

Expanding Novice and Experienced Iranian EFL Teachers' Assessment Identity Landscape: Does Online Explicit Instruction Make a Difference?

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ABSTRACT

Teacher assessment identity (TAI) is an integral element of quality assessment practice and professionalism, which has been widely overlooked in teacher education research. To bridge this gap, the present study explored the dynamism of TAI through an explicit training course. To do so, 22 novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers completed a questionnaire on TAI before and after the course. Then both novice and experienced teachers attended a 16-hour treatment in which various assessment dimensions were taught. The participants also completed tasks reflecting TAI components. Moreover, five novice and five experienced EFL teachers were interviewed. The results of the independent samples t-test indicated that novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers did not significantly differ regarding their assessment identity before and after the treatment despite improvements in their mean scores. However, the results of paired samples t-test revealed that the formal intervention has developed the TAI of both novice and experienced groups. This was substantiated by qualitative findings which demonstrated that, owing to the training, novice teachers manifested TAI in 16 domains while experienced teachers showed their identity as assessors in five domains. The study offers promising implications for EFL teachers and trainers, who can realize the dynamism of TAI and its core dimensions in light of instruction.

1. Introduction

Teacher identity has recently positioned itself in the body of research and practice in teacher education (Beijaard, 2019; Richards, 2021; Yazan & Lindahl, 2020). It is the core of the teaching profession and effectiveness in academia (Haghighi Irani et al., 2020; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2009) that features good teachers, who know themselves before teaching others (Palmer, 2007). As a complicated construct affected by many factors in education, teacher identity refers to how a teacher defines him/herself to self and others (Lasky, 2005; Prabjandee, 2020; Richards, 2021). Additionally, the way one perceives him/herself as a professional teacher depends on his/her classroom practices, interactions, beliefs, and previous and present experiences related to teaching and learning (Estaji & Ghiasvand, 2019; Chong et al., 2011). This perceived self-image is dynamic, negotiated, and relational in tune with the roles that an individual takes in a social context (Beijaard, 2019; Miller, 2008; Yazan, 2018). The significance and integration of teachers' identity with their practice, competence, and knowledge base in second/foreign language education have encouraged multitudes of empirical studies

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in different educational contexts (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Allami & Soleymani, 2022; Beijaard, 2019; Beijaard et al., 2004; Richards, 2016; Rushton & Reiss, 2021, among others).

Current research has been limited to three strands, namely L2 teacher identity formation/development process, its features, and the representations of identity in teachers' narratives/stories (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Yazan, 2018). L2 researchers have also scrutinized teacher identity in relation to many other variables and factors such as gender (Park, 2017), communities of practice or COPs (Trent, 2017), teaching experience (Yazan, 2018), positioning and agency (Barkhuizen, 2016), emotions (Wolff & De Costa, 2017), and the role of teacher education courses in identity negotiation (Yazan, 2017). Nevertheless, the yawning gap largely overlooked by L2 scholars is the linkage between teacher identity and classroom assessment, while assessment is an integral element of teacher professionalism and success (Ghiasvand et al., 2023; O'Neill & Adams, 2014).

Nowadays, aside from pedagogical skills, L2 teachers need assessment competencies to use assessment data to increase instructional quality, develop appropriate assessment methods/tools, interpret test results, and justify their selection and implementation of specific assessments (Popham, 2018; Wang et al., 2023). These requirements formed the basis of a novel notion in L2 research called Teacher Assessment Identity (henceforth, TAI), which is defined as how teachers perceive themselves and their practices as assessors of students' language (Adie, 2013; Estaji & Ghiasvand, 2022). TAI goes beyond assessment literacy and is crafted by teachers' self-perceptions as assessors and their care about how they are evaluated by others concerning their conducted assessments in the class (Looney et al., 2017). In particular, assessment knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, practices, confidence, and the professional reputation of a teacher as an assessor are all the various components of TAI (Adie, 2013; Looney et al., 2017).

Coming out of its shell, TAI has recently managed a separate identity for itself other than professional identity as assessment itself is a part of teachers' professional identity (Looney et al., 2017; Wood, 2016). This is largely due to the groundbreaking model of TAI proposed by Looney et al. (2017) that demystified the dimensions of this novel construct. Motivated by this model, scholars from the Iranian EFL context, recently, made giant leaps and developed two scales to measure TAI containing different components/dimensions (Estaji & Ghiasvand, 2021; Jan-nesar et al., 2021). Yet, what seems missing in this line of inquiry is the possible role of training courses in developing EFL teachers' assessment identity. Like many other identities malleable and sensitive to intervention, TAI can also be subjected to change due to training which has been kept uncharted, to date. To fill this gap and shed more light on TAI in L2 education, the present study investigated the developmental changes that EFL teachers' assessment identity underwent as a consequence of a training course. This line of inquiry is significant in that most of the studies on teacher identity in L2 education are confined to professional identity or teacher identities in relation to teaching rather than assessment. Moreover, knowing the dynamic and developmental path of TAI may inspire teacher educators to craft and re-craft pre-service and in-service EFL teachers' identity as assessors through training courses.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Teacher Identity

The concept of teacher identity (TI) relates to one's own role as a teacher, as well as the recognition and comprehension of the identities of others, and contains interior and exterior aspects (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Yazan & Lindahl, 2020). The internal domain includes cognition, while the external aspect reflects roles given in social settings. By definition, TI refers to the overarching self-image and consciousness that a teacher crafts regarding "who he/she is" and "what roles he/she takes" in a context (Atay & Ece, 2009). Such internal images, which are vital in identity development, emerge from an extended process that begins from the time one is a learner (Borg, 2017). TI echoes that being a teacher means more than what is fundamentally visible and includes the invisible domains of the teaching profession (Castañeda, 2011; Richards, 2021).

This multi-faceted construct has been perceived to be a dynamic feature emerging from the interplay of internal and external factors and processes that complement one another (Beijaard, 2019; Liu et al., 2021). The identity of a teacher is context-bound in that an instructor can form multiple identities in relation to various professional contexts and given roles (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Likewise, contextual peculiarities and social roles determine the process of TI development (Barkhuizen, 2017). As put by Gray and Morton (2018), TI is the outcome of teachers' interactions with the social environment. In such shared contexts, teachers can negotiate their identities with other community members (Teng, 2019). This is to argue that both community and practice are pivotal constructs in making sense of what it means to be an instructor (Tsui, 2003).

Despite the booming interest in unraveling and expanding the concept of TI in different contexts, it is still poorly defined (Richards, 2021; Rostami et al., 2020) and there are different conceptualizations for the term. This is because TI research does not have an analytical framework that efficiently helps scholars in different disciplines (Bennison, 2017). Moreover, three inherent features of identity (i.e., multiplicity, discontinuity, and social nature) have added to the complexity of its conceptualization (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). However, the two most dominant interpretations for TI have been offered by Clarke (2008, p. 8), who differentiated between "being a teacher" and "becoming a teacher". The former concerns obtaining the skills and competencies required to carry out the duties of a teacher, while the latter is a perceived sense of an instructor of him/herself. For Clarke (2008), learning to teach means "becoming" a teacher instead of gaining techniques and skills.

Considering these complications, TI has been commonly considered a shifting and relational construct (Estaji & Ghiasvand, 2022; Miller, 2008; Nazari & Karimpour, 2022). It develops as teachers obtain professional knowledge, increase their experience, and participate in personal and professional development programs (Meihami, 2021; Tsui, 2003). With significant progress in researching TI, many studies now corroborate that the construct is influenced by different factors such as context, experience, perception, age, socio-political background, educational level, and so forth (Mansaray, 2011). If teaching practices "hold a mirror to the soul" and elucidate one's identity (Palmer, 2007, p. 3), why not perceiving assessment that unites all aspects of education (Brown, 2004) to have a role in crafting a teacher's identity? However, the current body of research in the extant literature is limited to pedagogical TI and identities that teachers develop in relation to assessment have been widely overlooked. Such a chasm needs to be bridged because the teachers' assessment knowledge and skills are parts of their professional identity (Wood, 2016). Hence, teacher education programs should use fruitful procedures to promote teachers' knowledge in both instruction and assessment domains (Tavassoli & Farhady, 2018).

2.2 Moving Beyond Assessment Literacy

Assessment Literacy (AL), representing the understanding and expertise teachers possess regarding assessment knowledge and skills pertaining to their professional practice (Rastegr & Zarei, 2023; Stiggins, 1995), has been in the limelight for decades in educational research (Anani Sarab & Rahmani, 2023; Sultana, 2019). It concerns the teachers' ability to use and interpret the obtained assessment data to guide instruction, provide feedback, direct students' learning, and report classroom achievement (Stiggins & Duke, 2008). After witnessing bulks of research, the scope of AL has recently expanded from being a simple composite of assessment knowledge and skills to an overarching term including the various aspects of assessment (Looney et al., 2017). A resembling concept that AL has stretched into is the conceptions of assessment (COA), proposed by Brown (2011). COA pertains to broad mental structures that surround teachers' beliefs, desired theories, propositions, strategies, psychological ties, and favorite techniques related to assessment. Such conceptualizations of assessment function as a framework that guides a teacher's understanding, imagination, interpretation, and engagement with the teaching environment (Brown, 2011; Jan-nesar et al., 2021).

As a socio-cultural activity, assessment occurs in interactions, hence conflicting conceptions may emerge as per assessment beliefs and practices (Elwood & Murphy, 2015). For other scholars, COA is more than AL in that it is more complicated and has a direct association with assessment skills, knowledge, practices, and beliefs (Brown et al., 2011). Two other constraints of AL as pinpointed by Stiggins (1995) and Rea-Dickins (2004) are the absence of an emotional dimension for assessment and the inclusion of dilemmas faced by teachers when taking different roles in teaching and testing. Another drawback in the literature is ignoring the role of identity in AL. Given the criticality of these important issues and dimensions, it is claimed that AL is not ample to cover and mirror the complexities of "being an assessor" of students' language competence. Consequently, a new term has entered into educational research and practice dubbed as "Teacher Assessment Identity (TAI). This novel concept in educational

assessment grew out of other terms including AL, COA, assessment beliefs, and assessment disposition. The literature on the variable is gaining bone to cast more light on what the term means in education.

2.3 Teacher Assessment Identity (TAI): An Emerging Concept

Despite insufficient literature, the first foundation stones of TAI have been placed by a couple of landmark studies that conceptualized the construct for the first time. For instance, in a seminal investigation, Adie (2013) defined TAI as the teachers' perceptions of themselves as assessors and the way others (students, colleagues, parents, and other stakeholders) judge them for the quality of their executed assessment of students' language. Furthermore, Looney et al. (2017) added self-efficacy and dispositions of teachers toward assessment as two crucial elements in the conceptualization of TAI. Here, teachers' assessment self-efficacy referred to their beliefs in their abilities to perform specific assessment tasks/practices in a particular situation (Dellinger et al., 2008). On the other hand, teachers' dispositions concern their values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence their classroom behaviors and practices. Based on these conceptualizations, it is contended that TAI is a multi-faceted variable encompassing several assessment domains, which exert strong impacts on the teachers' assessment decisions, beliefs, attitudes, confidence, and practices.

2.4 The Dimensions of TAI

The quest for the dimensionalization of TAI began with the precious attempt made by Looney et al. (2017), who utilized AL dimensions and ideas put by scholars like Beijaard et al. (2004), Mockler (2011), Bandura (1986), and Day et al. (2006) to offer a solid model for TAI. Their model comprised five dimensions entitled "I know", "I believe", "I feel", "my role", and "I am confident". Such dimensions were claimed to have overlaps and joint-boundaries as drawing a rigid line among identity dimensions is neither practical nor warranted. In a similar manner, Jan-nesar et al. (2021) proposed three other dimensions of the construct of TAI including "AL", "contextual factors", and "assessment dispositions". Lastly, in their recent study, Estaji and Ghiasvand (2021) developed and validated a TAI scale in Iran collecting data from 340 novice and experienced EFL teachers. In the end, they identified 12 dimensions/factors for TAI including assessment "attitudes", "practices", "use assurance", "skills and confidence", "knowledge", "beliefs", "feedback", "grading/scoring", "roles", "consistency and consequence", "rubric/criteria", and "question-types". These dimensions signify that TAI is a complex and multi-layered variable, whose dimensions are nested in one another with overlapping boundaries.

2.5 Related Studies on Teacher Assessment Identity

Researching TAI in the educational arena has long been under the shadow of professional identity, while assessment itself is a part of teachers' PI and pedagogy (Wood, 2016). However, the nut has recently cracked with a number of revolutionary studies conducted in Australia and Iran. In their breakthrough research, Looney et al. (2017) provided the first tentative model of TAI and its dimensions taking advantage of AL research. As stated beforehand, they introduced 5 dimensions for TAI under macro-categories of "I know, I believe, my role, I feel, and I am confident". Furthermore, Adie (2013) examined 50 Queensland middle school teachers' assessment identity and the developmental modifications that their identity as assessors underwent under the influence of participation in online moderation. The results of grounded theory revealed that partaking in online moderation, while demanding for teachers, could offer prospects to shape and exchange TAI.

After the elucidation of the concept, presumably, Iranian L2 scholars designed the first scales for the measurement of TAI. More specifically, Estaji and Ghiasvand (2021) and Jan-nesar et al. (2021) concurrently developed and validated questionnaires that have covered the different dimensions of TAI in tune with the theoretical underpinnings of this line of research. The difference between these two breakthrough studies was that the former was more all-inclusive entailing 12 dimensions of TAI, while the latter was more general as it presented the items under three broad categories of "AL", "assessment dispositions", and "contextual factors". In another study, Estaji and Ghiasvand (2022) examined the contribution of e-portfolios to the identity growth and progress of both novice and experienced EFL teachers in Iran. They found e-portfolios effective in shaping and re-shaping TAI of teachers regardless of their experience level. Moreover, Estaji and Ghiasvand (2023) scrutinized the developmental trajectory of TAI among novice and experienced teachers through web-based audio diaries. The results

of their study revealed that the identity of both groups developed after preparing six diaries in three phases. These studies expressively signify that research on TAI is still in its initial stages and requires more empirical bones from different contexts. Inspired to add fresh insights into the body of knowledge concerning TAI and the possible dynamism of this type of identity, the current study unpacked the effect of an assessment-specialized training course on developing Iranian EFL teachers' assessment identity in light of their teaching experience level. In so doing, the following research questions were proposed.

1. To what extent, if any, does the assessment identity of novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers differ before and after receiving explicit instruction?
2. What are the manifestations of receiving explicit instruction on TAI in novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers?

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

In this study, a sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design was adopted (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In this design, first, the researcher gathers and analyzes the quantitative data and then incorporates qualitative data into the study to complement and refine the quantitative results. The design begins with a quantitative phase and culminates in a qualitative one. The reason for selecting this design was that mixed-methods designs provide a more comprehensive picture of variables like TI compared to pure quantitative or qualitative designs.

3.2 Participants and Setting

The target participants of this study were 22 non-homogenized Iranian EFL teachers (selected out of 40) with different teaching experiences and academic qualifications (Table 1) chosen through a convenience sampling procedure. This sample was picked up because some of the initial participants were unwilling to attend a lengthy research process when the process was explained. Hence, only the participants, who were available to the researchers and expressed willingness to cooperate in all phases, were selected for the study. They were both male (32%) and female (68%) instructors, majoring in Applied Linguistics, who have been working for different language institutes in the capital city of Iran, Tehran. This major was chosen because the researchers were from the same community of practice. Their age spanned from 26 to 46 years old ($\bar{x} = 31.86$, $SD = 5.81$). Considering their quantitative responses and teaching experience level, the instructors were placed into two groups of novice ($n = 11$) and experienced ($n = 11$) teachers with a cut-point of five years of teaching. Novice teachers were defined as having less than five years of teaching experience while those with five or more years of experience were labeled as experienced EFL teachers (Gotbonton, 2008).

Furthermore, in the qualitative phase, 10 EFL teachers (five novice, five experienced) were requested to take part in a semi-structured interview revolving around their perceptions of TAI and the instruction that they went through.

Table 1
Participants' Profile

Background Information	No. (%)
Age	
26-30	13 (59%)
31-36	4 (18%)
37-41	3 (14%)
42-46	2 (9%)
Gender	
Male	7 (32%)
Female	15 (68%)
Academic Qualification	
BA	1 (5%)
MA	11 (50%)
PhD	10 (45%)

Major

Applied Linguistics

22 (100%)

To preserve the research ethics, the researchers ensured the participants that they had the freedom and right to discontinue their participation in the study at any point and for any reason. Likewise, they were informed of how to provide accurate responses to the questionnaire and assured that their identity and personal information would be kept confidential and used only in this research study.

3.3 Instruments and Materials**3.3.1 TAI Questionnaire**

In tune with the research objectives, a recently validated questionnaire on TAI that was developed by Estaji and Ghiasvand (2021) was employed to glean the quantitative data of the pre-test and post-test phases. The questionnaire had two sections. The first section concerned the demographic information of the participants such as their age, gender, educational degree, major, and whether they have gone through any assessment training. The second, or the main part encompassed 61 items on a 5-point Likert scale presented under 12 sub-categories reflecting TAI dimensions. Concerning the reliability and validity indices of the research instrument, the results of Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis indicated that it is a reliable ($r = .94$) and valid tool to measure the construct of TAI. Regarding the scoring rubric of the questionnaire, all the items were scored in a non-reverse manner.

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interview

After the administration of the questionnaire in the post-test phase, the researchers held a semi-structured interview with a sample of teachers to reveal their opinions about assessment identity and the training they had experienced. The intention behind running such an interview was to double-check the participants' responses to the questionnaire, see the actual impact of TAI training on teachers' assessment perceptions and practices, and determine if there were any changes, matches, and mismatches in TAI. To this end, 10 EFL teachers (5 novice, 5 experienced) were selected for a semi-structured interview administered after the course intervention. Each interview session lasted about 10 to 15 minutes. Regarding the selection of the interviewees, the researchers used two criteria: The participants' responses to the questionnaire and their agreement for additional cooperation. The interview questions were designed by the researchers themselves, who then sought the expertise of three field experts holding a Ph.D. degree in Applied Linguistics and sufficient experience in assessment research and practice to review the suitability of the questions and their content validity. While the questions were fixed, the participants were free to clarify their answers and raise complementary points if required.

3.3.3 Course Materials

In the main phase of the study, both novice and experienced groups of participants took part in a 16-hour training course which was presented by the researchers to inform the participants of the various dimensions of their assessment identity. In this phase, all the required information pertaining to the different dimensions of TAI identified by Estaji and Ghiasvand (2021) was provided by the researchers in the form of a pamphlet composed of two sections, one dealing with the theoretical underpinnings of TAI and the other one contained many tasks and activities to be completed by the teachers during the course (Appendix). The researchers, initially, designed a syllabus for the course and clearly pre-specified the information to be covered and taught in each of the four sessions. In each session, which took about four hours, the researchers explained a wide range of assessment aspects to the participants with the hope that the training would be effective for the instructors' assessment identity.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

At the beginning of the study, the researchers distributed a validated questionnaire on TAI that included a demographic information section and 61 items measuring the different components of this construct among 22 Iranian EFL teachers with different teaching experiences. The questionnaire was given to the teachers as a pre-test before receiving explicit instruction. To ensure the applicability of the instrument, initially, a pilot test was conducted on 30 comparable EFL teachers to examine its

reliability and 340 participants to ensure its construct validity. Next, using the convenience sampling procedure, the questionnaire was filled in by 22 EFL teachers (11 novice, 11 experienced), who were teaching English in Tehran. The participants were requested to fill out the questionnaire at their convenience and deliver it to the researchers in a week. In the meantime, the researchers guaranteed the respondents that their identities and responses would be kept private. Lastly, the pre-test questionnaire was scored and statistically analyzed.

In the main phase, the researchers conducted a 16-hour training course on TAI that was delivered online through the *Webinar Plus Program*. During the instruction, the researchers taught, discussed, and reflected on major elements of TAI and assessment-related dimensions to construct a better image of their identity as L2 assessors. The training course was presented in four sessions, each lasting four hours, during which different dimensions of TAI were formally taught by PowerPoint files and interactively discussed by the participants and the researchers. Moreover, the researchers designed different tasks and activities in a pamphlet and gave it to the instructors to complete them after each session of the treatment. The tasks were in tune with the dimensions of TAI taught in each session separately. As for their typology, the tasks were open-ended, matching, selection, short answer, fill-in-the-blanks, multiple-choice, and performance-based (e.g., designing assessment rubrics). They were developed by the researchers using various textbooks, handbooks, articles, and personal assessment experiences. Before employing them in the study, three experts in L2 assessment, who were professors of Applied Linguistics in Iran, examined the appropriateness and content validity of the tasks.

After the last session of the training course, the instructors were given the same TAI questionnaire as a post-test with the hope of observing changes in their assessment identity. Additionally, to further probe into the teachers' responses to the questionnaire and identify the extent to which the training course has been effective in developing their assessment identity, a semi-structured interview was carried out with 10 EFL teachers. Moreover, the interview phase was done to unpack the participants' assessment perceptions, practices, and manifestations of assessment identity in their classroom instruction.

After gleaning all the interview data, the researchers transcribed the interviews using ATLAS.ti software (v. 9) which is a powerful tool in qualitative research in social sciences for transcribing and coding large bodies of qualitative data. After transcribing all the data, the researchers double-checked the interview audios to safeguard the precision of the transcriptions for the later analysis done by MAXQDA software (v. 2020). Moreover, member checking was done by asking the instructors' views about the codes and themes extracted from their interview responses. Furthermore, to estimate the inter-coder agreement on the generated themes, 30 percent of the interview data were cross-checked by another researcher who had recently conducted and published articles and books on L2 teachers' assessment and identity. The results of Cohen's Kappa coefficient revealed an inter-coder reliability of 0.96. As a final step, the researchers asked another expert in L2 education and research to audit trial (i.e., re-examine) the data analysis process in an effort to add confirmability to the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The results pointed to some agreements and disagreements, which were later fixed in a meeting on Skype.

3.5 Data Analysis

In this study, the data analysis was carried out in two separate quantitative and qualitative phases in line with the design of the study. In the quantitative phase, for analyzing the first research question, the independent samples t-test and paired samples t-test as parametric tests were used. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis were run to check the internal consistency and construct validity of the TAI questionnaire. In the qualitative phase, the interview data were analyzed iteratively and inductively via MAXQDA software. In doing so, firstly, all the interviews were transcribed, checked over for possible incongruities, and then entered into the software for coding. Afterward, the codification process was initiated, utilizing Strauss and Corbin's (1990) proposed model of qualitative data analysis, which includes "open coding," "axial coding," and "selective coding." Using this guide, the data were revisited by the researchers who then generated open codes. The open codes were further utilized in axial coding to produce themes by connecting and comparing them to create more comprehensive codes. Finally, the themes that were extracted were organized under broader categories during the "selective coding" phase (Creswell, 2008). Eventually, to ensure credibility and

confirmability, the codes were double-checked by a second coder who was an expert in L2 research. The coders maintained consistency in both codification and categorization of themes, despite a few minor disagreements ($k = .96$).

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 The First Research Question

To answer this research question, which sought to identify the significant difference between novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers regarding their assessment identity before and after receiving formal training, descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test were employed for both groups. Initially, both groups were compared in terms of their mean scores, SD, and possible initial significant differences prior to taking part in the treatment phase (Table 2, Table 3).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Experienced and Novice Groups Regarding Assessment Identity in Pretest

Experience		N	Mean	SD
Assessment Identity	Experienced	11	238.90	31.42
	Novice	11	223.09	12.50

After calculating descriptive statistics in the pretest ($N = 11, 11$; $M = 238.90, 223.09$; $SD = 31.42, 12.50$), Levene's test was utilized to make sure of the assumption of equal variances (Table 3). Since there is a significant level for Levene's test ($p = .002$), equal variances not assumed should be reported.

Table 3

Independent Samples t-tests for Experienced and Novice Groups Regarding Assessment Identity in Pretest

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
AI Equal variances assumed	11.95	.002	1.55	20	.136	15.81	10.19	-5.45	37.08
Equal variances not assumed			1.55	13.89	.145	15.81	10.19	-6.19	37.83

As illustrated in Table 3, the results of the independent samples t-test show that no significant difference exists between Iranian EFL novice and experienced teachers' assessment identity before taking part in the treatment ($F(20, 1.55) = 11.95, p = .145$). Thus, their comparison after the treatment is warranted as they do not have pre-existing significant differences in their assessment identity.

In the post-test phases, again descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and Levene's test were employed (Table 4, Table 5). Table 4 shows the number of respondents in the experienced and novice group, their mean scores, and standard deviation in the posttest ($N = 11, 11$; $M = 259.90, 256.63$; $SD = 23.30, 23.94$), respectively.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Experienced and Novice Groups Regarding Assessment Identity in Posttest

	Experience	N	Mean	SD
Assessment Identity	Experienced	11	259.90	23.30
	Novice	11	256.63	23.94

To make sure of the assumption of equal variances, Levene's test was used whose results indicated no significant level ($p = .808$), hence, equal variances assumed should be reported.

Table 5

Independent Samples t-tests for Experienced and Novice Groups Regarding Assessment Identity in Posttest

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
AI Equal variances assumed	.061	.808	.325	20	.749	3.27	10.07	-17.73	24.28
Equal variances not assumed			.325	19.98	.749	3.27	10.07	-17.74	24.28

As demonstrated in Table 5, the results of the independent samples t-test show that no significant difference exists between Iranian EFL novice and experienced teachers' assessment identity after doing the treatment ($F(20, .325) = .06, p = .749$). Thus, it can be concluded that TAI instruction did not create any difference between experienced and novice Iranian EFL teachers. In other words, the treatment course did not generate a significant change in novice and experienced EFL teachers' identity as assessors when they were compared together.

To identify if formal training on TAI made a significant change in novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers' identity as assessors, paired samples t-test were also used for both novice and experienced groups, separately. Tables 2 and 4 show the descriptive statistics of novice Iranian EFL teachers regarding their assessment identity in the pretest ($M = 223.09, N = 11, SD = 12.50$) and posttest ($M = 256.63, N = 11, SD = 23.94$). After calculating the descriptive statistics, the novice group was compared with itself from pre-test to post-test via paired samples t-test (Table 6).

Table 6

Paired Samples t-test for Novice Group

Pair 1	Pretest Novice	Posttest Novice	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			33.54	17.20	5.18	6.46	10	.036

As Table 6 indicates, the mean (33.54), the standard deviation (17.20), and the p -value (.03) of novice Iranian EFL teachers have significantly changed from the pre-test to the post-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the formal treatment on TAI has significantly changed novice Iranian EFL teachers' assessment identity.

In a similar manner, the descriptive statistics of the experienced group (Tables 2 and 4) were calculated in both pretest ($M = 238.90$, $N = 11$, $SD = 31.42$) and posttest ($M = 259.90$, $N = 11$, $SD = 23.30$) to have a general image of the data before comparing the two phases. Afterward, the experienced group was compared with itself from pre-test to post-test using paired samples t-test whose results illustrate that formal TAI instruction has significantly changed their assessment identity (Table 7).

Table 7
Paired Samples Tests for Experienced Group

		Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pretest Experienced	21.00	29.60	8.92	2.35	10	.040
	Posttest Experienced						

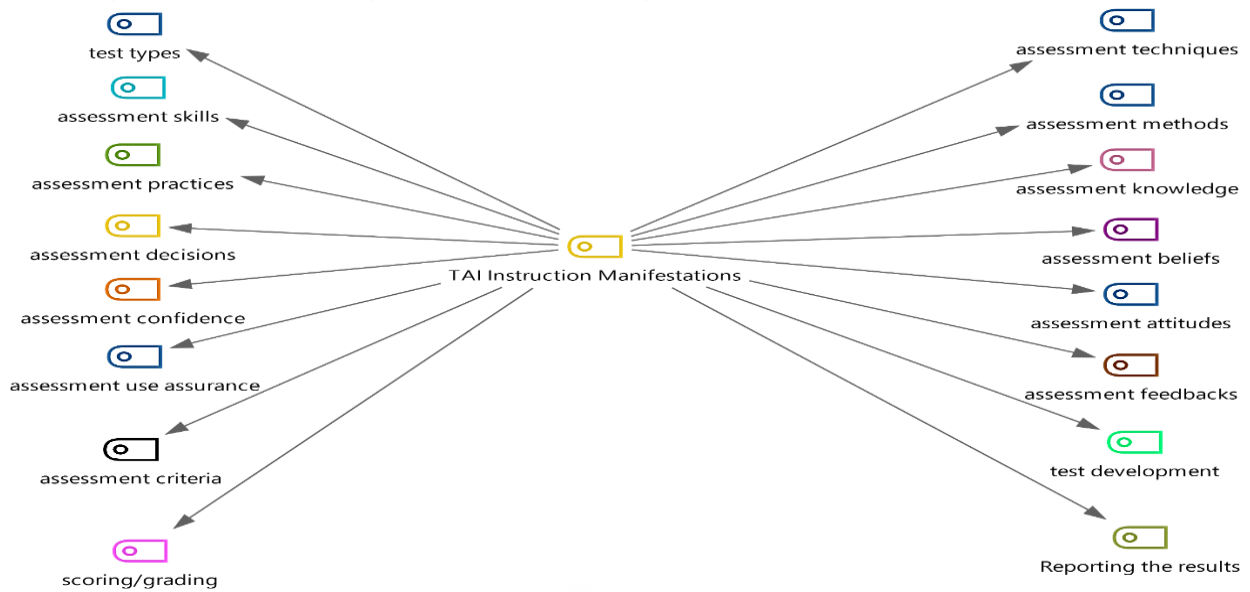
As it can be seen, the treatment has significantly changed both novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers' assessment identity since the difference between them increased from (.145) in the pre-test to (.749) in the post-test. Moreover, the mean scores of both groups increased from pre- to post-test; the novice group from (223.09) to (256.63) and the experienced group from (238.90) to (259.90), respectively.

All in all, the initial analysis showed no significant difference in assessment identity between the two groups before the treatment phase. The subsequent independent samples t-tests also revealed no significant difference in assessment identity between the groups after the treatment. This suggests that the treatment did not generate any significant difference in the assessment identity of either novice or experienced teachers. However, when analyzing each group individually, the paired samples t-tests revealed a significant increase in assessment identity for both novice and experienced teachers from pre-test to post-test. This indicates that the formal training had a positive effect on the assessment identity of individual teachers within each group. Hence, the study highlights the effectiveness of the training program in enhancing assessment identity at the individual level, but it did not result in significant differences between novice and experienced EFL teachers.

4.2 The Second Research Question

To provide appropriate responses to this research question regarding the manifestations of receiving explicit instruction on TAI in novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers, the participants in both groups were interviewed. The results of data analysis obtained by MAXQDA indicated that TAI instruction has manifested itself in various pedagogical aspects among both novice and experienced EFL teachers. Concerning novice teachers, 16 codes with different frequencies were extracted from interview data (Figure 1). The most frequent codes were assessment practices (5), assessment perceptions (5), assessment beliefs (5), assessment methods (4), and assessment feedback (4) as the main manifestations of TAI. Moreover, the interviewees referred to "assessment skills, assessment confidence, assessment knowledge, assessment techniques, and assessment attitudes" three times during the interview. Furthermore, "test types, test development, assessment decisions, assessment grading/scoring, and assessment criteria" were repeated twice by novice teachers. Finally, "assessment use assurance" and reporting the results" were raised only once by the participants as the manifestations of TAI after receiving explicit instruction.

Figure 1
The Manifestations of Receiving TAI Instruction among Novice Teachers



The following section presents some sample interview responses representative of the mentioned codes.

Owing to the instruction that you offered, my assessment identity developed a lot. As identity is a broad variable in L2 education, it can show itself in different areas. However, TAI manifests itself in my assessment knowledge of testing and test types, skills, perceptions, practices, beliefs, and classroom decisions and methods pertinent to assessment. Moreover, my identity is seen in the type of feedback that I give my students (Novice Teacher, 1).

This marvelous course on assessment really improved me and it can be observed in my assessment beliefs, confidence, feedback, skills, perceptions, knowledge, practices, and methods/techniques that I use in the class to evaluate my students (Novice Teacher, 2)

The assessment identity that I crafted demonstrates itself in my assessment practices, beliefs, perceptions, confidence, techniques, attitudes, feedback, criteria, test development, scoring/grading, and reporting the results of tests (Novice Teacher, 2)

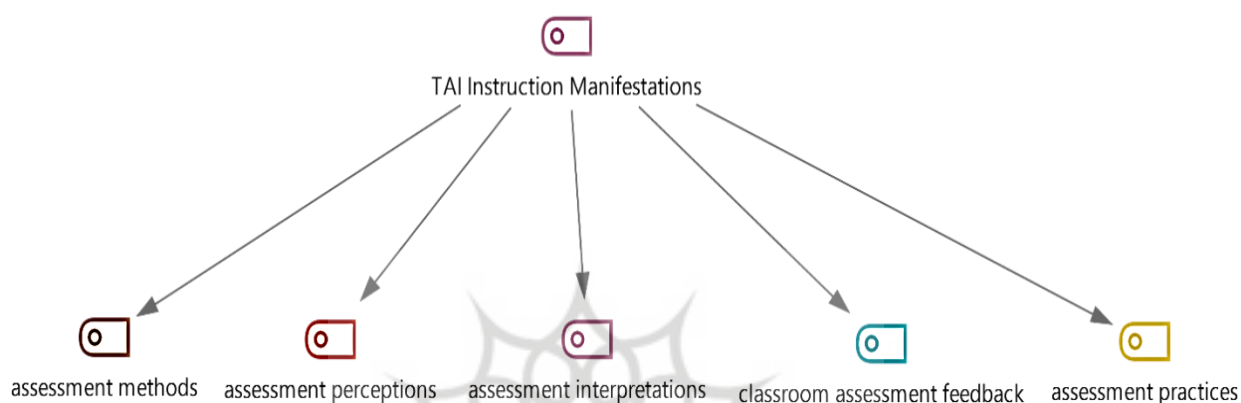
TAI instruction improved my assessment identity by using new assessing methods and techniques like alternative assessments (e.g., e-portfolio, journal writing, and audio diary). Additionally, TAI shows itself in one's test development, grading/scoring, decisions, and test types (Novice Teachers, 3).

Definitely, your training course developed my practices, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about assessment which can manifest themselves in my classes. They are my assessment identity which makes the way I evaluate and assess my learners and provide them with appropriate feedback. Now, my assessment criteria have changed to focus more on process rather than product (Novice Teacher, 4).

I think your course developed my assessment skills, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, practices, and methods. Now I have more confidence after this training course. I am almost certain that I know whatever language teachers are supposed to know about assessment, I mean knowledge of assessment. Likewise, my identity as an assessor of L2 reveals itself in the degree of assurance that I have in using a certain type of assessment in the class (Novice Teacher, 5).

On the other hand, the results of experienced EFL teachers' interviews indicated that "assessment practices" and "assessment methods" are the most frequently mentioned themes/codes regarding the manifestations of receiving explicit TAI instruction. These codes were raised five times across the interview, indicating that experienced EFL teachers care more about the practical manifestations of TAI. Moreover, "assessment perception" and "assessment feedback" were repeated three times by the interviewees as the manifestations of TAI instruction among experienced EFL teachers. Finally, "assessment interpretation" was the least frequently repeated code in the interviews being mentioned only once (Figure 2).

Figure 2
The Manifestations of Receiving TAI Instruction among Experienced Teachers



The representative sample interviews for the extracted codes are presented hereunder.

Before this research project, I focused on traditional testing as it was practical in terms of time and energy. However, now that we have gone through this research project, I value dynamic assessment more and will try to implement it as much as I can. So, my assessment identity is manifested in my assessment practices, methods, and perceptions. (Experienced Teacher, 1).

I show my assessment identity in my practices such as scoring rubrics, test types, alternative assessment techniques, and interpretations of test results (Experienced Teacher, 4).

My assessment practices are rooted to a great extent in my interpretations of assessment and my assessment identity. In other words, when I change my mind about one aspect of assessment identity (e.g., giving feedback), I also change my feedback practices in real classroom contexts. Due to the instability nature of assessment identity, my assessment practices and activities may shift over time as a result of a range of my assessment interpretations (Experienced Teacher, 5).

I believe receiving instruction on TAI helped me change and modify my assessment feedback. Now I know different types of assessment feedback which can be given to students according to their level, needs, and instructional objectives (Experienced Teacher, 2).

In sum, the results indicated that receiving explicit instruction on TAI could expand different academic areas of novice and experienced EFL teachers. In other words, TAI manifested itself in various assessment domains including "assessment practices, methods, skills, techniques, knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, confidence, feedback, use assurance, criteria, scoring/grading, interpretations, decisions, test development, and reporting the results of tests".

5 Discussion

The results of this study revealed that Iranian EFL novice and experienced teachers' assessment identity did not significantly differ before and after the treatment. Before the treatment they have had comparable assessment identity status that justified the conduction of the study as no pre-existing difference was identified in the independent samples t-test. After the treatment, both novice and experienced teachers improved in different aspects representative of assessment identity yet the difference between them was not statistically significant. In other words, the treatment course did not make a significant variation in novice and experienced EFL teachers' identity as assessors when they were compared together. The findings are inconsistent with a number of studies which argued that teacher identity changes and expands as one gains more experience and participates in professional development courses (e.g., Beijaard, 2019; Mansaray, 2011; Richards, 2021; Tsui, 2003). The results can be attributed to the fact that TAI like other types of identity in teacher education change and develop over long periods of time (Estaji & Ghiasvand, 2022; Looney et al., 2017), but the present research compared novice and experienced EFL teachers' assessment identity over a four-month period. In other words, a time-series analysis of TAI might end in differences between the two groups. Another justification for this finding can be the resistance that teachers usually show when their identity and psycho-emotional factors are of concern (Harris & Graham, 2019). It is possible that Iranian EFL teachers in this study have somehow closed their assessment identity systems leaving no or little room for observing significant changes from pre-test to post-test. This might be the offshoot of cultural factors in that Asian EFL teachers have been found to resist change at various levels (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Khany & Fakhar Shahreza, 2016; Zimmerman, 2006). The absence of openness to change in identity could explain the results of this study.

However, the results of the paired samples t-test demonstrated that explicit TAI instruction has significantly changed both novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers' assessment identity, separately. Their mean scores and amount of difference increased from the pre-test to the post-test. The results are in tune with Richards (2016), Ahmad et al. (2018), and Meihami (2021), who maintained that professional development courses play a critical role in developing and re-crafting EFL teachers' identities. Moreover, the findings led support to those of Adie (2013) who ran a seminal study on 50 teachers' assessment identity in Queensland focusing on the impact of participating in online moderation on the developmental modifications of TAI. The results of his investigation revealed that participation in online moderation offers prospects to shape and negotiate teachers' assessment identity. The dynamism of TAI in this study also concurs with Estaji and Ghiasvand (2022, 2023), who examined the developmental nature of novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers' TAI under the impact of e-portfolios and weblog discussion. In the end, they reported that the identity of both groups improved over time.

The logic behind the significant impact of receiving formal instruction on both novice and experienced EFL teachers' assessment identity can be the absence or paucity of formal professional development programs and courses for EFL teachers regarding their assessment practices and self as assessors of L2. This shortage might have made the participants pay considerable attention to the course content and the given tasks, leading to a development in their TAI and its various components and domains. The results can also be ascribed to the developmental and dynamic nature of TAI that develops in interactions and over time. The present study involved formal instruction sessions in which the researchers taught the basics and fundamental dimensions and components of TAI, engaging the participants in a dialogic and co-constructed way of identity development.

In this study, the mean scores of both groups increased from pre- to post-test; the novice group's mean increased from (223.09) to (256.63) and that of the experienced group increased from (238.90) to (259.90) in the post-test. This finding signifies that the degree of identity change and development has been more among novice EFL teachers than the experienced ones. It is likely that the participants of both groups have had identity fluidity in comparable ways. Yet, novice teachers' identity had been more elastic and open to change. This can be justified by the fact that as teachers obtain more and more experience as a teacher, student, assessor, and teacher trainer their assessment identity becomes more solid and hardly mutable. Identity is ongoing and dynamic as long as novel experiences, events, and interactions emerge in academia (Estaji & Ghiasvand, 2019). It is not shifting all the time over one's lifetime.

Therefore, experienced teachers might have already constructed their assessment identity leaving little space for its modification and growth due to the intervention offered in this study. However, novice teachers, in their initial years of teaching, lack sufficient knowledge of assessment. Their identity as assessors of L2 is in its nascent stages, making them more enthusiastic about professional development courses specializing in L2 assessment. Thus, the treatment has exerted more impact on novice EFL teachers' assessment identity than experienced ones as identity is progressive rather than regressive (Beijaard, 2006). Novice teachers have just started shaping and re-shaping their identity as a teacher and assessor of a second/foreign language, hence absorbed more professional development information.

Furthermore, the results of the qualitative phase demonstrated that novice and experienced EFL teachers manifested their assessment identity in different academic domains/aspects. More particularly, novice EFL teachers referred to 16 assessment aspects including their assessment "practices, perceptions, beliefs, methods, feedback, skills, confidence, knowledge, techniques, attitudes, test types, test development, decisions, assessment grading/scoring, criteria, use assurance, and reporting the results" as manifestations of their assessment identity. On the contrary, experienced EFL teachers argued that TAI instruction has manifested itself in five domains including assessment "practices, perceptions, methods, feedback, and interpretations". These manifestations are on a par with TAI dimensions and components proposed by Estaji and Ghiasvand (2021), Looney et al. (2017), and Jan-nesar et al. (2021).

Moreover, the results are in line with that of Daniels (2015) who found that novice teachers usually show more zest for identity development because they are constantly struggling to strike a balance between their autonomy, agency, and organizational conformity. To put it simply, novice teachers face more challenges and conflicts in the teaching process and the molding of their identity as teachers. This is supported by Xu (2013), who stated that novice teachers show more effort to recognize their identity and have a more effective role in education. Hence, they show more control and involvement in professional development programs that intend to develop their identity and pedagogy (Daniels, 2015). Additionally, this finding is attributable to Iranian novice EFL teachers' high receptiveness to new information and change in beliefs and values in their first years of teaching career during which they welcome training programs that plant the seeds of professionalism.

This does not mean that experienced teachers' identity is a fixed entity but a shifting one that is gradually constructed and co-constructed in social contexts and interactions with others (Fraser, 2016). The reason that TAI instruction has had more manifestations among novice teachers can be their limited knowledge and expertise in L2 assessment making the instruction fruitful in various aspects of assessment. In contrast, experienced teachers manifested their identity as assessors in five practical domains, namely assessment practices, perceptions, methods, feedback, and interpretation. A justification for less manifestation of TAI can be experienced EFL teachers' previous assessment-related experiences. They might have obtained sufficient assessment knowledge and expertise through actual teaching and assessing, attending training courses, assessing high-stakes exams, or even being assessed as L2 students. All these have shaped their assessment identity in advance, leaving limited space for more identity changes and development. In sum, it can be argued that TAI instruction influences both novice and experienced EFL teachers depending on their receptiveness, assessment-related experiences, needs, and expertise.

6 Conclusion and Implications

In this study, it was found that offering formal instruction on TAI is effective in expanding novice and experienced EFL teachers' identity as assessors of L2. Although no significant difference was identified from the pre-test to post-test between the novice and experienced EFL teachers, both groups developed, separately. In simple terms, the treatment caused change/development in both groups but no difference when compared together. In light of this breakthrough, it can be concluded that formal intervention is influential in developing EFL teachers' assessment identity provided that it incorporates sufficient information, tasks, activities, interaction, and involvement during and after the course.

The findings of this study are promising in confirming the effectiveness of training courses in (re)constructing EFL teachers' assessment identity. It drives the field forward as researching teacher identity, especially in relation to assessment identity, is a crucial domain for the future of language

education and teacher professionalism (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Moreover, the results add new insights into the role of teacher identity in language assessment and the trace of assessment in identity theories related to L2 teachers. It also casts light on the potentials of assessment-related professional development programs in teacher education.

This study has significant implications for EFL teachers in that their knowledge and awareness of TAI and its components and manifestations can increase. They can use different assessment techniques and practices to maintain and promote their assessment identity in the class. Furthermore, teacher trainers can find this study helpful in that they further realize the power of training courses in shaping and developing TAI. They can offer similar courses, workshops, and seminars in which various components of TAI are covered and explicitly taught to pre-service and in-service EFL teachers. In light of the findings, teacher educators can also recognize the need to change their beliefs that their past programs have been unquestionably effective and that there is no need to change or embed assessment issues and principles in them. Although assessment and instruction are two complementary sides in any education system, most of the current training programs focus exclusively on pedagogical aspects of L2 education, and developing assessment and identity is limitedly (if any) highlighted.

Despite these promising implications, this study suffers from some limitations that constraint the generalizability of the findings. The first limitation concerns the duration of the treatment that lasted only four months, while identity better shows itself and develops over longer periods of time. Another backdrop pertains to the small sample size that restricted the generalizability of the results to other settings. Additionally, the researchers had no control over the socio-economic status, ethnic, and social background of the participants, while these factors can affect their identity and developmental trajectories. Considering these flaws, future studies can be done on TAI using longitudinal research designs to trace the developmental paths of EFL teachers' identity as assessors. Cross-cultural studies are also recommended to examine the role of cultural factors in shaping EFL teachers' assessment identity. Avid researchers can also scrutinize TAI in relation to other demographic factors like gender, academic degree, and field of study. Finally, more studies can be conducted on the effect of teacher-related factors (e.g., agency, empowerment, pedagogical reasoning, and pedagogical knowledge among others) on the development and establishment of TAI.

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