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Research Paper

ESP Teachers' Language Assessment Literacy and their Perception of Formative Classroom Assessment in Online Courses

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Abstract

This study is a mixed-methods parallel design aiming at exploring the perception of 49 ESP teachers toward formative classroom assessment with regard to their language assessment literacy (LAL) in Iran within the theoretical framework of Hay and Penney (2013). The data were collected through an online semi-structured interview and a questionnaire, extracted from Shahzamani and Tahririan's (2021) questionnaire, consisting of 13 Likert items and 9 open-ended questions which were validated for this study through confirmatory factor analysis. The results of a Chi-square test on the Likert items showed a significant difference between the participant's responses to each item which revealed an overall tendency of the ESP teachers toward employing formative assessment as an efficient way for evaluating their own teaching efficacy, the quality of the teaching materials, and their students' progress. The results also revealed that the two features of 1) ability to assess learners based on cultural-related issues in a certain context, and 2) ability to design suitable assessment methods for multilevel ESP classes should be added to the components of LAL in the existing literature. The results have implications for teacher educators to consider these two features in teacher education programs. Also, academic authorities are to notice that reliance on summative assessment and evaluation merely based on final exam scores are not appreciated by most ESP teachers.

Keywords: *Language assessment literacy, ESP assessment patterns, formative classroom assessment, culturally appropriate assessment, multilevel classroom assessment*

میزان آشنایی مدرسین انگلیسی با اهداف ویژه با ارزشیابی و نوع برداشت آنها از ارزشیابی ساختاری در کلاسهای آنلاین
پژوهش حاضر از نوع روشهای آمیخته متوازی است که هدفش مطالعه نوع برداشت 49 نفر از مدرسان انگلیسی با اهداف ویژه از ارزشیابی ساختاری در کلاس درس بر پایه میزان آشنایی آنها با نحوه انجام ارزشیابی صورت گرفته است. داده های لازم از طریق مصاحبه های نیمه پیش بینی شده و بصورت آنلاین و با استفاده از پرسشنامه ای که از تحریریان و شاهزamani (2021) گرفته شده بود جمع اوری گردید. این پرسشنامه شامل 13 سوال از نوع لیکرت و 9 سوال باز است که با روش تحلیل تایید فاکتور روایی آنها تعیین شده است. نتیجه از موزن ضریب خی در مورد سوالات لیکرت نشان دهنده تفاوت چشمگیر میان پاسخهای مدرسین بود که حاکی از تمایل آنها به استفاده از ارزشیابی ساختاری به عنوان شیوه ای کارا در ارزشیابی موثر تدریس خودشان. کیفیت مواد آموزشی و پیشرفت دانشجویان است. یافته ها همچنین نشان داد که دو ویژگی 1. توانایی طراحی شیوه های ارزشیابی فراگیران بر اساس مسائل فرهنگی و 2. توانایی طراحی نحوه ارزشیابی انگلیسی با اهداف ویژه باید به اجزا سواد ارزشیابی افزوده شود. یافته ها می تواند برای دست اندرکاران تربیت مدرس مفید افتد. از طرفی لازم است دانشگاهیان توجه داشته باشند که شیوه ارزشیابی مبتنی بر پایان ترم مورد قبول بیشتر مدرسین انگلیسی با اهداف ویژه نیست.
واژگان کلیدی: آشنایی با شیوه های ارزشیابی. ارزشیابی ساختاری. الگوهای ارزشیابی انگلیسی با اهداف ویژه. ارزشیابی متناسب با اهداف فرهنگی. ارزشیابی چند وجهی

Introduction

Nowadays, any EFL program in higher education includes some sort of ESP courses. Most university programs in Iran, too, include at least one ESP course as a requirement that the students in any field of study need to pass. The evaluation system used in ESP courses in Iran is mostly based on summative assessment, that is, complete reliance on students' final exam scores as the main indicator of their success or failure. In this sense, Davidheiser (2013) argued that any kind of assessment that is used to rank students based on their final achievement does not provide teachers with the opportunity and ability to offer students constructive feedback and improve the quality of instruction. Other scholars such as Stiggins (2005) and Deneen and Brown (2016) also maintain that assessment for learning (AFL) should include assessment of learning (AOL). This means that we need to focus on the students' day-to-day learning procedure and notice that the learners' success does not merely depend on their final achievement.

With regard to these facts, this study is an attempt to investigate the way that ESP teachers perceive continual classroom assessment (formative assessment) in their online courses in Iran where the main purpose of the universities and institution authorities is to evaluate the students' achievement only based on their final exam scores which, according to the studies in the literature, is not a fair method for evaluating the learners' language development (Stiggins, 2005; Collins, 2007; Davidheiser, 2013; Deneen & Brown 2016).

Review of Literature

Language assessment literacy (LAL) originally taken from the term "assessment literacy" (Stiggins, 1991), is defined as "an individual's understanding of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures deemed likely to influence educational decisions" (Popham, 2011, p. 267). The earlier definition of LAL referred to the standards for teacher competence in the educational assessment of students (American Federation of Teachers et al., 1990) that highlighted the skills that teachers need in seven areas. The areas included selecting and developing assessments for the classroom, administering and scoring assessment results, using assessment results for grading and decision making, communicating assessment results, and recognizing unethical or inappropriate assessment use. Following these facts, various scholars defined the concept of teacher assessment literacy in various ways which all have the main aforementioned skills in common (e.g., Campbell & Collins, 2007; Mertler, 2009; DeLuca, 2012, etc.).

Davies (2008) defined assessment literacy as a construct consisting of multiple dimensions. The main three core components for assessment literacy in his definition include skills, knowledge, and principles. The "skills" component is practical and refers to (the how-to) part of the assessment. The "knowledge" component relates to the "related background in measurement and language description", and the "principles" element is defined as underlying testing concepts, "the proper use of language tests, their fairness and impact, including questions of ethics and professionalism" (p. 5). These three components have stayed still in theoretical and research discussions about LAL; however, the scope and the boundaries of the three components have been questioned (Inbar-Lourie, 2013a; Taylor, 2013). Generally, the knowledge, principles, and skills of a teacher in the realm of language testing are known as LAL (Davies, 2008; Malone, 2008; Fulcher, 2012).

As a more developed theoretical framework, Hay & Penney (2013) defined assessment literacy largely as "teachers' understanding of assessment processes as well as their capacities to design assessment tasks, develop adequate criteria for making valid judgments on the quality of students' performances, and understand and act upon the information that is collected through assessment", (pp. 69–70). It should also be added that, the constructed language in LAL is different from its universal form which is the language



structure used in testing literacy (Giraldo, 2018). Hence, LAL incorporates knowledge of language, principles, and skills of language testing (Davies, 2008; Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2013).

The emergence of the concept of LAL can be the result of social and contextual changes in language testing, language teaching, and language learning that demanded new assessment methods in these fields. To put it differently, learning a language, in the era of globalization, is a transdisciplinary process intertwined with the multilingual-multicultural world which is highly correlated with technological innovations. (Leung & Scarino, 2016; Shohamy & Or, 2017). According to Kern and Liddicoat (2010), a language learner is perceived as a “social speaker and actor,” who “acts and speaks in multiple communities (scholarly, social, virtual, etc.) and experiences intercultural interactions in various communications” (p. 22).

In multi contextually and culturally bound contexts, research on assessment literacy in various fields appear to care for merging the combination of disciplinary knowledge and assessment (Inbar-Lourie, 2008; Zolfaghari & Ahmadi, 2016; Coombe, Vafadar, & Mohebbi, 2020). To meet the challenge raised by the realities of different languages and cultures, the current conception of language learning should be compatible with a related assessment theory and practice (Farhady, 2018).

Considering the abovementioned statements teachers need to develop an ability to evaluate their students effectively and be literate in the assessment. Assessment literacy helps teachers develop assessment systems that transform the learning goals into assessment activities by reflecting the students' achievement and progression in the teaching practice (Stiggins, 2002; Mertler & Campbell, 2005; Poham, 2009). Teachers' familiarity with various assessment tools provides them with the opportunity of selecting the most appropriate, relevant, and powerful assessment methods to pursue particular learning goals (Gottheiner & Siegel, 2012; Farhady, 2018).

Pastore and Andrade (2019) described a framework to identify assessment literate teachers as a person who can:

- Connect assessments to clear purposes
- Clarify achievement expectations
- Apply proper assessment methods
- Develop quality assessment exercises and scoring criteria and sampling appropriately
- Avoid bias in assessment
- Communicate effectively about student achievement
- Use assessment as an instructional intervention

Furthermore, as Shepard (2000) stated, assessment literate teachers must be able to design and administer more than summative end-of-unit tests and exams if they are to realize improvements in schools.

Since stakeholders such as students, teachers, and administrators are directly affected by language classroom assessment, assessment literacy is vital for language teachers (Shepard, 2000). In this sense, Taylor (2009) argued that LAL is essential not only for language teachers but also for all stakeholders, so they can deeply understand the scope of the field of study. However, some scholars contended that language teachers are the most important of all the stakeholders because they are the direct assessment users (Scarino, 2013; Harding & Kremmel, 2016). In this regard, as Taylor (2013) suggested, in order for teachers to make use of assessment methods the most efficiently, they are required to have a specific degree of knowledge which are categorized in eight levels 1) knowledge of theory, 2) technical skills, 3) principles and concepts, 4) language pedagogy, 5) sociocultural values, 6) local practices, 7) personal beliefs/attitudes, and 8) scores and decision making. Alternatively stated, teachers' knowledge in assessment refers to teachers' understanding of language assessment, how language assessment should be



done, and on the 'why' the assessment is taken. Therefore; it can be stated that LAL can also be considered as a gateway to further learning as it provides individuals with both "the necessary skills and knowledge about good assessment practices which facilitates the evaluation of educational situations and decision making accordingly" (Price et al., 2012, p.9).

As teacher education and teaching methods have changed over years, assessment literacy has transitioned through three stages (Deneen & Brown, 2016) as are described in the following lines.

First, little formal training in assessment activities is offered by teacher education (Stiggins, 1991). Brookhart (2011) reviewed the changes and argued that two shifts were found at the first stage including: 1) the increased emphasis on assessment for learning (Earl, 2013), and 2) attending to social, theoretical, and technical matters that teachers bring into their assessment activities. At this stage, early efforts to foster effective assessment practices mainly focused on measurement theory and skills. In this sense, Davidheiser (2013) stated that, historically, assessment was used to rank students based on their achievement. However, the largely psychometric and knowledge-driven view of assessment was later expanded by subsequent studies indicating that this approach to assessment literacy had restrictive formative utility. It did not provide teachers with the opportunity and ability to offer students constructive feedback and communicate assessment results toward positive changes (Leighton, Gokeirt, Cor, & Heffernan, 2010).

The second stage considered assessment literacy as a priority to teacher education and teacher practice which has longitudinal impacts on students' achievement (Stiggins, 2005). With this regard, Ecclestone and Pryor (2003) stated that long-term interactions between students and teachers can be highly effective in students' accomplishments since the equilibrium of formative and summative assessment in a long term could have significant consequences on students' success in a certain program. A widely disseminated message at this stage was that summative assessment, especially through standardized testing, was harmful to students' learning (Deneen & Brown, 2016); whereas, the proponents of this viewpoint stated that the negative effect of summative assessment was not a matter of illiteracy or malpractice of teachers; rather, it was due to a more fundamental problem with conceptualizing assessment as measurement (Shepard, 2000).

Deneen and Brown (2016) introduced the third stage of assessment literacy by trying to develop a synergy between formative and summative assessments in education. This means that, at the third stage, teacher education programs were required to prepare the teachers with the literacy of combining summative and formative assessment methods along with dealing with the challenging tasks of teaching, preparing students for various tests, and reporting assessment results to the stakeholders. These three stages present the importance of assessment literacy in language teacher education programs which has been accentuated in numerous studies in the literature (e.g., Lukin et al., 2004; Weigle, 2007; Mertler, 2009; Crusan, 2010; Malone, 2013; Jeong, 2013).

Herrera and Macías (2015) demonstrated that LAL-related courses should be provided by the teacher training programs supplied for pre-service and in-service English teachers, as the assessment knowledge would empower language teachers to raise the standards of English language teaching. Similarly, Lukin et al. (2004) examined the effectiveness of teacher training programs in teachers' assessment literacy and found a positive effect of such programs on teachers' confidence, knowledge, and assessment skills. In this sense, López and Bernal (2009) argued for more training in language assessment for prospective teachers to learn to develop, use, score and interpret language assessments. Although much attention has been given to assessment-related training, many teachers are not well-prepared to perform classroom-based assessment activities confidently and professionally (DeLuca & Johnson, 2017). To put it another way, despite the importance of assessment literacy for language teachers, unfortunately, most teachers do not have the adequate level of assessment knowledge to attain the optimum results in their practice (Crusana, Plakans, & Gebril, 2016; Melone, 2013).



In the Iranian academic contexts, Bayat and Rezaei (2105) argued that teachers must develop a certain level of language assessment literacy to prevent serious negative consequences of lack of knowledge in this issue. Similarly, Esfandiari and Nouri (2016) suggested that enhancing teachers' awareness of assessment literacy can enable them to evaluate the performance of their learners more effectively. Also, Rahimi Rad (2019) found out that assessment literacy of the teachers had a statistically meaningful impact on their assessment efficiency in the classroom. According to him, teachers with high assessment literacy can organize lesson plans effectively and are considerably more aware of their learners' strengths and weaknesses compared to teachers with lower level of assessment literacy. In this regard, Rezaei Fard and Tabatabaei (2018) found that Iranian ELTs' general level of LAL was low. However, Jannati (2015) argued that ELT teachers are assessment literate, but this literacy is not reflected in their practices. Similarly, Shahahmadi and Ketabi (2019) contended that the current level of Iranian EFL teachers' LAL is not ideal or at least is not visible in their teaching practice.

With regard to the components of LAL in the Iranian EFL context, Janatifar and Marandi (2018) found out that reliability, validity, test design, large-scale standardized testing, classroom assessment, beyond-the-test aspects including social and ethical aspects of language testing/assessment, were the components of LAL in the Iranian context. Their results indicated that EFL teachers believed that they should receive hands-on skills-based instruction in language assessment.

ESP teachers are called practitioners, as Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) distinguished pivotal roles for ESP teachers, namely teacher, course designer and materials provider, collaborator, researcher, assessor. To explain briefly, the first role, as a 'teacher', is synonymous with that of the 'General English' teacher. But, the methodology changes since the teaching becomes more specific. As the students are frequently the primary knower of the content, the teacher is no longer a primary knower. In other words, teachers need to create real, authentic communication in the classroom based on the students' knowledge. Defining the second role, as a course designer and materials provider, ESP teachers plan the course and provide the required materials. This fact makes the role of LAL in ESP teachers even more crucial since LAL is a way to develop suitable materials for a certain group of learners (Rahimi Rad, 2019).

In any teaching and learning situation, assessment aims to evaluate the students' achievements and the teachers' teaching effectiveness. The case is different in the ESP context, as the assessment of the students, the course, and teaching materials are the main methodology for achieving the best results in creating/selecting teaching materials, teaching methods, and students' learning attainments (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Thus, due to the uniqueness of ESP courses, assessment is a must and deserves more attention and research with regard to the LAL of language teachers. Although the reviewed studies in the literature have examined the LAL of English teachers, they mostly shed light on the categories of assessment principles in general, and have not investigated the ESP teachers' suggested assessment patterns and their perception toward formative classroom assessment with regard to their LAL in online courses. Formative assessment is defined as a non-stop assessment process that provides teachers with the ongoing progression of their learners (Boston, 2002) and formative classroom assessment (FCA hereafter) is a systematic approach to formative assessment, used by instructors to determine how well students are learning (Shepard, 2000).

Considering the reviewed literature, this study is an attempt to answer to the following research question:

- Q1. What is the perception of ESP teachers about formative classroom assessment in online courses?
- Q2. What are the prevalent patterns that ESP teachers employ for assessing students in their online courses?
- Q3. What are the most common features found to be part of ESP teachers' LAL?



Methodology

This study enjoys a parallel mixed method design in which a set of statistical data analysis is employed to answer to the first two research questions and data coding and pattern analysis is used to answer to the second research question.

Participants

A total of 49 ESP teachers (24 male and 25 female) constituted the participants of this study who taught ESP in various fields of management, mathematics, psychology, law, and physical education in BA and MA university programs in Esfahan and Tehran. Their age range was from 34 to 70 years and their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 45. They were chosen through the snowball sampling method and were approached and contacted via email.

Data collection and instrumentation

The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviewing. First, the participants were informed about the whole purpose of the research through a letter of invitation to participate in this study; then, they were asked to complete the questionnaire and interview with us online.

The instrument employed in this study was a 28-item questionnaire designed in two parts validated for this data set which was mainly extracted from the questionnaire designed by Shahzamani and Tahririan (2021). The first part of the questionnaire included 19 Likert items exploring the participants' perception toward various aspects of FCA (formative classroom assessment) as is shown in Table1, and the second part of the questionnaire included 9 open-ended questions aiming at eliciting various assessment patterns that ESP teachers would employ in their routine evaluations of their students in online courses. After validating the Likert items, the data of 6 items were removed from the analysis which made the instrument a 22-item questionnaire that will be described in section 3.3 and is illustrated in appendix 1.

The online interviews were conducted using WhatsApp in which the questions mainly revolved around eliciting more information and explanation on the participants' answers to the 9 open-ended questions of the questionnaire. The whole interview data were audio-recorded and transcribed in Persian. The data collection procedure took place from March to June 2021.

Table1

The construct of the questionnaire.

Concept measured by the questionnaire	The number of questions related to each concept
FCA and assessing the quality of the teaching method	1,5,6,12,15,17
FCA and assessing the weaknesses and strengths of the learners	4,8,11,14,18,13,16
FCA and appropriateness of the materials	2,3,7, 9,19,10

Construct validity and reliability of the instrument

In order to check for the construct validity of the first part of the questionnaire, a confirmatory factor analysis was employed. The results revealed that items number 7,9,10,13,16,19 did not load onto the related constructs; therefore, they were removed from the analysis. Also, in order to check for the reliability of the questionnaire and consistency of the responses, a reliability coefficient analysis was performed. Consequently, the final version of the questionnaire turned out to consist of 13 Likert items with a reliability coefficient of 0.72 and 9 open-ended questions which is shown in Appendix 1.

Results

Quantitative data analysis and results

In order to answer the first research question, a Chi-square test was performed to explore the participants' responses to each item. The results, illustrated in Table2, showed that there is a statistically significant difference among the selection of responses to each item among the participants. In other words, there found to be a relationship among the participants' overall opinions and the frequency of the responses to each item. This fact could be seen in Table3.

Table3 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the whole data set which reveals that the most frequently selected response for the items number 1,4,6,10 happened to be strongly agree, and the most frequently choice in response to the items number 2,3,5,7,9,11,12,13 was agree.

The only item with no significant result in the Chi-square test was the question number 13 which enquired the teachers' opinion about employing various techniques in conducting formative assessment. This result makes the question number 13 a controversial enquiry in this data set which made it the basis of the open-ended questions for the qualitative part of the study.

Table 2

Chi-square analysis of the Likert items.

	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
q1	17.429 ^a	2	.000
q2	19.143 ^a	2	.000
q3	18.286 ^a	2	.000
q4	24.653 ^a	2	.000
q5	11.796 ^a	2	.003
q6	14.000 ^a	2	.001
q7	21.714 ^a	2	.000
q9	16.816 ^a	2	.000
q10	6.653 ^a	2	.036
q11	8.375 ^b	2	.015
q12	16.694 ^a	2	.000
q13	5.673 ^a	2	.059

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 16.3.

b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 16.0.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of the data

	N		Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
	Valid	Missing						
q1	49	1	4.47	5	.616	.379	3	5
q2	49	1	4.41	4	.574	.330	3	5
q3	49	1	4.33	4	.591	.349	3	5
q4	49	1	4.57	5	.540	.292	3	5
q5	49	1	4.35	4 ^a	.663	.440	3	5



q6	49	1	4.39	5	.640	.409	3	5
q7	49	1	4.45	4	.542	.294	3	5
q8	50	0						
q9	49	1	4.37	4	.602	.362	3	5
q10	49	1	4.29	5	.736	.542	3	5
q11	48	2	3.90	4	.692	.478	3	5
q12	49	1	4.16	4	.624	.389	3	5
q13	49	1	4.06	4	.719	.517	3	5

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Qualitative data analysis and results

In order to discover the assessment patterns that ESP teachers employed in their online classes, the transcribed interview data and the participants' written responses to the open-ended questions were coded based on the main assessment methods they employed and their purpose and logic for using each method in order to find a framework in this data set. Table 4 illustrates the patterns found in the qualitative data.

Table 4

The assessment patterns used by the ESP teachers in online courses.

Assessment pattern	Purpose
1.Oral quick questions about the current session's lesson at the end of each session	To check if the material was clear to them To check if they achieved what was covered
2.While teaching questions related to the previous lessons	To check if they are following the whole story To make sure the previous lessons are not forgotten
3.Asking the whole class a specific question with regard to the material and expect for a volunteer to answer	To check if the atmosphere of the class is cooperative or not To check if the material is suitable for their level of English proficiency
4. Asking them to think about a question and search it online.	exploratory teaching technique
5. Asking questions about a word or a topic before teaching it	Brainstorming technique and check for the adequacy of the material
6. Summative assessment at the end of the course	No way to announce the final scores without this.

Apart from the patterns coded in this data set, the ESP teachers were found to emphasize on the role of cultural issues in their assessment procedures. They clearly stated that some assessment methods such as while-teaching questions, formative classroom assessment, and portfolio assessment are not accepted as suitable evaluation methods by which the university teachers can report the students' final score in the Iranian academic settings. In their opinion, this fact is because of the intense influence of the traditional summative assessment system in Iran which is rooted in the ancient education culture of this country. Therefore, understanding the cultural-related issues in a teaching context should be considered as a crucial component of teachers' LAL in the literature which should be added to the LAL framework of Hay and Penny. Furthermore, the majority of the ESP teachers (44out of 49 ~89.7%) were found to employ various assessment patterns to evaluate the whole class at the same time. In the interview sessions, they emphasized the fact that in most of the ESP classes in Iran, students are from various levels of language proficiency; so, there is a significant difference between homogeneous EFL classes and multilevel ESP



courses in the Iranian academic contexts. Consequently, ESP teachers have to show compatibility with this issue and be able to manage this problem by designing assessment techniques that can fairly evaluate the achievement of their ESP students with multiple levels of language proficiency.

This ability has not been mentioned in the literature of LAL before and should be added to the framework of Hay and penny as well.

Discussion and Conclusion

The previous studies performed in the Iranian contexts suggested that teachers' assessment literacy should be increased through suitable teacher education programs because teachers' with high level of assessment literacy are more efficient and confident in evaluating the performance of their learners along with evaluating the whole education program (Bayat & Rezaei, 2015; Esfandiari & Nouri, 2016; Rezaei Fard & Tabatabaei, 2018). Furthermore, teachers with high assessment literacy are able to organize lesson plans more effectively and choose materials more efficiently (Jannati, 2015; Rahimi Rad, 2019). Since the overall tendency of the ESP teachers in this study was found to be in favor of employing various methods of continual classroom assessment as an effective way to improve their quality of teaching and choices of teaching materials, this study is in line with the results of the previous research in the literature with regard to the importance of improving teachers' LAL in teacher education programs and teacher training courses in the upper education system of the country.

Pastore and Andrade (2019) described a framework to identify assessment literate teachers as a person who can 1) connect assessments to clear purposes, 2) clarify achievement expectations, 3) apply proper assessment methods, 4) develop quality assessment exercises and scoring criteria, and sampling appropriately, 5) avoid bias in assessment, 6) communicate effectively about student achievement, 7) use assessment as an instructional intervention. Also, Janatifar and Marandi (2018) found out that reliability, validity, test design, large-scale standardized testing, classroom assessment, beyond-the-test aspects including social and ethical aspects of language testing/assessment, were the components of LAL of teachers in the Iranian context. In this regard, the results of this study supplements the literature of LAL in that the two components of 1) compatibility to the cultural-related issues in designing suitable assessment methods in a certain context and 2) employing various assessment methods for evaluating multilevel language classes were found as essential qualities of an assessment literate teacher and need to be added to the LAL components in the literature.

Furthermore, since the findings of Shahzamani and Tahririan (2021) revealed that the content teachers were found to have limited knowledge about formative classroom assessment in cooperative ESP programs, the assessment patterns used by the ESP teachers in this study are worth summarizing and mentioning here since it could be a valuable contribution as a classroom assessment framework which could be used by teachers in ESP courses. The patterns included: 1) asking oral quick questions about the current session's lesson at the end of each session, 2) asking questions related to the previous lessons while teaching, 3) asking the whole class a specific question with regard to the material and expect for a volunteer to answer, 4) asking the students to think about certain content and search it online, 5) asking questions about a word or a topic before teaching it.

The results of this study have implications for teacher educators to guide the prospective teachers and in-service practicing teachers to consider two factors, 1) cultural-related issues in designing appropriate assessment methods in a certain context and 2) mixing various methods of assessment for managing classes with students of multilevel of language proficiency in the teacher education programs.

Also, the results have implications for authorities in academic contexts in which the main reliance of evaluation is on summative assessment and final exam scores of the students. Meaning that ESP teachers were found to not believe in this type of evaluation as a fair way of making proper decisions about the students' success or failure in a course. However, they feel obligated to consider final exams as a requirement in their evaluations due to cultural issues and dominant policies.



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Appendix 1

The final version of the questionnaire was validated for this study.

Part1. Likert items on teachers' perception of formative assessment.

1. Formative assessment is one of the most prominent ways to evaluate the overall quality of teaching.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
2. Formative assessment provides the teachers with some information about the adequacy and quality of the teaching materials.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
3. Formative assessment provides the teachers with some information about the quantity of the teaching materials.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree



4. Formative classroom assessment gives the teachers some information about the weaknesses and strengths of the language learners.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
5. Formative assessment gives the teachers some information about the efficiency of the teaching methods.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
6. The results of formative assessment play an important role in learners' education progression.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
7. The results of formative assessment help teachers to track the developmental procedures in their learners.				
Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
8. Summative assessment (final exam) is a better evaluation than formative assessment.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
9. Formative assessment makes a relationship between teachers' sense of efficacy and their teaching methods.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
10. Students' portfolio and the quality of their classroom activities is a better evaluating scale than final exam.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
11. The results of formative assessment are directly related to my teaching efficacy.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
12. The goal of formative assessment is highly correlated with the goal of the program.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
13. I need to design various techniques/methods in conducting the formative assessment.				
Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Part 2. Open-ended questions

1. What is the effect of formative classroom assessment on the efficacy of teaching methods?
2. What methods of assessment would you use in assessing your ESP students?
3. Why do you employ the methods you mentioned in question 2?
4. Do you employ the same pattern of assessment in your different classes? Why?
5. How do you make use of Formative Classroom Assessment results?
6. Do you believe various results could obtain from different methods of assessment? Why?
7. To what extent your assessment practices are dictated by the institutions/ universities you belong to?
8. What contextual features can determine the assessment methods you employ for formative classroom assessment?
9. Please provide us with your valuable comments on your favorite methods of assessment which has not been included in the previous questions.

