

Research Paper



Critical Issues of Learning-Oriented Assessment Among Iranian EFL Teachers: Perceptions, Limitations and Challenges

Javad Gholami Domsky¹, Gholamreza Zareian^{2*}, Hamid Ashraf³, Hossein Khodabakhshzadeh⁴

¹*Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English, Torbat-e Heydareih Branch, Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Iran*
domskeyjavad@yahoo.com

²*Department of English, Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Iran & Associate professor of TEFL at Hakim Sabzevari University, Iran.*

g.zareian@hsu.ac.ir

³*Assistant Professor, Department of English, Torbat-e Heydareih Branch, Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Iran*

hamid.ashraf.elt@gmail.com

⁴*Assistant professor, Department of English, Torbat-e Heydarieh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Iran,*

kh.phdtbt2015@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions about critical issues of LOA using a mixed- methods design. To this end, a 35-item questionnaire for investigating perceptions towards LOA was designed and validated. A group of 213 high school EFL teachers in Torbat-e Heidarieh and Mashhad were selected based on simple random sampling as the main participants of the study, and 57 EFL teachers were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews to triangulate the results obtained from the questionnaire. The data obtained through the questionnaire were analyzed using different methods of analysis. First, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to confirm the construct validity of the questionnaire. It included seven subcategories: contextual, affective, interactional, instructional, learning, proficiency, and elicitation. Second, the data were analyzed using SPSS software- using frequencies and percentages, computing independent sample t-test and Pearson Correlation. The results indicated that females had a more positive view than males towards the use of LOA in Iranian language classes. Positive relationship was found between teachers' age and their perceptions of LOA. The results indicated significant relationship between teaching experience and attitude of LOA. The qualitative findings of semi-structured interviews supported those of the questionnaire, revealing that the vast majority of EFL teachers believed that the use of LOA was advantageous and productive. These results have implications for L2 teachers and teacher trainers.

Keywords: Assessment, Learning, Learning-Oriented Assessment, Teachers' perception

مقولات مهم سنجش مبتنی بر یادگیری در بین معلمان زبان انگلیسی: ادراکات، محدودیت ها و چالش ها

پژوهش حاضر با هدف بررسی ادراک معلمان زبان انگلیسی زبان ایرانی در مورد مسائل مهم LOA با استفاده از یک طرح ترکیبی انجام شد. برای این منظور، پرسشنامه ای ۳۵ سوالی برای بررسی ادراکات نسبت به LOA طراحی و اعتبار سنجی شد. گروهی متشکل از ۲۱۳ نفر از معلمان زبان انگلیسی دبیرستان های تربت حیدریه و مشهد بر اساس نمونه گیری تصادفی ساده به عنوان شرکت کنندگان اصلی پژوهش انتخاب شدند و ۵۷ معلم زبان انگلیسی برای شرکت در مصاحبه های نیمه ساختاریافته برای مثلث بندی نتایج به دست آمده از پژوهش انتخاب شدند. پرسشنامه. داده های به دست آمده از طریق پرسشنامه با استفاده از روش های مختلف تحلیل مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفت. ابتدا برای تأیید روایی سازه پرسشنامه از تحلیل عاملی تأییدی استفاده شد. این شامل هفت زیرمجموعه بود: زمینه‌ای، عاطفی، تعاملی، آموزشی، یادگیری، مهارت و برانگیختگی. ثانیاً داده‌ها با استفاده از نرم‌افزار SPSS و با استفاده از فراوانی‌ها و درصدها، محاسبات آزمون t مستقل و همبستگی پیرسون مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفت. نتایج نشان داد که زنان نسبت به مردان دیدگاه مثبت تری نسبت به استفاده از LOA در کلاس های زبان ایرانی داشتند. بین سن معلمان و ادراک آنها از LOA رابطه مثبتی مشاهده شد. نتایج حاکی از ارتباط معنادار بین سابقه تدریس و نگرش LOA بود. یافته‌های کیفی مصاحبه‌های نیمه‌ساخت‌یافته، نتایج پرسشنامه را تأیید کرد و نشان داد که اکثریت قریب به اتفاق معلمان زبان انگلیسی معتقد بودند که استفاده از LOA سودمند و سازنده است. این نتایج برای معلمان L2 و مربیان معلم پیامدهایی دارد.

کلمات کلیدی: ارزشیابی، یادگیری، ارزشیابی یادگیری محور، ادراک معلمان

INTRODUCTION

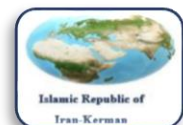
The immediate effect of assessment on English as a foreign language and English as a second language learning and teaching have received much attention in the literature (Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Galikyan et al., 2019; Johnson & Shaw, 2019; Kalali et al, 2022, Suryoputro, 2018; Xu & Liu, 2018). As Iran is a context in which the communicative language teaching method (CLT) is being implemented in most centers in the private sector (Koosha & Yakhabi, 2013), it faces with lack of research concerning other language teaching methods.

In terms of LOA, for example, research is very rare. Gholami et al. (2022) indicated that "LOA is an approach to language learning rather than a step-by-step method. In addition, it places much of the learning workload on the shoulders of the learners" (p. 727). As a result, and due to different understandings of this approach, what happens in the classroom may differ from one context to another. This also urges the need to focus on the teachers' practices in LOA classes. The success of a teaching method in a particular context depends on several variables. As a result, it would be cumbersome to generalize that LOA will be a suitable approach to language education in Iran unless a comprehensive study is conducted. One cannot deny the role of teachers in the success of teaching approaches and methods and it is necessary to explore how the Iranian teachers think of LOA and if they use it in class. In terms of LOA and teachers' perceptions in Iran, more research is required. Few studies have investigated LOA in the context of Iran (e.g., Ashegh Navaie, 2018) and the focus has been on the implementation of LOA rather than the perception and practices of the teachers. This scarcity is worth addressing when we refer to the central role of assessment in EFL teaching and learning quality. More importantly, due to the merits enumerated for LOA in the literature, any research attempt in this regard would lead to positive contributions to EFL teaching/learning system of Iran.

Moreover, age can be an important factor to consider when investigating EFL teachers' perceptions and practices related to language-oriented assessment. Here are some reasons why: Age can be an indicator of experience, with older teachers typically having more years of teaching experience than younger teachers. This experience can influence their perceptions and practices related to assessment, with more experienced teachers possibly having a more well-developed and nuanced approach to assessment. Older teachers may have received different types and levels of training related to language assessment than younger teachers. This could lead to differences in their understanding and implementation of assessment practices, with older teachers potentially having a more traditional or established approach to assessment (Derakhshan & Ghiasvand, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the results of multiple experimental studies, the effect of assessment can be represented positively and negatively. Xu and Liu (2018) reported that the positive impact of doing the test occurs when the assessment is well constructed and measures what is to be measured. Nevertheless, Ali and Hamid (2020) discussed that the negative impact emerges for various reasons, as EFL/ESL teaching and learning are affected by social, political, and psychological issues. Cox, et al, (2018) believed that the effects of assessments crucially emerge regardless of the kind of tests, such as paper-based or online assessments.



Based on the idea of assessment for learning, all the testing strategies should aim to develop students' learning. Students should be actively involved in the process of learning and practice their previous knowledge or learnt content in the opportunities provided for them; they should also receive feedback and help from the teachers in order to become autonomous learners. The characteristics of AfL (Assessment for Learning) have a lot in common with the characteristics of cognitive theory of constructivism. In both teachers should be assured of active engagement of students in the process of learning. Some tasks such as collaboration, dialogues, discussions, authentic examples, and self-reflection activities are crucial here. Through active involvement knowledge and understanding are progressed and learning happens (Rawlusk, 2018). Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) is a multisource concept which indicated assessment for learning and enhances students' learning for the present and future (Carless, 2015).

Thinking of language assessment, most people remember the standardized format of high-stakes and large-scale exams. These forms of examinations are highly recognized for providing valid and reliable measures of students' knowledge. However, these standardized assessments have been criticized for not providing teachers with exact information about knowledge, skills and abilities needed for 21st century students. To provide a more authentic way of assessment which meets these demands, researchers have been trying to re-conceptualize test designs and study the development procedures to come up with a novel assessment way in the 21st century (Carroll, 2017).

Gholami et al. (2022) claimed that "learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) has been theorized as a framework for determining the dynamic, interactive relationship between three things: instruction, learning and assessment in the classroom." They also asserted that this framework also considers the effect of educational standards and technology on the development of curriculum and materials used in classes. LOA aims to enhance successful learning and guide the progress of learning-oriented assessment. The implication of positive and negative feedback on performance are crucial in orientation to learning in LOA and the relationship between learners and learning processes and the indicators of learning are taken into account as vital (Carroll, 2017).

Current practices of assessment usually fail to consider learning and its bidirectional interactions with assessment as the core but learning-oriented assessment (LOA) situates learning at the center. Many remarks have been made about the importance of interrelationship between learning, teaching and assessment. A framework has been provided by Purpura and Turner (2014) for understanding LOA as an approach to classroom based assessment and has regarded assessment as an important component of learning. Language assessment should be implemented with the goal of promoting learning while taking various effective factors into consideration. Purpura and Turner (2014) believed that the process of learning and its outcomes with the agents involved in it (including teachers and learners themselves) should be placed at the center of curriculum and they should be the fundamental for instructional decision making. At the same time, assessment tasks need to collect information for promoting future learning and try to close the learning gaps meanwhile try to inform instruction in the classroom context. Ciriani Dean (2014) believed that interaction which takes place in classes when the focus is on LOA can lead to successful understanding and learning.



Rawlusk (2018) believed that language- oriented assessment includes three criteria- tasks as learning tasks, self and peer assessment, and feedback which encourages students to become engaged in the assessment process. Some of the abilities and skills such as analytical thinking, problem solving, and meta- cognitive activities can be developed through active participation of students in the assessment process. These criteria are explained as:

Tasks as learning tasks

One reason for using tasks in classes is to promote learning and these tasks need to be authentic. Real tasks are more complex and they can integrate abilities and skills and lead to more learning. Authentic assessment can motivate students to apply their understandings in real- world situations and cause deeper learning. These authentic tasks can be used as assessment tools in learning contexts. According to Rawlusk (2018) some of the activities which can be regarded as authentic are: interview, observations, journals, oral presentations, performances, portfolios, role plays, case studies, problem solving and simulations.

Peer and Self- assessment

The core function of peer and self- assessment is to learn how to judge others and oneself. If learners practice this activity in learning context, they learn how to make judgments in real life in future. Furthermore, students' critical thinking, independence and sense of responsibility are enhanced. Peer assessment is also effective in providing a situation for students to practice how to criticize others and be responsible for their judgments. The development of metacognition which is the ability of learners to gain knowledge about their learning is the important value of self- assessment. Self- assessment also empowers students to be able to self- monitor and focus on self- reflective abilities (Rawlusk, 2018).

Feedback

Feedback is regarded as a method of transmitting information from teachers to students. The assumption behind this method is that students know what they need to improve. Giving feedback is considered as a powerful way to increase learning. Rawlusk (2018) described feedback as "feedforward which means that the students' use the assessors' comments to feedforward to work they will do in the future (p. 5)". Giving feedback should not be considered as a one- way process of transmitting information to students; instead, it should be considered as active engagement of students in various sources of gaining feedback. When both teachers and learners are committed to the process then feedback is effective (Barker & Pinard, 2014).

Dimensions of Learning- Oriented Assessment

One of the central themes in LOA is the influence of learner- generated feedback on learning. There are various interrelated dimensions of L2 learning which are significant in LOA. Each dimension can provide an understanding of the students' internal and external factors that have great impact on assessment (Joo, 2016). According to Carroll (2017) the dynamic interaction between instruction, learning and assessment can be regarded along seven dimensions which are classified under two main categories: performance moderators and performance indicators. The first category which is called performance moderator



includes five dimensions that indicate the factors influencing learning development. The second category which is called performance indicator includes two dimensions which identify methods for eliciting, evaluating and interpreting the success of learning development. The following section deals with these categories.

Performance Moderators

To mediate learning development five various yet interacting performance moderators are involved namely context, instruction, interaction, affect and socio- cognitive demands (Carroll, 2017). LOA framework considers these cognitive behaviors as five separate and interacting dimensions (Sabatini et. al., 2015).

Contextual Dimension: it identifies the effect of political and educational perspectives on the social, cultural and technological factors which are related to learning development and performance.

Instructional Dimension: it focuses on the extent to which instructors effectively use technology, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge in their instructions to guide learning development and performance.

Socio- Cognitive Dimension: it includes socio- cognitive features that enhance the identification, comprehension, and integration of learning objectives and examines the cognitive, socio- cognitive and strategic demands of assessing such learning objectives.

Interactional Dimension: it focuses on investigating the interactional structures embedded in classroom based assessment using conversation analytic procedures.

Affective Dimension: it examines the socio- psychological impact of assessment on the beliefs and attitudes of learners and decision makers who use test information.

Performance Indicators

A series of multi- dimensional and dynamic interactions are used in LOA to guide and support decisions which are connected to methods used for performance elicitation, the interpretations gathered from those methods and the extent these interpretations and decisions are influenced by proficiency over time (Carroll, 2017). There are two dimensions which are important here:

Elicitation and Evidence Dimension: there are some design, structures and organization used by test takers for eliciting specific types of evidence. These considerations are important both for decision making and promoting further knowledge.

Proficiency Dimension: it examines the evolving conceptualization of proficiency and the effect it has on learners' proficiency which means that for test making construct definition, changes of definitions over time, and understanding of the effects of these changes are important.

Considering the elements of LOA mentioned above, this study was an attempt to find the answers of the following questions. With a view to the fact that few studies have investigated LOA in the context of Iran within a mixed-method design, this study enjoys novelty.

RQ1: Is there a significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of LOA?

RQ2: Is there any significant relationship between teachers' perceptions towards LOA and their years of teaching experiences?



RQ3: Is there any significant relationship between teachers' perceptions towards LOA and their age?

RQ4: What limitations, challenges, and opportunities do the teachers encounter during their LOA practice?

METHOD

In the quantitative section of this study, a group of 213 EFL teachers teaching at high schools in Torbat-e Heydarieh and Mashhad were selected based on random sampling procedure. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using sound judgment, which will result in saving time and money. They were selected randomly based on diversity in age, teaching experience, and gender. In order to gather Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions about critical issues of LOA, a semi-structured interview was held by the researcher asking seven questions about the perceptions, challenges and limitations 57 EFL teachers faced in employing LOA in their classes.

The setting of this research was high schools in Iran. The selected high schools in this study represented the population of high schools in Iran as all high schools in Iran follow the same curriculum and educational system. The rationale for choosing the high school was as follows: First, the LOA was under investigation and this is a broad concept and category, thus all educational settings including universities and private institutes could not be taken into account and a more limited and specified setting was needed. Therefore, high schools were selected. Second, the approach and attitude of high school teachers may not necessarily be the same as that of university instructors or institute teachers; therefore, just one group was taken into account. Third, the researcher's accessibility to all EFL teachers and learners was not possible, so we needed to exclude some.

The instruments used for data collection included the a) EFL teachers' perceptions and practices in LOA scale developed and validated by Gholami et al. (2022), and b) semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire included 35 items in seven domains which were contextual, affective, interactional, instructional, learning, proficiency, and elicitation. The interview included seven questions about Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions, challenges and limitations in employing LOA in their classes.

The design of the present investigation was a mixed-methods one. The quantitative section of the study was conducted by giving the questionnaire to the language teachers concerning their perception of LOA. The qualitative section of the study included a semi-structured interview with Iranian EFL teachers about their practices of LOA in the classes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Research Question One

Is there a significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of LOA?

To answer the first research question aiming at examining whether teachers' perceptions towards LOA and its sub-constructs differ significantly between genders, an independent-sample t-test was performed.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of male and female teachers in LOA. Results of the independent-sample t-test for gender difference are presented in Table 2.



Table 1*The Descriptive Statistics of male and female teachers in LOA*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
F1	Female	130	17.26	2.47
	Male	83	16.22	3.58
F2	Female	130	17.19	2.79
	Male	83	15.62	3.96
F3	Female	130	17.93	2.74
	Male	83	15.84	4.07
F4	Female	130	17.81	3.03
	Male	83	15.90	3.84
F5	Female	130	17.37	2.62
	Male	83	15.60	3.25
F6	Female	130	16.59	3.31
	Male	83	14.79	3.06
F7	Female	130	20.11	4.00
	Male	83	17.80	3.69
Overall	Female	130	124.31	16.32
	Male	83	111.77	22.06

As Table 1 shows, the mean score of female teachers in LOA and its sub-constructs is higher than male teachers. The mean score of female teachers in overall LOA (124.31) is higher than male teachers (111.77). To find that these differences are significant, t-test was run.

Table 2*Results of the Independent-Samples T-Test for Gender Difference*

<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>					
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
F1	2.48	211	.014	1.03	.41
F2	3.37	211	.001	1.56	.46
F3	4.48	211	.000	2.09	.46
F4	4.03	211	.000	1.91	.47
F5	4.37	211	.000	1.77	.405
F6	3.96	211	.000	1.79	.45
F7	4.22	211	.000	2.30	.54
Overall	4.75	211	.000	12.54	2.63

As indicated in Table 2, there are significant differences in the level of EFL teachers' LOA and its sub-constructs between male and female teachers: F1 ($t=2.48$, $P<.05$), F2 ($t=3.37$, $P<.05$), F3 ($t=4.03$, $P<.05$), F4 ($t=4.37$, $P<.05$), F5 ($t=4.37$, $P<.05$), F6 ($t=3.96$, $P<.05$), F7 ($t=4.22$, $P<.05$), and Overall LOA ($t=4.75$, $P<.05$).



Results of Research Question Two

Is there any significant relationship between teachers' perceptions towards LOA and their years of teaching experiences?

In order to find the association between Years of Teaching Experience and teachers' LOA, Pearson correlation was conducted. Table 3 shows the results of correlation between Years of Teaching Experience and different sub-constructs of teachers' LOA.

Table 3

Results of Pearson Correlation between Years of Teaching Experience and LOA

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	Overall
Experience	.24**	.33**	.40**	.36**	.43**	.33**	.41**	.44**

**Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01

As it can be seen in Table 3, there are positive significant relationships between seven sub-constructs of teachers' LOA and experience. Among seven sub-constructs of the scale, F5 ($r=.43, p<.05$) has the highest relationship and F1 ($r=.24, p<.05$) has the lowest relationship with experience. In addition, there is a moderate positive significant relationship between overall LOA and years of teaching experience ($r=.44, p<.05$).

Results of Research Question Three

Is there any significant relationship between teachers' perceptions towards LOA and their age?

In order to find the association between age and teachers' LOA, again Pearson correlation was conducted. Table 4 shows the results of correlation between age and different sub-constructs of teachers' LOA.

Table 4

Results of Pearson Correlation between age and LOA

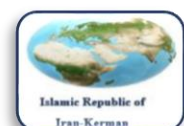
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	Overall
Age	.25**	.36**	.45**	.44**	.48**	.36**	.49**	.49**

**Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01

As it can be seen in Table 4, there are positive significant relationships between seven sub-constructs of teachers' LOA and age. Among seven sub-constructs of the scale, F7 ($r=.49, p<.05$) has the highest relationship and F1 ($r=.25, p<.05$) has the lowest relationship with age. In addition, there is a moderate positive significant relationship between overall LOA and age ($r=.49, p<.05$).

Results of the Interview

57 EFL teachers were randomly selected and interviewed in order to answer the related research question (What limitations, challenges, and opportunities do the teachers encounter during their LOA practice?) and the interviews were continued till saturation was reached. They were asked to give their opinions about the limitations and challenges they face in classes while practicing LOA. The results obtained are reported as follows:



First of all, teachers think that learning oriented assessment is a type of assessment with the ultimate aim of enhancing students' learning and it is process based. It is not one- shot assessment of students' learning and is not product oriented. The first advantage of using LOA in language classes is that it allows assessing students during the course and not restricting evaluation to summative tests. It is a mixture of summative and formative assessment.

The second advantage is that the teacher and students can evaluate their work and check their improvement through LOA. Improvement of teaching and learning can be measured when using LOA principles in language classes. It can also help checking the continual progress of teachers and learner.

The third advantage is that LOA can delete the deficiencies in teaching and change the teaching methods to new ones. The fourth advantage is that as assessment is considered as an indispensable accompaniment to lifelong learning and LOA is regarded as a new approach to assessment, the learners are actively involved in their own learning process. It empowers teachers and learners to set individual goals and form evidence concerning learning. Another benefit of implementing LOA in language classes is that it can increase a number of skills among learners. Some skills such as reflection, critical thinking and self- awareness are fostered and it can give students an insight into the assessment process.

The other positive point is that the idea of LOA is considered as a creative effort for designing assessment tasks to tap into new constructs, to reflect new ways of communication among students and real use of language, and to provide meaningful and detailed information about students.

The other point is that students can see the learning outcomes at the end of the course more effectively through learners' performance which may promote better learning. Teachers also believe that one advantage of LOA in classes refers to the fact that teachers and students can take advantage of different assessable moments in the classroom which are embedded within the instruction and this is useful to figure out how best learning proceeds. Teachers also said that learning oriented feedback provided by the teachers can be more accurate and less problematic during the assessment process. Another important point is that as students are actively involved in the process of assessment, it can improve students' decision making ability.

Any activity which leads to an end in learning is precious. LOA is also recommended when it is for the sake of learning. However, disadvantages are also significant in language classes according to what teachers believe. One disadvantage is that it is time consuming to follow LOA principles in classes. It takes a lot of time to administer LOA correctly considering all aspects. Checking students' progress continually and giving feedback is costly regarding time. The other one is that it needs expertise on the part of the teachers. Another disadvantage is about the students' stress which is increased by repeated assessments. Another point of concern which is considered as a disadvantage is that assessment using LOA may have harmful impact on students' motivation, especially for weaker students. Careless implementation of LOA in language classes may result in negative feelings in learners especially if the needs of the students are not taken into account.

The other important disadvantage is that Iranian EFL teachers are not familiar with the principles of LOA and cannot implement it in their classes. Another important point to be considered is that linking external assessment such as exams into a systematic relationship with the kind of assessment which occurs during the class seems very challenging. When having learning oriented assessment in the class



which can be planned or unplanned, the results obtained and outcomes should be related to external exams (standardized measures) out of school or out of language class.

Another point of concern is that in this kind of approach to assessment, learning stages should be progressive. This means that LOA should be done continuously not just as a quick shot; otherwise, it would not be effective. Some teachers believe that when LOA is put into practice it is difficult to have an accurate interpretation of what students are learning and relate it to learning objectives. It needs a lot of practice on the part of the teachers.

The other important point as teachers mentioned refers to the role of teachers in LOA classes. Teachers need to have new knowledge, skills and behaviors and they need for higher levels of assessment literacy. This is complicated and challenging for the teachers who are accustomed to traditional ways of teaching. Table 5 shows the summary of teachers' opinions about the challenges, limitations and disadvantages of implementing LOA in Iranian language classes. Table 6 shows the summary of teachers' opinions about the opportunities and advantages of implementing LOA in Iranian language classes.

Table 5

Frequency and percentage of teachers' opinion about the challenges & limitations of LOA in language classes

	Teachers	
	F	p
Time consuming	43	75.4
Needs expertise	37	64.9
Students' stress	19	33.3
Students' motivation	11	19.2
Lack of familiarity	23	40.3
Linking with external exams	8	14
Progressive assessment	9	15.7
LOA in practice	14	24.5
Changing roles of teachers	31	54.3

Table 6

Frequency and percentage of teachers' opinion about the opportunities & advantages of LOA in language classes

	Teachers	
	F	p
Formative assessment	21	36.8
Self- evaluation	17	29.8
New approach to teaching	34	59.6
Life- long learning	11	19.2
New approach to assessment	18	31.5
Foster skills	9	15.7
Authentic use of language	27	47.3
Learning outcomes	13	22.8
Assessable moments in class	6	10.5



Teachers' feedback	41	71.9
Decision making	12	21

Regarding the limitations faced by teachers regarding the implementation of LOA, the majority of teachers referred to time limitations and technical issues. One of the teachers gave the following response to this question:

"Teachers need adequate time to engage in effective LOA; however, most teachers face time constraints in this regard".

The interview also sought to elicit the opportunities LOA can provide to both L2 teachers and students. The responses varied widely based on the interviewees' own experiences with LOA. One of the teachers believed that:

"LOA can serve a dual purpose; in addition to enhancing learning, it can be used as an assessment technique".

The time teachers spend on LOA was also another question raised in the interview. Interviewees gave their own rationale for allocating specific time to covering LOA in their classes. For example, one of the teachers referred to the nature of tasks as a deciding factor in the duration of LOA.

"I try to devote at least 15 minutes to LOA in my classes. Sometime, it may increase up to an hour. It varies based on the nature of tasks and the class size".

The interviewees were also asked about the benefits and advantages they had gained from their experiences. Overall, they expressed their satisfaction with the positive outcomes of LOA in their classes. One of the interviewees said:

"Both teachers and learners can benefit from effective LOA. It can increase students' motivation for learning. It also helps teachers teach and assess simultaneously".

Lastly, regarding the disadvantages, a sub-group of interviewees raised some issues and disadvantages. One of them responded:

"Improper use of LOA can be counterproductive. Students may feel anxious as they may lack self-confidence to take part in class activities".

Another teacher brought up the following disadvantages:

"Some students and teachers may find LOA a weird activity. They are used to the conventional activities in language class. It takes time for them to adapt to such creative activities. Teachers may fail to push LOA toward the realization of the stated goals".

To triangulate the results, a one-on-one interview was conducted with some teachers. The interview questions elicited the interviewees' feelings towards using LOA in an English class; the challenges associated with using LOA in English classes; the limitations teachers face while using LOA in an English class; the opportunities that LOA can provide for teachers or students in an English class; the time allocated by teachers to LOA; the possible advantages and benefits related to using LOA for both teachers and students; and finally, the disadvantages that are related to using LOA in language classes. In the same vein, other qualitative assessments have used interviews to examine the research questions.

For example, Nasr et al. (2018) used a mixed methods approach to obtain a comprehensive understanding of EFL teachers' perceptions of assessment for learning practices. The study involved the



participation of 384 Iranian EFL teachers, who completed a 35-item self-report questionnaire on assessment for learning, using a Likert scale. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The qualitative findings supported those of the questionnaire, revealing that the vast majority of EFL teachers believed that the use of assessment for learning was advantageous and productive.

CONCLUSION

To answer the first research question which stated that "Is there any significant difference in teachers' attitude towards LOA components between male and female Iranian EFL teachers?" an independent-samples t-test was performed. The results showed that the mean score of female teachers in LOA and its sub-constructs was higher than male teachers and the findings of the t-test indicated that these differences were significant. This means that female instructors had a more positive view of the use of LOA in Iranian language classes. This may be rooted in the difference between male and female teachers' assessment literacy. The difference in their bulk of knowledge may have led to such differences.

To answer the second research question which stated that "Is there any significant relationship between teachers' attitude towards LOA and their years of teaching experiences? Pearson correlation was conducted. The results indicated that there was significant relationship between overall LOA and teachers' years of teaching experience. This can be justified in the sense that teaching experience plays a key role in different aspects of teachers' thinking and performance. It is experience which shapes teachers' orientations towards teaching components. The old saying is that practice makes perfect. Teaching experience re-forms and transforms teachers' views considerably.

To answer the third research question which stated that "Is there any significant relationship between teachers' attitude towards LOA and their age?" again Pearson correlation was conducted. It was concluded that there was positive and significant relationship between teachers' age and what they think about LOA. It can be interpreted by arguing that age has been considered as a factor which changes individuals' perspectives about different phenomena. Attitude towards LOA is not an exception in this regard.

The last research question concerned the qualitative section of this mixed-methods study. What limitations, challenges, and opportunities do the teachers encounter during their LOA practice? In case of limitations and challenges three factors were mostly named by the teachers; LOA is time-consuming, needs expertise, and requires teachers to change their roles. On the other hand, LOA provides opportunities such as feedback, new methods of teaching, and practicing authentic language.

Several caveats must be taken into account when interpreting the results of the study. Firstly, the study was conducted in the Iranian EFL context, and therefore the generalizability of the findings to other contexts may be limited. Secondly, the sample size of the study was relatively small, which may have affected the ability to detect significant differences between groups. Moreover, the study used a self-report questionnaire, which may have resulted in social desirability bias, where participants may have reported what they thought was expected of them.

Based on the results, it is worth investing in teacher training programs that are aimed at raising L2 teachers' awareness of LOA and the relevant challenges that may arise in such classes. Accordingly, teachers need to take into account different assessment methods, including LOA. Expanding on the idea of training and professional development in LOA as an intervening variable, it is important to note that



teachers' exposure to and understanding of LOA may vary depending on their level of training and professional development. For example, teachers who have participated in workshops, seminars, or courses on LOA may have a deeper understanding of the principles and practices of LOA, which may lead to a more positive view of it. On the other hand, teachers who have not had such training or professional development may have a more limited understanding of LOA, which may result in a less positive view of it.

This study can be beneficial for EFL teachers in case of increasing their awareness and understanding of most critical parts of implementing LOA in the classroom. Moreover, it provides insights for the advantages, challenges and limitations in using LOA in Iranian English classes.

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Biodata

Javad Gholami Domsy is a Ph.D. candidate in TEFL at Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e Heydarieh Branch, Iran. He is an English teacher at schools and his field of interest is psychology for language teachers.

Gholamreza Zareian is currently an associate professor of TEFL at Hakim Sabzevari University, Iran. His main research interest is curriculum studies.

Hamid Ashraf, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Torbat-e Heydarieh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Iran



Hossein Khodabakhshzadeh received his MA from Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST) in 2000. He pursued his education at Ferdowsi University of Mashad (FUM) and obtained PhD in TEFL. Currently he is an Assistant Professor at Islamic Azad University. He has taught different courses and published several books and articles in the field of ELT and Language Assessment.

