-and in-service education. The data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews revealed that despite the small difference across countries, only certain domains of teachers' AL literacy were developed. Although the participating teachers expressed that they had been learning about AL in their institutions, they still needed training in this field with varying priorities.

Ashraf and Zolfaghary (2018) examined the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' AL and their reflective teaching. To this end, 120 EFL teachers were selected randomly to fill out two questionnaires: AL inventory designed by Zolfaghary and Ashraf (2015), and reflective teach-

ing questionnaire designed by Behzadpour (2007). The result of the study recommended that there was a relationship between EFL teachers' AL and their reflective teaching. Furthermore, it was observed that teachers' AL predicted their reflective teaching.

Firoozi, Razavipour, and Ahmadi (2019) investigated the assessment needs of Iranian EFL teachers in the wake of the new assessment reform, which aims at replacing traditional discrete-point testing policies with performance testing. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 EFL headteachers. In addition, documents related to the curriculum reform were also examined. The analysis of the data showed that to meet the requirements of the reform, teachers' existing perceptions of language assessment ought to change. Furthermore, results suggested that teachers needed training in both skills and knowledge of language testing. More specifically, teachers were in need of training in developing rubrics to use in assessing speaking and writing.

2.1 Studies on dynamic assessment in L2 contexts

As far as previous research shows, the majority of the research in the area of DA in language classes focuses on the design, use, and marking of this assessment. For example, Davin et al. (2014) did a piece of research on a dynamic reading comprehension task with second language learners. The teacher, in this study, used pre-scripted mediation prompts during the task, and scores were calculated for each student. The authors concluded that the task should be used as a language learning tool in second language classrooms.

Naeini and Duvall (2012) studied the likely improvements in English Language Training university students' reading comprehension performance by applying the mediations of a dynamic assessment approach to instruction and assessment. In their study, dynamic assessment were used with 10 ELT university students. Participants took part in a pretest-mediation-posttest study. The mediation phase included focusing on a particular reading comprehension sub-skill. The analyses of the results revealed significant progress in participants' reading comprehension performance.

In a study, Hessamy and Ghaderi (2014) studied the impact of DA

on the vocabulary learning of EFL learners. Fifty intermediate Iranian EFL learners participated in an experimental piece of research. While the experimental group received a pre-test, mediation, and post-test, the control group received only the pre- and post-test. Results suggested that the experimental group outperformed the control group in vocabulary learning. Hessamy and Ghaderi (2014) concluded that "incorporation of DA as a supplementary procedure to standard testing has a positive effect on both test performance and vocabulary learning of learners" (p. 645).

Among very few studies looking into the perceptions of English teachers regarding DA, Hidri (2014), exploring how to improve current assessments of listening comprehension of university EFL learners in the Tunisian context, reported that "although the new assessment [DA] provided better insights into learners' cognitive and meta-cognitive processes than did the traditional assessment, raters were doubtful about the value of and processes involved in DA mainly because they were unfamiliar with it" (p. 1). The only studies exploring EFL teachers' perceptions of dynamic assessment more elaborately have been carried out by Karimi and Shafiee (2014).

Karimi and Shafiee (2014) examined 42 Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards DA with regard to their years of teaching experience and academic degrees. The participants were from private language institutes, schools, universities, and business sectors. The researchers reported a significant difference across BA holding and MA holding teachers in their perceptions of DA. Findings also suggested that the EFL teachers' awareness of contextual and institutional factors improved as participants' years of experience increased.

The present piece of research aimed to investigate whether there was any significant relationship between EFL teachers' AL and their attitude toward DA. It was also within the scope of the present study to explore which components of assessment literacy can best predict teachers' attitude toward DA. In order to achieve the objectives of the current study, the following questions were posed:

Q1. Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' assess-

ment literacy and their attitude toward dynamic assessment?

Q2. Are there any significant relationships between the components of assessment literacy and EFL teachers' attitude toward dynamic assessment?

Q3. Which components of assessment literacy can best predict the EFL teachers' attitude towards dynamic assessment?

3. Methods

3.1 Design of the study
The design of the study is a quantitative design of survey type to measure the relationship between EFL teachers' AL and their attitude toward DA. In other words, the Assessment Literacy Questionnaire (Campbell & Mertler, 2003) was used to measure the participants' AL, and the Applicability of DA Questionnaire (Gholamalian et al., 2015) was used to measure the participants' attitude toward DA.

3.2 Participants
Initially, 120 EFL teachers were selected from 12 language institutes in Shiraz. They were selected based on stratified random sampling from 12 different English language institutes across Shiraz, Iran. Shiraz is divided into 4 districts according to the Ministry of Education. Therefore, three institutes were selected randomly from each district and 10 teachers were randomly selected from each institute. After collecting the data, the number reduced to 104 (44 male and 60 female) EFL teachers. The participants' age ranged from 22 to 45. From among the 104 EFL teachers, 71 had BA, 30 had MA, and 3 held Ph.D in English Language Teaching. Moreover, all the participants had more than five years of experience in English language teaching and testing.

3.3 Instruments
3.3.1 Assessment literacy questionnaire
The Assessment Literacy Questionnaire developed by Campbell and Mertler (2003) was used in this study. The Assessment Literacy Questionnaire including 35 items has been designed to find the level of assessment knowledge of teachers. Questions 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29 measure

the ability to choose the appropriate assessment method. Standard 2 requires teachers to be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions. Questions 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30 measure the ability to develop appropriate assessment methods. Standard 3 defines a teacher's ability to administer, score, and interpret the results of both externally produced and teacher-produced assessment methods. Questions 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31 measure this standard. Questions 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29 measure the ability to choose the appropriate assessment method. Standard 2 requires teachers to be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions. Questions 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30 measure the ability to develop appropriate assessment methods. Standard 3 defines a teacher's ability to administer, score, and interpret the results of both externally-produced and teacher-produced assessment methods. Questions 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31 measure this standard. A teacher's skill in using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement is Standard 4. Questions 4, 11, 18, 25, and 32 address the level of competence in Standard 4. Standard 5 says teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures that use pupil assessments. Questions 5, 12, 19, 26, and 33 address Standard 5. Standard 6 addresses the ability of teachers to communicate assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences, and other educators. The questions measuring this ability are numbers 6, 13, 20, 27, and 34. Standard 7 asks teachers to be skilled in recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information. The questions measuring this standard are 7, 14, 21, 28, and 35. The overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for this questionnaire was calculated to be 0.79 through a pilot study using 30 English language teachers.

3.3.2 Attitude toward DA questionnaire

The Attitude toward DA Questionnaire (Gholamalian et al., 2015) was used to measure the participants' attitude toward DA. This questionnaire consists of 23 items each scored on a 5-point scale response ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The minimum possible score is 23 and the maximum possible score is 115. The overall Cron-

bach's Alpha reliability coefficient for this questionnaire was calculated to be 0.83 during a pilot study.

3.4 Data collection procedures

Initially, 120 EFL teachers were selected from 12 language institutes in Shiraz. After collecting the data, the number reduced to 104 EFL teachers. Then, the participants were asked to fill in the online Assessment Literacy Questionnaire in 30 minutes. In the following week, the online version of the Attitude toward DA Questionnaire was given to the participants to answer in 15 minutes.

3.5 Data analysis procedures

First, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to confirm having a normal distribution of the selected participants. Second, Pearson correlation coefficient between Assessment Literacy Questionnaire and Attitude toward DA Questionnaire scores was computed. Then, Multiple Regression Analysis was run to check which component(s) of AL can best predict the EFL teachers' attitude toward DA.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics

After ensuring the normality of the data through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores of AL questionnaire were computed (see Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Total Assessment Literacy Scores

	Mean	SD	N
Total	17.12	4.635	104

As Table 1 shows, the mean and standard deviation of the participants' scores on the AL questionnaire were 17.12 and 4.635, respectively.

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum of the participants' scores on the AL questionnaire and its subcomponents (i.e., Choice of methods, Decision making, Test development, Commu-

nicating results, Ethics, Administration, and Grading).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Components of Assessment Literacy

	Mean	SD	N
Choice of methods	2.80	1.476	104
Decision making	2.61	1.293	104
Grading	2.25	1.385	104
Test development	2.04	1.124	104
Communicating results	1.83	1.059	104
Ethics	1.70	0.915	104
Administration	1.62	0.890	104

As Table 2 depicts, amongst the subcomponents of the AL, choice of methods had the highest mean score (M = 2.80, SD = 1.476). Moreover, administration had the lowest mean score (M = 1.62, SD = 0.890). Table 3 illustrates the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum of the participants' scores on the Attitude toward DA Questionnaire.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Scores on the Attitude toward DA Questionnaire

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	N
Total	72.45	18.62	40	110	104

As shown in Table 3, the mean and standard deviation of the participants' scores on the attitude toward of DA Questionnaire were 72.45 and 18.62, respectively.

4.2 Inferential statistics
4.2.1 Results of correlational analyses

Two-tailed Pearson correlations were computed between the scores of AL questionnaire and the scores of attitude toward DA questionnaire to

determine the relationship between them (Table 4). The Cohen's (1988) criterion for interpreting the strength of correlation was followed. Cohen (1988) stated that correlation coefficient of more than 0.50 is strong.

Table 4: Correlation Coefficients between the Scores of Assessment Literacy and Attitude toward DA

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Attitude toward DA	–								
2. Assessment Literacy	0.512**	–							
3. Choice of methods	0.546**	0.718**	–						
4. Decision making	0.520**	0.695**	0.624**	–					
5. Grading	0.495**	0.574**	0.539**	0.407**	–				
6. Test development	0.453**	0.502**	0.472**	0.386**	0.420**	–			
7. Communicating results	0.401**	0.465**	0.381**	0.325*	0.468**	0.312*	–		
8. Ethics	0.380**	0.429**	0.355*	0.314*	0.360*	0.351*	0.318*	–	
9. Administration	0.372*	0.436**	0.392**	0.281*	0.342**	0.339*	0.297*	0.302*	–

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

As shown in Table 4, the results of two-tailed Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant and strong relationship between the participants' scores on the AL and attitude toward DA ($r = 0.512, p < .01$). Moreover, there were significant and positive relationships between EFL teachers' attitude toward DA and five subcomponents of AL. Choice of methods had the highest correlation with EFL teachers' attitude toward DA ($r = 0.546, p < .01$).

4.2.2 Results of multiple-regression analyses

To answer the third research question, Multiple Regression Analyses were conducted. Table 5 is the model summary of the regression analysis on EFL teachers' attitude toward DA as the dependent variable and the components of the AL (i.e., choice of methods, decision making, grading, test development, communicating results) as the independent variables.

Table 5: Model Summary for Multiple Regressions

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2
1	.571	.326	.301

Note: Predictors: components of assessment literacy; Dependent Variable: attitude toward DA

As Table 5 illustrates, the adjusted R2 was 0.301 which implies that components of the AL accounted for about 30% of the variance in the EFL teachers' attitude toward DA scores. To determine the most powerful predictor of EFL teachers' attitude toward DA and to compare the unique contribution of each independent variable, the Beta values were computed (see Table 6).

Table 6: Multiple Regressions analysis results

	Beta	Sig
(Constant)	---	.000
Choice of methods	0.455	.000
Decision making	0.421	.000
Grading	0.334	.001
Test development	0.305	.008
Communicating results	0.261	.020
Ethics	0.247	.027
Administration	0.218	.035

Note: Dependent variable: attitude toward DA

As Table 6 displays, the Beta value of choice of methods, decision making, grading, test development, communicating results, ethics, and administration as the predictor variables were significant ($p < .05$). Choice of methods had the highest Beta value suggesting a stronger contribution to the dependent variable, attitude toward DA, accounting for about 45% of the variance in the attitude toward DA scores. Decision making, grading, and test development accounted for 43%, 33%, and 30% of the variance in the attitude toward DA scores, respectively.

5. Discussion

The results of two-tailed Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant and strong relationship between the participants' scores on Assessment Literacy and attitude toward DA ($r = 0.512, p < .01$). The results are consistent with DeLuca and Klinger (2010) and Berry et al. (2019). This study was an attempt to investigate the components of AL needed for Iranian EFL teachers to improve their attitude toward DA.

Results also indicated teachers' perceptions of language assessment were incompatible with the assessment ideals. Specifically, although the

reformed-based assessment policy emphasizes AL and alternative forms of assessment, teachers' views of assessment are still exam-oriented. This echoes findings from previous studies in the literature (Atai & Mazlum, 2013; Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). This underlines the crucial role of grassroots movement in educational innovations (Fullan, 2001). Since the teacher recruitment policy has not changed, the crises of teachers' lack of communication skills still is an issue (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). Consistent with other studies (e.g., Atai & Mazlum 2013; Brookhart 2011; Mertler 2004; Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018; Stiggins, 2002), this study supports the crucial need for clear assessment guidelines in practicing classroom assessment. The gap between assessment policy and practice can be bridged by aligning the policies with the assessment norms and developing teachers' AL (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014).

For English teachers to test, measure, and document students' communicative competence, they themselves need to master high-level English communication skills. Furthermore, irrespective of the educational context, teachers should have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum, content, and the subject matter they teach in order to do effective assessments (Brookhart, 2011; Xu & Brown, 2016). This suggests that to assess communicative language ability (Bachman 1990), teachers need to know how to meaningfully communicate in English as well as how to assess the construct of communicative competence (Sheehan & Munro, 2017).

Previous research has shown that traditional teacher preparation courses in classroom assessment are not well matched with what teachers need to know for classroom practice (Xu & Brown, 2016). Therefore, it can be argued that one or two courses in assessment and measurement may not truly be sufficient to cover everything teachers need to know on AL (Mertler, 2004). In fact, this argument lends credence to Campbell and Mertler's (2003) study on measuring teachers' knowledge and application of classroom assessment concepts. They confirmed that in a lot of cases teachers were not well familiar with AL principles. This is made even worse when considering the fact that many teacher preparation programs in Iran do not even require a course in assessment.

Considering the importance of AL and attitude toward DA in recent

years, the present study sought to explore the relationship between EFL teachers' AL and their attitude toward DA. The findings of the study revealed that there is a positive correlation between EFL teachers' AL and their attitude toward DA. This implies that the more teachers' AL, the more their attitude toward DA on their teaching. In other words, by increasing teachers' AL, their attitude toward DA in their teaching increase too. Besides, among the subscales of AL, the highest correlation is observed between teachers' attitude toward DA and their choice of methods in language assessment, and the lowest correlation was obtained between teachers' attitude toward DA and their literacy on ethics and administration of tests. The findings also give support for the arguments Coyle (2002) who believes that highly motivated teachers are involved in analyzing, discussing, evaluating, changing, and developing their practice, which can lead to their students' language learning improvement.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the study showed a significant and strong relationship between the participants' scores on the AL and attitude toward DA. Furthermore, there were significant and positive relationships between EFL teachers' attitude toward DA and five subcomponents of AL. Choice of methods had the highest correlation with EFL teachers' attitude toward DA. This implies that the more teachers' AL, the more positive their attitude toward DA. In other words, by increasing teachers' AL, their attitude toward DA increases too.

Moreover, it can be inferred from the results that teachers need training both in the subject matter knowledge and in the pedagogy of assessment to improve their attitude toward DA. This finding parallels those from earlier studies (e.g., Razavipour & Rezagah 2018), suggesting that to assess language skills, teachers need to know how to meaningfully communicate in English. Since the teacher recruitment policy has not changed, the crises of teachers' lack of communication skills still is an issue (Sheehan & Munro, 2017).

As a main way of teachers' professional development, teacher training is facing with the problem of teachers' insufficient participation and a low

level of learning engagement. The conclusions of the present study can be helpful for understanding the relationship among teachers' attitude toward DA and their AL, that is, under what conditions and in what ways teachers' attitude toward DA is associated with their AL.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of the current study provided some pedagogical implications for the EFL language teachers and language learners in Iranian educational system. First, the most significant implication is that teacher education programs that offer specific courses on assessment and evaluation and many pre-service programs currently do not assume their teacher candidates are graduating with an adequate level of AL to assess students effectively (Campbell & Mertler, 2003). Consequently, it is necessary for all educational curriculums to provide teachers with adequate knowledge and skills in assessment. Teacher educators and professional developers need to form a range of assessment methods within their own coursework and professional development opportunities so that pre-service students and in-service teachers construct a deeper understanding of the utility of different assessment approaches (Boyles, 2005). Second, for English teachers to test, measure, and document students' communicative competence, they themselves need to master high-level English communication skills. Furthermore, irrespective of the educational context, teachers should have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum, content, and the subject matter they teach in order to do effective assessments (Xu & Brown, 2016). Moreover, teachers' AL skills must be improved through in-service or pre-service programs. Once this is taken care of, teachers need to be trained in devising and using rubrics to systematically diagnose, measure, and record students' communicative competence in English.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher aimed to undertake this study with rigor to generate objective, unbiased results based on the data collected. However, a number of limitations to the study exist that should be considered in interpreting the results: First, the sample size of this study was 104 EFL teachers teaching English in Shiraz language institutes. The sample size could be

larger, and thus any assertion of generalizability has to be treated with caution. Second, the participants in this study were selected from EFL teachers who were teaching English at English institutes, and teachers teaching at high schools were not considered; therefore, the findings may not be applicable to other groups of EFL teachers. Third, a broader range of instruments could have been administered to provide more perspectives, specifically through an objective observer. For example, the present study did not include interview with EFL teachers.

In line with the limitations, it is suggested to replicate this study with a larger sample size. Moreover, for doing further studies, a different group of EFL teachers at high school or universities is recommended. In addition, other instruments such as interview can be used to obtain more in depth data. Finally, future researchers could study the relationship between EFL teachers' AL and other variables such as teaching style, EFL learners' language achievement, and job satisfaction.

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