



A Mixed Methods Study of Assessment Literacy among Iranian EFL Reflective Instructors

Mozhdeh Sultan Eshagh¹, Azizeh Chalak^{1*}, Hossein Heidari Tabrizi¹

English Department, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan Khorasgan Branch, Isfahan, Iran

Email: Mzhdeh.Sultan@gmail.com

Email: Heidaritabrizi@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author's Email: azichalak@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Reflection, a significant aspect of English teachers' progress, could support the instructors in developing their language assessment practices. However, scant attention has been given to the assessment literacy of English teachers with different reflectivity levels. This study sought to investigate assessment literacy among Iranian EFL reflective instructors. The aim is to see if any significant differences exist among high-reflective, mid-reflective, and low-reflective teachers regarding their language assessment literacy. In order to achieve this objective, a total of 235 Iranian EFL teachers were chosen using convenience sampling from different private language institutes in Iran. Two questionnaires were used to gather the quantitative data: English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory and Assessment Literacy Inventory. The results of one-way ANOVAs showed that high, mid, and low-reflective teachers significantly differed in assessment literacy. Tukey's post hoc analyses revealed that high-reflective and mid-reflective teachers outperformed their low-reflective counterparts. Moreover, 36 EFL teachers (i.e., 12 teachers from each reflective teaching group) participated in a semi-structured interview, and their results aligned with the quantitative data analysis. Finally, the findings of this study offer valuable data that can aid teachers in enhancing their language assessment literacy.

KEYWORDS: Assessment Literacy; EFL Teachers; Reflective Teachers; Reflective Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Reflective teaching is an approach that emphasizes self-reflection, critical analysis, and continuous improvement in the instructional practices of teachers. It involves teachers examining their beliefs, assumptions, and teaching strategies to enhance student learning outcomes (Farrell, 2008, 2019, 2022; Martini, 2020). The concept of reflective teaching originated from the work of influential educational philosopher John Dewey in the early 20th century (Farrell, 2022). Dewey described reflective teaching as a dynamic and intellectual process that empowers teachers by cultivating a deeper understanding of their own practices and beliefs, leading to improved teaching effectiveness (Dewey, 1933, as cited in Moon, 2005). Reflective teaching has gained recognition and importance in the field of education as a means to promote professional development and enhance teaching practices (Costello, 2011; Farrell, 2015; Grant, Mckim, & Murphy, 2017; Watanabe, 2017).

Assessment literacy, on the other hand, refers to teachers' knowledge and skills in designing, implementing, and interpreting assessments to effectively measure students' learning progress (Scarino, 2013; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017). In the realm of English Language Teaching (ELT), assessment plays a crucial role in evaluating learners' performances, reflecting their language proficiency, skills, and overall development. As Brown (2004) emphasizes, assessment is an ongoing and multifaceted procedure that extends beyond traditional tests and quizzes. Even in everyday classroom interactions, instructors inadvertently assess learners' performance when they answer questions or engage in discussions, offering opportunities for formative assessment and feedback (Brown, 2004).

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the area of language assessment literacy (LAL) among English language teachers and researchers (e.g., Deygers & Malone, 2019; Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2017;

Malone, 2013; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017; Xu & Brown, 2017; Homayounzadeh & Razmjoo, 2021). LAL refers to skills, the knowledge, and understanding, that teachers possess to design, implement, and evaluate language assessments effectively (Scarino, 2013; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017). Language assessment plays a crucial role in educational systems, providing teachers with valuable information about their students' learning progress and enabling them to make informed instructional decisions (Baird, 2013; Shepard, 2000; Xu & Brown, 2016). However, research in the area of assessment literacy is still in its early stages, and there is a lack of systematic approaches to developing teachers' assessment literacy skills (Fulcher, 2012; Lam, 2015).

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of reflective teaching on the language assessment literacy of English teachers. It seeks to examine how reflective teaching practices impact teachers' abilities to design, administer, and interpret assessments accurately and effectively. By exploring the relationship between levels of reflective teaching and assessment literacy, this study intends to shed light on the specific mechanisms through which reflective practices influence teachers' assessment skills and knowledge.

Understanding the impact of reflective teaching on language assessment literacy is of great importance for several reasons. Firstly, assessment literacy is crucial for English teachers to ensure fair and valid assessment practices, as well as to provide students with constructive feedback to support their learning progress (Brown, 2004; Fulcher, 2012). By examining the effect of reflective teaching on assessment literacy, this study will contribute to enhancing the quality and accuracy of assessments in English language education. Secondly, reflective teaching provides a platform for teachers to critically reflect on their assessment practices, identify areas for improvement, and adapt their teaching strategies accordingly. By investigating the relationship between reflective teaching and assessment literacy, this study will offer insights into how reflective practices can enhance English teachers' abilities to design and implement effective assessments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing the literature on reflective teaching and LAL reveals a growing body of scholarly attention to these topics in recent years (e.g., Campbell & Evans, 2000; Clark, 2015; Farahian & Rajabi, 2022; Farrell & Mom, 2015; Fulcher, 2012; Gobena, 2017; Hudaya, 2017; Malmir & Mohammadi, 2018; Mellati and Khademi, 2018; Orakci, 2021; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017). To date, a number of studies have also examined the intersection of reflective teaching and LAL (e.g., Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018; Babaii & Asadnia, 2019; Lee, Goldenberg, & Williams, 2023). This section provides an overview of relevant studies, concepts, methodologies, and key findings that illuminate the reciprocal relationship between reflective teaching and LAL.

LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT LITERACY

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the broad implications of LAL (Yastıbaş & Takkaç, 2018). While LAL is a relatively new research area (Fulcher, 2012), there is an increasing need to evaluate the assessment literacy of language instructors (Ölmezer-Öztürk & Aydın, 2018). Enhancing teachers' LAL requires them to critically evaluate their roles as instructors and assessors (Scarino, 2013; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017) and effectively utilize assessment data to enhance their classroom practices (Popham, 2009). Language instructors with higher assessment literacy possess the ability to discern the purpose of language assessment, select appropriate assessment tools and settings, and provide clear assessment tasks (Inbar-Lourie, 2008).

Although English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors participate in different instructional courses at colleges and organizations, they need to be methodically skilled in how to grow their LAL for operationalizing suitable ideologies of the language assessment (Fan, Wang, & Wang, 2011) and guiding classroom assessment (Lam, 2015). On the other hand, as Vogt and Tsagari (2014) recognized, instructors with insufficient LAL can progressively improve their LAL by conducting educational resources for assessment aims. According to Tsagari and Vogt (2017), since instructors' teaching databases do not sufficiently prepare them with assessment awareness, they are encouraged to use adjustable policies like trusting in published resources and looking for advisors' support.

With a resilient tendency for concentrating on setting, encouraging, and conducting assessment literacy, researchers need to be more capable of suggesting some decided constituents for all the conditions and issues. As Malone (2013) noted, analysis specialists have different thoughts concerning the features of assessment literacy. From the viewpoint of assessment specialists, principles, standards, test growth developments, explanations, evaluations of test scores, and focus on needs are the main mechanisms of assessment literacy (Malone, 2013). However, teaching specialists favor the choice and presentation of fitting tests as the overall mechanism of assessment literacy.

REFLECTIVE EFL TEACHERS

Reflection, as a critical aspect of teachers' professional growth and development (Jamil & Hamre, 2018), affects the instructors to "express and determine where they are at that moment and then choose where they need to go

in the future" (Farrell, 2012, p. 7). Reflective teaching includes a procedure where "instructors methodically gather data about their training, and, while engaging in discourse with others, implicate the data to make knowledgeable results about their training" (Farrell, 2015, p. 123).

Lately, investigators have emphasized the critical role of reflection as a process of understanding rather than a reflective difficulty-resolving basis (Farrell, 2017; Freeman, 2016). Moving beyond finding the roots of reflection (Farrell & Kennedy, 2019) and conceptualizing it as analysis training (Freeman, 2016), reflection provides instructors with opportunities for professional growth (Beauchamp, 2015). Farrell and Kennedy (2019, p. 11) state that the general attitude to instructors' reflection "attaches the teacher-as-person with the performance of education." Using Farrell's (2015) available style to instructors' reflection (attitude, belief, concept, training, and beyond training), these initiate accessibility, art-based directions (dependent on individual knowledge and ability), and interest in the crucial landscapes of reflectivity performances.

Burhan-Horasanl and Ortaçtepe (2016) also defined the inserted and cooperative landscape of reflective training, where the former emphasizes instructors' synchronized participation in "reflection-in-action", "reflection-on-action", and "reflection-for-action" (Farrell, 2012), whereas the latter reports instructor arrangement in a typical public training setting. There are three-layered reflection procedures, including "reflection-on-action", "reflection-in-action", and "reflection-for-action". In the first one, instructors reflect on their preceding educational performances, analytically assess them, and discover substitutions. "Reflection-in-action" refers to instructors' quick consideration of their in-progress actions. Moreover, by "reflection-for-action", instructors report their strengths and faults, measure their present policies, tackle the unforeseen problems, and mull over upcoming actions to progress their training.

EMPRICAL STUDIES

Several research studies have investigated the correlation between reflective teaching and Language Assessment Literacy (LAL). In a particular study conducted by Ashraf and Zolfaghari (2018), the objective was to explore the relationship between assessment literacy and the engagement of EFL teachers in reflective teaching. The participants in the study were EFL teachers who were requested to complete two distinct questionnaires: an assessment literacy inventory and a reflectivity questionnaire. The outcomes of this study indicated a positive link between the assessment literacy of EFL teachers and their involvement in reflective teaching. Moreover, the findings demonstrated that teachers' assessment literacy significantly influenced their adoption of reflective teaching practices. Overall, the study conducted on Iranian EFL teachers emphasized a positive association between assessment literacy and the practice of reflectivity, implying that teachers who possessed higher levels of assessment literacy demonstrated a greater tendency to engage in reflective practices.

In another study conducted by Babaii and Asadnia (2019), the focus was on exploring the impact of reflection on language teachers' assessment literacy development. Recognizing the importance of assessment literacy in language education, the researchers aimed to investigate how reflective teaching could contribute to enhancing teachers' understanding and application of language assessment principles. Using a qualitative research design, the study employed reflective journals and interviews to collect data from a group of language teachers. The findings revealed that engaging in reflective teaching facilitated teachers' critical examination of their assessment beliefs, strategies, and practices. Through reflection, teachers were able to identify areas for improvement, challenge their assumptions, and adopt more informed and effective assessment practices.

In a related reflective action research, Lee et al. (2023) investigated the impact of professional development on LAL among a group of teachers. The researchers aimed to examine how a professional development program focusing on language assessment practices influenced teachers' understanding and application of assessment principles. The participants engaged in a series of workshops, collaborative discussions, and hands-on activities aimed at enhancing their LAL. Pre- and post-program assessments, along with interviews and classroom observations, were conducted to gather data on the teachers' knowledge and practices. The findings indicated that the professional development program positively influenced the teachers' LAL, as evidenced by their improved understanding of assessment principles, increased use of formative assessment strategies, and enhanced ability to align assessments with instructional goals. The study highlighted the effectiveness of targeted professional development in supporting teachers' development of LAL and emphasizes the importance of ongoing support and training to sustain and deepen teachers' assessment practices.

Since reflection is crucial in teacher education and the language teaching process, it is necessary to investigate whether LAL might be influenced by reflective teaching. While previous research has addressed reflective teaching and assessment literacy independently, fewer studies have investigated their interrelationship (e.g., Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018; Babaii & Asadnia, 2019; Lee et al., 2023). What is more, there is lack of research on the role that different levels of reflectivity play on levels LAL. Hence, this study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the effect of reflective teaching practices on the development of LAL among English teachers. Therefore, this paper sought to fill this gap by answering these research questions:



RQ1) Does reflective teaching impact Iranian EFL teachers' LAL?

RQ2) Is there any difference among high-reflective, mid-reflective, and low-reflective teachers regarding their LAL?

METHOD

This study sought to investigate whether reflective teaching significantly affects Iranian EFL teachers' assessment literacy. To this end, groups of teachers (i.e., high-, mid-, and low-reflective EFL teachers) were compared. Reflective teaching was considered the independent variable, while teachers' assessment literacy was considered a dependent variable. After the quantitative data analysis, based on the results of descriptive statistics, the participants were classified into three groups low-reflective, middle-reflective, and high-reflective.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design employed in this study was an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach which went through a quantitative stage followed by a separate, complementary qualitative phase (Creswell, 2005). A qualitative stage was also added to check the credibility of the quantitative findings. At this stage, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted for the participants of each category (low-reflective, middle-reflective, and high-reflective teachers).

PARTICIPANTS

The participants were 235 Iranian EFL teachers (105 male and 130 female) between 20 and 36 years old. Most participants held either a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or a Master of Arts (M.A.) in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). They were recruited based on convenience sampling from different private language institutes in central provinces of Iran (e.g., Tehran and Karaj). To ensure the participants met the criteria for the study, the researcher verified that they had a minimum of three years of teaching experience and had completed a teacher training course (TTC). The study was conducted in 2020 in the Iranian EFL context. Table 1 summarizes the demographic information pertaining to the participants involved in the study.

Table 1
Demographic Background of the Teachers

No. of the Teachers	235
Gender	Male 105 Female 130
Native Language	Persian
Age Range	20 to 36
Academic Years	2022-2023
English Center	Sadegh Hariri, Asre Ertebatat, and Nasir language Institutes
Degree	BA 189 MA 46

INSTRUMENTS

The current study utilized the following instruments: the English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory (Appendix A), the Language Assessment Literacy Inventory (Appendix B) and a semi-structured interview. (Appendix C).

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING REFLECTION INVENTORY

The participants were required to respond to the English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory, which was developed by Akbari et al. (2010). This questionnaire entails 29 five-point Likert-scale items. It is scored on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). These items assess various aspects of reflective teaching, including five sub-factors: beneficial practices, mental reflection, meta-cognitive reflection, affective reflection, and critical reflection. Examples of items within each sub-factor include "keep accounts of teaching for reviewing purpose" (beneficial), "after each session, the teacher writes about accomplishment failure of that lesson or he/she talks about the lesson to a colleague" (mental), "teacher reads books/articles related to effective teaching to improve classroom performance" (meta-cognitive), "teacher talks to students to learn about their learning styles and preferences" (affective), and "teacher thinks about the political aspects of teaching and the way they may affect



students' political view" (critical reflection). The internal consistency of the English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory was found to be strong, as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86 in the current study.

ASSESSMENT LITERACY INVENTORY

The participants in this study were asked to complete the Assessment Literacy Inventory developed by Mertler and Campbell (2005). This inventory comprises 35 content-based items that assess the participants' perceived competence in language assessment. These items cover various aspects of assessment, including knowledge of assessment terminology, assessment ethics, interpretation of assessment results, and test design procedures tailored to local needs. The inventory aims to gauge teachers' understanding and proficiency in these areas.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The interview questions underwent expert judgment and were formulated based on the relevant literature in the field. A total of 36 participants, with 12 participants from each group (high-reflective, mid-reflective, and low-reflective groups), were selected for the interviews. The questions in this section were adapted from previous studies that focused on various aspects of the participants' teacher training course, their familiarity with current assessment methods and issues (such as self- or portfolio or peer assessment), their experience with standardized tests, and their involvement in advising learners in this area. The types of assessments they commonly used in their teaching institutes were also explored. The interview sessions lasted approximately 30 minutes each and were conducted in English. To ensure the validity of the interview questions, Furthermore, interview questions were reviewed by a panel of three experts in applied linguistics to establish their validity.

Moreover, to ensure the elements of trustworthiness, the researcher posed no leading or revealing questions during the interview sessions. Interviews were audio-recorded, and at the same time, critical points of the respondents' answers were jotted down for further review and analysis. Besides, the researcher made every effort to create a calm, friendly, and stress-free environment during the interviews, ensuring that the interviewees could respond to the questions with utmost concentration and in a peaceful state of mind. To achieve this, she established a comfortable and private interview setting, free from distractions. Additionally, the researcher adopted a warm and welcoming demeanor, actively listening to the participants and encouraging open and honest responses. These measures aimed to foster a supportive atmosphere, promoting the interviewees' comfort and willingness to share their perspectives and experiences.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The data collection procedure for this study spanned approximately seven weeks. The participants were provided with ample time to complete the electronic questionnaires through a provided Telegram link. Prior to administering the questionnaires, the researcher provided a brief explanation of the study's purpose and emphasized the significance of the learners' involvement in the research. Furthermore, the researcher assured the participants that their data would be treated confidentially and collected anonymously.

Additionally, a purposive sampling method was employed to select 36 teachers for interviews, with 12 teachers chosen from each group. The interview questions were designed in English and focused on two key questions aligned with the main themes of the research inquiries. The teachers were interviewed to gather their perspectives and insights related to these specific research questions.

After the data collection, SPSS version 26 was used for running inferential statistics. One one-way ANOVA and Tukey post hoc analysis were run to answer the research questions. Meanwhile, the interviews were recorded in audio format and subsequently transcribed. Recurring themes and repeated patterns were identified and coded for further analysis. Frequency analysis was conducted on the coded data, and the results were organized and presented in tabular form.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE PHASE

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to address the first and second research questions, specifically examining a) the impact of reflective teaching on Iranian EFL teachers' LAL and b) any potential differences among high-reflective, mid-reflective, and low-reflective teachers in terms of their LAL. The results of the analysis are presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for R.T. Groups' Assessment Literacy

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Min	Max
Low	80	5.27	.98	.21	3	7
Mid	97	6.93	1.68	.31	4	12
High	58	7.50	2.16	.54	4	12
Total	235	6.52	1.84	.22	3	12

Table 1 shows the total scores of teachers' assessment literacy. The mean score of the low-reflective group was 5.27 ($SD = .98$), the mean score of the low-reflective group was 6.93 ($SD = 1.68$), and the mean score of the high-reflective group was calculated to be 7.50 ($SD = 2.16$). Respectively, there were differences among these three groups, with high-reflective groups being in the first rank. To test the significance of this difference, a one-way ANOVA was conducted.

Table 3
ANOVA for R.T. Groups' Assessment Literacy

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	54.49	2	27.24	10.24	.00
Within Groups	170.22	232	2.66		
Total	224.71	234			

As shown in Table 3, there was a significant difference between the groups in terms of their assessment literacy at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2, 232) = 10.24, p = .00$. In other words, reflective teaching level significantly affects Iranian EFL teachers' assessment literacy.

Table 4
Tukey for R.T. Groups' Assessment Literacy

(I) R	(J) R.T.	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% C. Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	Mid	-1.65*	.46	.00	-2.76	-.55
	High	-2.22*	.53	.00	-3.51	-.94
Mid	Low	1.65*	.46	.00	.55	2.76
	High	-.56	.50	.50	-1.79	.65
High	Low	2.22*	.53	.00	.94	3.51
	Mid	.56	.50	.50	-.65	1.79

The second research question sought any significant difference among high-reflective, mid-reflective, and low-reflective teachers regarding their LAL. The results of Tukey's post hoc analysis showed that high-reflective and mid-reflective teachers significantly outperformed their low-reflective counterparts ($p < .01$) regarding their assessment literacy.

FINDINGS OF THE QUALITATIVE PHASE

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. During the interviews, the researcher actively listened for key ideas and concepts that could be relevant for the subsequent data analysis. Subsequently, the interview transcripts were read multiple times to identify and extract themes, ideas, and key topics that emerged from the participants' responses.

Once a list of themes was generated, the researcher carefully examined the transcripts to determine the frequency of occurrence for each theme. This information was recorded to identify the most recurring themes among the EFL teachers' answers. The interview transcripts were then coded and analyzed, with the identified themes serving as the basis for the coding process.

To further explore the patterns and prevalence of the themes, a frequency analysis was conducted on the coded themes. This involved quantifying the number of times each theme appeared in the interview data. The results of this frequency analysis were used to highlight the EFL teachers' most frequent answers to the interview questions, which are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
EFL Teachers' Answers to Interview Question One

Answers	Percentage
Low familiarity.	46%
Using mid-term quizzes and final exam	35%
Conducting mid-term evaluation	19%
Total	100%
Just being able to add and divide scores	14%
Low familiarity	19%
Enough familiarity but no usage	22%
Using mid-term exams as well as a final exam	34%
Using peer-assessment	11%
Total	100 %
Enough familiarity	17%
Good Familiarity	22%
Using quizzes	25%
Always adopting some forms of formative assessment	20%
Using peer-assessment or self-assessment in writing tasks	16%
Total	100%

To the first question what are you with explore interview (i.e., To extent familiar

assessment issues in language learning and teaching such as formative and summative assessment, alternative assessments...?), 36 teachers (12 from each group of reflectivity) participated in a voluntary basis in the interview, their most frequent answers are presented in Table 5.

According to Table 5, as the reflectivity upon teaching practice increases, knowledge about assessment issues and different types of assessment improves. Most low-reflective teachers (46%) need to familiarize themselves with assessment. In the interview session, it was noticeable that some low-reflective teachers needed to learn the difference between assessment and measurement and needed to be made aware of alternative assessment modes. Examples of these alternative assessment methods include “peer assessment”, “portfolio assessment”, and “self-assessment”. Mid-reflective teachers' understanding of assessment was evaluated at a higher level than their low-reflective counterparts. That is mid-reflective teachers (11%) adopted at least one mode of alternative assessment.

The second interview question (i.e., Do you think reflective language teaching affects assessment literacy?) was asked from 36 teachers in the interview; their most frequent answers are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
EFL Teachers' Answers to Interview Question Two

Groups	Answers	Percentage
Low	I already know it plays an essential role, but I can not improve my reflection practices.	12 %
	It is essential, and every teacher knows it affects assessment literacy.	67 %
	Some reflection aspects are excellent but optional.	21 %
	Total	100%
Mid	It can affect assessment literacy practice.	26 %
	It is necessary to develop assessment literacy.	61 %
	Reflection techniques are only necessary some of the time.	13 %
	Total	100 %
High	It can positively affect assessment literacy practice, and I have some knowledge of it.	29 %
	It plays a big part, but it takes work to improve reflective teaching.	14 %
	It is necessary to reflect upon some assessment issues.	57 %
	Total	100%

According to Table 10, all three groups of reflectivity (i.e., low-, mid-, and high-reflective teachers) believed that reflective teaching is essential to acquire or improve assessment literacy (67% mid-reflective teachers, 61%

mid-reflective teachers, and 57% high-reflective teachers). However, some teachers maintained that it is easy to say but difficult to do (12% low-reflective teachers and 14% high-reflective teachers), referring to the time, budget, and energy it takes to reflect upon assessment. A noticeable part of the participants stated that we should be selective concerning reflective practices (21% low-reflective teachers, 13% mid-reflective teachers, and 57% high-reflective teachers), believing that most of them are necessary to improve, but not all of them. More specifically, they claimed they needed to improve their abilities in assessing the learners' productive skills, such as speaking and writing. Most of the teachers preferred online tutorial materials to improve their assessment literacy. Besides, they expressed a need to receive training on the tests' validity, reliability, and fairness. From the content of the interview, it appeared that although teachers perceived that they were prepared for assessment, they needed more assessment knowledge. They mainly used assessments to report a score to the school and rarely used test scores to support learners' learning process. What needed to be added in the classroom assessment was giving effective feedback to students and constructing appropriate use of test results.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated assessment literacy among Iranian EFL reflective instructors and the significant differences among high-reflective, mid-reflective, and low-reflective teachers regarding LAL by adopting a mixed-methods study. The findings indicated a strong connection between reflectivity and teachers' assessment literacy levels.

The RQ1 aimed to investigate whether reflective teaching significantly affects Iranian EFL teachers' assessment literacy. The results of the study support this hypothesis, as there was a significant difference in assessment literacy among the three groups of teachers categorized based on their level of reflectivity. High-reflective and mid-reflective teachers demonstrated higher levels of assessment literacy compared to low-reflective teachers. This suggests that engaging in reflective teaching practices can enhance teachers' understanding and competence in language assessment. These findings align with previous research conducted by Ashraf and Zolfaghari (2018), Babaii and Asadnia (2019), and Lee et al. (2023), which also indicated a positive relationship between reflectivity and assessment literacy. The present study contributes to the existing literature by focusing specifically on Iranian EFL teachers and providing evidence of the impact of reflective teaching practices on their assessment literacy levels.

The RQ2 aimed to explore the differences in assessment literacy among high-reflective, mid-reflective, and low-reflective teachers. The results revealed that high-reflective and mid-reflective teachers outperformed low-reflective teachers in terms of their assessment literacy. This suggests that the level of reflectivity plays a role in teachers' assessment literacy development. Teachers who engage in reflective practices and critically examine their assessment beliefs, strategies, and practices are more likely to have a higher level of assessment literacy.

High-reflective and mid-reflective teachers significantly outperformed their low-reflective counterparts concerning their general LAL. Additionally, according to the findings, LAL was the same between high-reflective instructors and their mid-reflective counterparts. This finding might be explained by the fact that EFL teachers with high levels of reflective teaching might have gone through various testing and assessment books and courses and acquired adequate information about assessing language learners. By contrast, those with lower levels of reflectivity with basic knowledge about language testing and assessment might need to be more thoroughly familiar with assessing their teaching practices.

The qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews provided further insights into teachers' familiarity with assessment issues and their beliefs about the impact of reflective teaching on assessment literacy. The interviews highlighted the importance of selective reflective practices and the need for training on test validity, reliability, and fairness. It was also evident that while teachers perceived themselves as prepared for assessment, they still expressed a need for further development in certain areas, such as providing effective feedback to students and making appropriate use of test results.

In line with the study of Quilter and Gallini (2000), which revealed the association between instructors' awareness of instructive assessment and their attitudes toward different assessment forms, the present study revealed that reflectivity causes a change in teachers' attitudes toward LAL. Therefore, awareness about reflection on instructive evaluation could be connected to current approaches to assessment.

This study also suggests that EFL teachers' critical reflection plays a key role in their LAL, which may impact the learners' educational achievements. This reminds us of the conclusion drawn by Yazdani, Amerian, and Hadadi (2015), who recommended that the connection between reflective instruction and EFL instructors' assessment of learners' success should be considered in teacher education. The findings also align with the viewpoints presented by Cole (1997) and Coyle (2002).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated assessment literacy among Iranian EFL reflective instructors and any significant differences among high-reflective, mid-reflective, and low-reflective teachers regarding LAL by adopting a mixed-methods study. The results showed that reflective instruction significantly affected Iranian EFL teachers' overall assessment literacy and that high-reflective and mid-reflective teachers outperformed their low-reflective counterparts; however, there was no difference between high-reflective teachers and their mid-reflective counterparts. This study showed that as the reflectivity upon teaching practice increases, knowledge about assessment issues and the extent to which different assessment types are used grows. Also, it was shown that most low-reflective teachers need more familiarity with assessment. The study showed that some low-reflective teachers needed to learn the difference between assessment and measurement and needed to be made aware of alternative assessment modes (e.g., peer- and self-assessment, portfolio assessment).

Interview findings also indicated that mid-reflective teachers' understanding of assessment was higher than their low-reflective counterparts. Mid-reflective teachers, however, adopted at least one mode of alternative assessment. Due to the importance of teachers' level of reflective teaching, some implications are suggested related to the present study's findings. Due to their higher level of assessment literacy and different beliefs about language teaching, high-reflective and mid-reflective teachers might be more successful than low-reflective teachers.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have practical implications for teacher education and professional development programs. They suggest that incorporating reflective teaching practices into teacher training programs can enhance teachers' assessment literacy and their ability to design and implement effective language assessments. By encouraging teachers to reflect on their assessment practices, educational institutions can promote continuous professional growth and improve the quality of language assessment in EFL contexts.

The results of this study provided analytical support for the proposition that EFL instructors should dedicate more time and effort to developing their awareness of reflective teaching. They should also explore the concepts and principles of reflective teaching and expand their knowledge of how to effectively incorporate reflective practices in their instructional methods. Another important implication is the recognition that many preservice teacher education programs currently do not adequately equip teacher applicants with the necessary level of assessment literacy to efficiently measure learners' progress (Campbell et al., 2002).

Considering their higher levels of assessment literacy and distinct yet strong beliefs about language teaching, high-reflective and mid-reflective teachers should be preferred over low-reflective teachers when assigning English teaching roles. Consequently, it is imperative that all educational programs provide instructors with comprehensive skills and knowledge in assessment.

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