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Iranian EFL Teachers' Dynamic Assessment Literacy and their Views of Its Practicality: A Comparative Study of Public School and English Language Institute Teachers

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Abstract

Teachers play a pivotal role in the instruction-assessment process. Knowing EFL teachers' conceptualizations of the role of assessment as well as their own role in the implementation of assessment is very critical. Accordingly, the current study aimed to compare Iranian EFL public high school teachers' literacy and perceptions of dynamic assessment with those of English language institute teachers. In so doing, 45 (23 high school, 22 institute) English teachers, teaching in Lahijan, Iran were selected according to convenience sampling method. The teachers were invited to cooperate and participate in the study and fill out the questionnaire sent via social network like WhatsApp and Telegram. In addition, nine teachers (five high school, four institute teachers) were selected through purposive sampling to participate in a semi-structured interview with five questions posed through the above-mentioned social networks. A researcher-adapted questionnaire with 23 items in a Likert-type scale was utilized to collect data. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were achieved through experts' opinion and Cronbach Alpha, respectively. Having collected the data, descriptive and inferential statistics of the findings showed that although both groups of teachers had a realistic view about the application of dynamic assessment due to its practicality and social acceptance, the teachers in two different contexts of teaching had different rates of literacy and perceptions of dynamic assessment. Furthermore, the difference in the two groups of teachers' perceptions of dynamic assessment practicality was significantly different. The institute teachers enjoyed a higher average of both literacy and perceptions of dynamic assessment practicality in their classrooms. This study echoes the teachers' voices, and as in the wake of new forms of curricular policy in many parts of the world, teachers are increasingly required to be agents of change that would hopefully encourage change at the discipline and in the institutional level.

Keywords: dynamic assessment, EFL high school teachers, EFL institute teachers, literacy, perception

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1. Introduction

Evaluating students' educational achievements is an ongoing responsibility for language teachers, who need to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of different assessment methods through appropriate techniques. Teachers are encouraged to use DA based on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory to enhance dialectical praxis and assessment awareness, as it has a significant impact on language assessment and the relationship between assessment and instruction.

Built upon SCT, DA is defined as the unification of instruction and assessment as two components of educational process (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). Constructing and reconstructing language teachers' perceptions of DA requires the integration of teachers' theoretical knowledge of assessment with the knowledge of teaching methodology they gain through education. This gained tacit of theoretical knowledge is, then, proceduralized via actual classroom practice as a long-term learning approach (Inbar-Lourie, 2013). As such, education and experience contribute to development of teachers' perspectives regarding DA, which entails investigating and improving their constructivist approaches towards assessment, according to context and culture (Troudi, Coombe, & Al-Hamliy, 2009).

Over the last few decades, DA has attained considerable prominence in language assessment and educational systems. A large body of research testifies to that fact (Estaji & Ameri, 2020). However, the distinctive feature that remains consistent is the examiners' active intervention in the assessment process of the examinees (Haywood & Lidz, 2008). DA has been endorsed as a successor for traditional psychometric approaches to cognitive functioning assessment (Ableeva, 2010).

DA takes heed of both the evaluation process and product. DA is no longer a novel method to psychological and educational assessment; in fact, nowadays, its contemporary implementations can be felt in every conceivable facet of English language instruction and assessment (Ebadi & Bashiri, 2020; Estaji & Farahanynia, 2019; Safdari & Fathi, 2020). As Kennedy, Chan, Fok, and Yu (2018) argue, student learning is positively influenced by assessment, and according to Struyven, Dochy, and Janssens (2015), the impact of assessment is significantly observable on students' performance, and the way students approach learning determines the way they think about classroom assignments and tests.

Moreover, Britzman (cited in Nushi & Momeni, 2022) suggests that teachers' knowledge is rooted in their personal experiences, values, and beliefs, within the societal environment that encourages this, and within the interpersonal connections that enable the understanding of teaching and learning. Understanding teachers' cognition is crucial to comprehending how teachers learn and what they do in the classroom (Borg, 2009). Moreover, it is crucial to consider teachers' assessment beliefs as they could potentially clash with effective assessment practices, hindering efforts to enhance and reorganize classroom assessment activities (Chang, 2006).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In the history of EFL context, teaching and assessment have traditionally been viewed as distinct entities and practices. Educators may view end-of-semester standardized or teacher-created tests as more beneficial than alternative assessments such as DA. In this context, instruction is given the primary focus, and assessment methods are not predetermined. Similarly, test preparation is considered often an end for EFL teachers in itself that can even deviate from learning objectives. Another factor contributing to the split between assessment and instruction may concern teachers' lack of knowledge of the theory and principles underlying assessment practices. All too often, teachers are not usually prepared for the challenges of developing appropriate assessment materials and instruments (Mohammadi, Babaii, & Hashemi, 2020).

Similarly, despite the recognition of the impact of assessment on instruction in many washback studies (Kazemian Sana'ati, Khonamri, Azizi, & Molana, 2019; Mauludin Ardianti, Prasetyo, Sefrina, & Astuti, 2021; Mohammadi et al., 2020), little, if any, research has been conducted to help contextualize Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and values about DA. Besides, to the best of researcher's knowledge, little research has been done in Iranian EFL high schools and institutes with regard to the teachers' perceptions and knowledge of DA comparatively. Mohammadi et al. (2020) argue that in an Iranian classroom setting, teachers face challenges implementing DA because of constraints in the educational system, costs, time constraints, and teachers' lack of literacy. Hence, there has been no evaluation of Iranian EFL teachers' assessment beliefs to understand the extent to which these beliefs may go against effective assessment practices and hinder attempts to enhance classroom assessment efforts.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Investigation on DA is a critical concern that deserves an efficient procedure for comprehending teachers' diverse assessment needs and their beliefs and perceptions on the practicality of assessment in classroom. With respect to this

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line of inquiry and regarding the fact that in recent years, there has been a growing interest among Iranian researchers (e.g., Estaji & Farahanynia, 2019; Kamali, Abbasi, & Sadighi, 2018; Kazemian Sana'ati et al., 2019; Mohammadi et al., 2020) to evaluate the role of DA and its influence on different components of foreign language teaching. The present research aimed to examine the understanding and opinions of Iranian EFL instructors regarding DA. This study aimed to investigate how familiar Iranian EFL teachers in both public schools and language institutes are with Discourse Analysis (DA) due to the lack of research on its potential to enhance learners' language abilities in Iran. It also examined how the teachers viewed the applicability of DA in the two environments. The following research questions were formulated according to the problems stated and objectives mentioned above:

RQ1: How familiar are Iranian EFL teachers working in two different contexts (i.e., public schools vs. language institutes) with dynamic assessment?

RQ2: What are Iranian public schools vs. language institute teachers' attitudes toward the practicality of dynamic assessment in the classroom?

RQ3: Is there any statistically significant difference between public schools and language institute teachers' familiarity with dynamic assessment?

RQ4: Is there any statistically significant difference between public schools and language institute teachers' perception of dynamic assessment practicality in the classroom?

2. Literature Review

Originated from Vygotsky's theory of zone of proximal development (ZPD), DA is based on SCT that considers cognitive change as influenced by "the productive intrusion of other people and cultural tools in the [developmental] process" (Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989, p. 68). Accordingly, cultural affordances that provide mediation for the learners to be engaged in social activity, allow for "the emergence of specifically human psychological processes as the person appropriates the affordances" (Lantolf, 2007, p. 52), and this, in effect, results in development in that activity, in this case second language learning.

Among the many, Linn and Miller (2005) define assessment of student learning as a systematic process of collecting information about student progress towards the learning goals. Similarly, Dhindsa, Omar, and Waldrip (2017) characterize assessment as a key component of teaching and learning, "a systematic process of data gathering" (p. 1261) about students' progress. According to Herrera, Murry, and Cabral (2017), students are now being asked to use their "cognitive development, academic knowledge, and language skills to read, comprehend, synthesize, analyze, compare, contrast, relate, articulate, write, evaluate and more" (p. 76). This support establishes the base for using different types (formative) of assessment in the classroom, allowing teachers to track gradual progress.

Literature in recent decade witnesses much research interest regarding ELT teachers' knowledge of DA (e.g., Eshagi Sardrood, 2011; Estaji & Ameri, 2020; Lidz & Gindis, 2013; Mohammadi et al., 2020; Nazari, 2017; Önalan & Karagül, 2018). To further spotlight the importance of education in teachers' assessment competence, and to compensate for the gap between theory and practice, Taras and Davis (2012) highlighted the dichotomy between assessment theory, classroom assessment, and learning process due to separation between practitioners and educationalists.

Criticizing the ignorance towards learning assessment theories on the part of teachers, Taras and Davis (2012) stress the role of theoretical knowledge in generating coherence across "institutional quality, curriculum, courses and degrees" (p. 51). Additionally, to bridge the chasm between academics' methodological constraints and practitioners' intuitive assessment, Yi (2013) calls for establishing a shared ground for practice between these two poles to encompass language teaching and assessment with "a dynamic, relevant, and culturally appropriate understanding" (p. 77).

In the same way, Bullock (2011) found that teachers play a crucial role in introducing and creating new assessment methods. Borg (2009) also highlights that understanding teachers' beliefs helps to recognize and develop their specific beliefs, leading to the selection of suitable teaching methods. Putting pedagogical functions of assessment in perspective, Rea-Dickins (2008) surveyed teachers' ideas towards formative assessment through a series of interviews to find out that teachers benefited from it in four major ways: Planning and managing their teaching; providing evidence regarding students' learning; identifying the developmental extent for teachers and students alike as determined by curriculum; and providing feedback on their own teaching.

Önalan and Karagül (2018) investigated EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding assessment and their needs in this area. The findings indicated that teachers' beliefs about assessment are insistent about the importance of using assessment for formative aims, and self-evaluation processes are also assigned the next greatest level of significance.

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Furthermore, the results demonstrated that the assessment preferences of participants are unaffected by their undergraduate departments or years of experience.

In the Iranian EFL context, Eshagi Sardrood (2011) explored 51 Iranian EFL language institutes, universities, and school teachers' perceptions of DA through a structured interview and a questionnaire. The results demonstrated that most of the teachers held a negative attitude about DA and considered that implementing it fully in Iranian EFL classes would be too hard due to lack of DA training and guidelines, time-consuming nature of DA and Information Communication Technology (ICT) resources, large number of students in EFL classes, the regular utilization of static tests, and heavy dependence on the teachers' teaching and assessment abilities.

Nazari (2017) conducted a qualitative interpretive study to ascertain English language lecturers' perceptions of the difficulties and potentials associated with DA as a possible alternative. Despite the teachers' uncertain feelings and concerns about the difficulties associated with DA, the study's findings revealed that lecturers were certainly interested in the potential of DA to provide more individualized learning for students. Moreover, obstacles to integrating DA in classes were pointed out by the research subjects, such as university policies, insufficient training and understanding of DA, the necessity to observe examples of DA, the need for more time and involvement from both students and teachers, and worries about fairness.

Similarly, Estaji and Ameri (2020) examined teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to four stages of classroom-based assessment, including planning, implementing, monitoring, recording and dissemination process. The study's findings indicated that teachers held and implemented their own staunch beliefs with regard to classroom-based assessment and had a good deal of knowledge about testing principles and assessment. The teachers' pedagogical beliefs, their understanding of learning objectives, their preconceived notions about learners, and their estimation of students' performance in the target language use domain all influenced both their attitude toward assessment methods and their actual implementation of assessment practices.

Mohammadi et al. (2020) looked into perceptions of 25 Iranian TEFL teachers, selected through purposive sampling, concerning the application and importance of DA. The content analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed that Iranian teachers viewed the application of DA in their classrooms positively. Furthermore, it was found out that teachers could not put DA into practice due to factors such as educational system limitations, expense matters, time concerns, and lack of literacy on the part of teachers.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The sample size consisted of 23 high school and 22 institute English teachers selected from a total number of 54 English teachers availably practicing teaching in Lahijan, Iran. The participants were chosen based on convenience sampling as one of the main types of non-probability sampling methods. The participants were of both genders with a 26-45 age range and from two to 20 years of teaching experience. The participant's fields of study consisted of English Language Teaching, English Language Literature, and Linguistics. They were of three different degrees, namely Masters of Arts (M.A.) and Ph.D. candidates, and PhD holders.

3.2 Design of the Study

The study utilized a descriptive design which did not involve a cause-effect relationship or treatment procedure, with the researcher lacking control over variables already present in the study participants (high school and institute teachers). Furthermore, since teacher cognition is a set of hidden traits framed by passions, ethos, beliefs, ideals, and previous learning and teaching experiences, it is best perceived when it is triangulated by data from various acts in different conditions (Hung, 2012). Accordingly, the design of the study would be considered as a sequential explanatory mixed methods or a two-phase model because, as Mohammadi et al. (2020, p. 833) note, "first quantitative data are collected and analyzed; and then, to further explain the findings from the first phase, qualitative data are collected and analyzed; finally, integrated interpretations are drawn based on the quantitative and qualitative data". The significance of using this design lies in the point that a broad picture of the research questions will be provided by the quantitative results, then, qualitative data extends, refines and elucidates the comprehensive understanding of findings (Creswell, 2011).

3.3 Materials and Instruments

In order to operationalize the present study and fulfill its objectives, a questionnaire and a follow-up interview were used.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

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The questionnaire of this study was an adapted version of the questionnaire developed by Eshagi Sardrood (2011) in 5-point Likert scale namely very hard, hard, neutral, easy, and very easy assuming that the strength/intensity of experience is linear, i.e., on a continuum from very hard to very easy. The questionnaire consisted of one demographic section that collected data on the teachers, personal and educational backgrounds. The second section asked about the teachers' literacy of DA (1-7). The third section included the questions (1-16) about the teachers' attitudes toward DA classroom practicality.

3.3.2 Interview

The interview included five questions investigating teachers' thoughts on the results from the study's quantitative phase about their knowledge of DA and opinions on DA's usefulness in EFL classes. It also investigated the teachers' attitudes towards DA, their own professional experiences of DA practicality, and their challenges and concerns about the contextual factors. To confirm the validity and accuracy of the interview questions, the questions were submitted to three ELT experts for their comments on the questions. To thoroughly elicit teachers' beliefs and values on the issue, the interviewees were asked to express their ideas in their mother tongue (Persian).

The purpose of employing interview was to figure out teachers' views of the findings of the quantitative phase of the study and to add depth and detail to the qualitative phase of the study. The interview was done electronically, and the justification for using an electronic interview through social network rather than a face-to-face one was that it allowed participants to reflect on their responses and experiences and also enabled them to participate at their time of convenience (James, 2016) without disturbing factors so that they could comfortably express their beliefs and attitude about DA practicality.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

On account that participation in the study was voluntary, convenience sampling was used as it is the most common sampling procedure in L2 research (Dworkin, 2012). The participants were selected upon their oral consent when they were called for to participate in the study. Upon asking 54 teachers (29 high school teachers, 25 institute teachers) 25 teachers from high school and 24 teachers from the institutes(totally 49) expressed their agreement to cooperate and participate in the survey. Therefore, their social network IDs like WhatsApp and Telegram addresses were attained

Since the questionnaire instrument was already standardized, its validity and reliability were reassessed for the current study. To preserve the accuracy, the researcher initially sought the insights of experts by distributing the questionnaire to three university instructors, three high school English teachers, and three English institute teachers. According to their opinions collected, the survey was considered suitable for the job because every expert rated it as having excellent items that supported the factors. Next, the questionnaire was administered to sample representatives (10 English teachers) for piloting purpose. The purpose was to eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in wording and try out the coding /classification system for data analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire stood at 0.80.

Later, the final version of the research instrument was developed based on feedback on this draft, and the researcher administered 49 questionnaires to English high school and institute teachers in the educational year of 2023. The respondents completed the questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously. The total number of questionnaires the researcher could collect finally and was able to run the study with was 45 (23 high school, 22 institute English teachers). After the questionnaires were collected, the data were entered into spreadsheet program for analysis.
Concerning the qualitative phase of this study, nine English language teachers (five high school, four institute teachers) were selected through purposive sampling to participate in the follow-up interview. To cover all aspects of the issue in question and to answer the questions in researchers' mind not covered in questionnaire, a semi-structured interview was carried out with seven teachers to collect more and precise information about their literacy of DA.

Certain criteria were employed to choose participants for both the qualitative and quantitative stages of the research, with a crucial requirement being that educators must possess M.A. or Ph.D. degrees in English Literature, Linguistics, or English Language Teaching. This standard was chosen because teachers who have only completed bachelor's degrees may not be knowledgeable about DA, so the information gathered from them may not be reliable or valid.

The interviews were recorded, rewritten, transcribed, and translated into English. Then, they were transcribed and analyzed by the researcher, and was finally verified and coded. Once the coding was completed, a second rater, a colleague, was invited for an inter-coder reliability check, or inter-coder agreement (Creswell, 2011). The Cohen's Kappa was conducted to calculate the ratio of coding agreements. According to Creswell, a kappa of 1 indicates perfect agreement, whereas a kappa of 0 indicates agreement equivalent to chance. For the purpose of the present study, the

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inter-rater agreement calculated by Kappa statistics was reached to be 0.88, and it indicated an almost perfect agreement as it was between 0.81-0.99.

In relation to confidentiality and ethical concerns, it should be noted that the questionnaire's confidentiality was upheld throughout. Participants were instructed to refrain from including their signature or any form of personal identification on the questionnaire. No one except the researcher accessed the finished questionnaires. Additionally, participants were assured that the information would only be utilized for this specific research study and for the purpose of publishing the outcomes. Because the questionnaires lacked the participants' names, codes/numbers were used for analysis and report writing, avoiding the use of actual names.

4. Results

To address the first research question (i.e., how familiar are Iranian high school teachers and institute EFL teachers with dynamic assessment?), responses of the teachers in the two contexts to items 1 and 7 were analyzed. Table 1 summarizes the results of English high school teachers' literacy of DA.

Table 1. Familiarity of English language high school teachers with DA

Questions	*%* Yes	*%* No
Do you know how to integrate assessment and instruction?	42	58
Do you know how DA is different from traditional assessment?	34	56
Are you familiar with the theoretical aspects of DA?	33	67
Are you familiar with the procedural aspects of DA?	30	70
Do you know how DA different is from standardized testing?	45	55
Do you know whashabck effect?	36	64
Do you know to conduct a dynamic assessment?	32	68

Based on Table 1, 30% of teachers knew about, while 70% did not know about the procedural theoretical aspects of DA. 33% were acquainted with theoretical aspects of DA, while 69% were unacquainted with them. Additionally, 68% of teachers were unaware of how to incorporate DA in their classrooms, while 34% could distinguish between DA and the traditional form of assessment. Similarly, their understanding of the impact of washback and the combination of assessment and instruction were 36% and 42%, correspondingly. However, the English teachers at the institute experienced a varying level of DA literacy. Table 2 shows the results of English institute teachers' familiarity with DA.

Table 2. Familiarity of English language institute teachers familiarity with DA

Questions	*%* Yes	*%* No
Do you know how to integrate assessment and instruction?	57	43
Do you know how DA is different from traditional assessment?	69	31
Are you familiar with the theoretical aspects of DA?	59	41
Are you familiar with the procedural aspects of DA?	64	36
Do you know how DA different is from standardized testing?	67	33
Do you know washback effect?	79	21
Do you know to conduct a dynamic assessment?	62	38

The institute teachers' knowledge of the DA theoretical aspects was 59% as compared to 33% of the high school teachers' knowledge. As demonstrated, 57% of educators at the institution are acquainted with integration of assessment and instruction, while 43% are not familiar with it. In addition, 79% of institute teachers are knowledgeable

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about the washback effect, while 64% understand DA procedural aspects, and 67% are familiar with DA implementation. Furthermore, 67% of the institute teachers are aware of the distinction between DA and standardized testing, while 59% understand the difference between DA and traditional assessment. The mean and standard deviation of the literacy question responses from high school and institute teachers were calculated and analyzed, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The means and the standard deviations of teachers' responses to familiarity questions

	Number	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
School teachers	23	33	**12.16**
Institute teachers	22	54.5	**14.19**

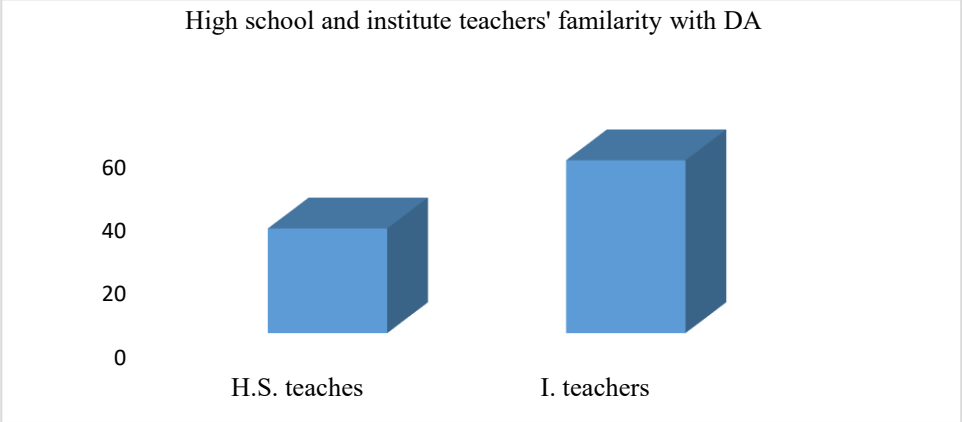


Figure 1. High school and institute teachers' familiarity with DA

As shown in Table 3, the means were reported to be 33, 54.5 for high school and institute teachers, respectively with regard to their responses to familiarity questions. Figure 1 also presents a graphic represntation of the data. The analysis of the descriptive data revealed that the teachers were differently familiar with the principles of DA. As shown in Table 3, the means of two groups (high school and institute teachers) proved to be different in their familiarity level with DA. However, to make sure of their homogeneity and that there was any statistically significant difference between the teachers' familiarity with DA, an independent samples t-test was run. The results of an independent-samples t-test of the participants' familiarity, at a 95% confidence, are indicated in Table 4.

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Table 4. Results of independent-samples t-test on the teachers' responses to familiarity questions

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD	SED	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Teachers' familiarity	Equal variances assumed	.445	.514	-3.56	29	.000	-21.5	.3547	-2.412	-.214
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.36	28.98	.000	-21.5	.3547	-2.412	-.214

The significance level for Levene's test is .514, bigger than the cut-off of .05. This means that the assumption of equal variances has been met for the familiarity scores. The amount of sig two tailed is '.000' which is significantly less than the predetermined amount of p value which is .05. Hence, it can be inferred that there is a statistically significant difference between the teachers in their familiarity with DA. From another point of view, the amount of T is '3.56', higher than critical value. As Table 4 shows, there is a statistically significant difference in high school teachers' (33, SD = 12.16) and institute teachers (M = 54.5, SD = 14.19; t (29) = -3.56., p = .000 two-tailed). In other words, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between teachers' familiarity with DA.

On the other hand, the teachers' responses to questionnaire items 1-16 were computed to probe their perceptions of the practicality of DA in the classrooms. Table 5 shows the English high school teachers' perceptions of DA practicality in their classrooms by assigning very hard, hard, neutral, easy, and very easy to the items.

Table 5. English language high school teachers' perceptions of DA practicality

No	The degree of DA practicality in Your classrooms	Very hard %	Hard %	Neutral %	Easy %	Very easy %
1	The application of pretest-teach posttest model	35	27.3	31.5	4.2	2.1
2	Identifying every student's ability level of English before teaching	56.1	26.3	4.2	9.4	4.1
3	Identifying every student's needs, goals, and learning problems before teaching	36.1	41.3	7.4	6.2	6.1
4	Preparing graduated (easy-to hard) activities and tasks before teaching	50.3	25.3	13.8	6.4	2.1
5	Providing implicit-to-explicit standardized feedback	30.6	41.2	17.7	1.2	3.2
6	Recording the amount and kind of feedback (assistance) needed for every individual student	22.2	52.7	11.6	4.2	9.3
7	Getting continuous feedback about students' progress	47.2	32.8	12.6	3.2	4.1
8	Adapting teaching to the students' responsiveness	34.4	39.8	17.1	3.6	4.4
9	Managing the time to interact and work with every individual student	26.4	45.4	4.3	6.4	15.7
10	Managing the time to integrate teaching with assessment	30.8	36.9	16.9	3.2	12.2

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11	Managing the available resources such as pair-work, group work, presentation, and portfolio to have students help each other	53.5	29.6	4.3	8.5	4.2
12	Utilizing the computer-assisted instruction and other technological tools in scaffolding students.	30.2	30.8	21	6.7	10.1
13	Determining students' learning potential	40.	41	9.4	6.2	3.4
14	Administering several tests to measure students' ability to extend their knowledge and skills to new situations	27.1	50.7	12.8	3.5	6.
15	Passing or failing students on the basis of the DA results	20.3	32.2	38.9	4.4	4.3
16	Replacing the current practice of static tests with DA	13.5	29.7	46.5	5.1	5.2
Mean		34.6	36.4	16.8	5.15	6.03

Based on the mean score for each column in Table 5, 34.6 % of high school teachers found application of DA in the EFL classrooms to be very hard, 36.4% considered it hard. However, only 5.15% of the teachers considered it easy, 6.03% considered it very easy, and 16.08% had no idea. A closer analysis of the column labeled 'very hard' reveals that items 2 (56.1) and 11 (53.5) obtained the highest percentages. These two items are concerned with *'managing the time to interact and work with every individual student*' and *'managing the time to integrate teaching with assessment*'. Item 6 (52.7) and item 14 (50.7) in the 'hard' column of Table 5 also gained a rather high percentage of the responses. According to English language institute teachers' responses to the questionnaire items, they had a different perception of DA practicality in their classroom as their answers to the items are reported in Table 6.

Table 6. English language institute teachers' perceptions of DA practicality

No	**The degree of DA practicality in Your classrooms**	**Very had %**	**Hard %**	**Neutral %**	**Easy %**	**Very easy %**
1	The application of pretest-teach-posttest model	9.7	5.4	31.5	30.8	22.5
2	Identifying every student's ability level of English before teaching	14	16.1	11	20.5	38.1
3	Identifying every student's needs, goals, and learning problems before teaching	15.4	17.8	5.4	27.7	33.6
4	Preparing graduated (easy-to hard) activities and tasks before teaching	22	15.4	14	20.7	25.8
5	Providing implicit-to-explicit standardized feedback	13	13.4	35.9	19.1	17.6
6	Recording the amount and kind of feedback (assistance) needed for every individual student	19.4	13	18.6	18.5	30.5
7	Getting continuous feedback about students' progress	14.9	21.8	1	31.4	24.9
8	Adapting teaching to the students' responsiveness	19.9	14.8	15	20.2	30.1
9	Managing the time to interact and work with every individual student	19	16	5.5	20.2	38.2
10	Managing the time to integrate teaching with assessment	18.9	12	3	21.7	44.4
11	Managing the available resources such as pair-work, group work, presentation, and portfolio to have students help each other	17.8	16.4	5.4	33.9	25.5

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12	Utilizing the computer-assisted instruction and other technological tools in scaffolding students.	3	15.5	20.8	38.3	20.3
13	Determining students' learning potentials	10.4	24.8	14	35.3	15.4
14	Administering several tests to measure students' ability to extend their knowledge and skills to new situations	15.4	16.4	9.8	28.2	30.1
15	Passing or failing students on the basis of the DA results	17	8	39.4	15.2	20.3
16	Replacing the current practice of static tests with DA	15.5	7	27.9	19.4	30.1
Mean		15.48	14.61	15.91	25.06	28.03

As shown in Table 6, 28.03 % of English language institute teachers considered DA practicality in their classrooms as very easy, 25.06% considered it as easy, 15.48% considered it as very hard, 14.16% considered it as hard, and 15.91% of teachers had no idea about the practicality of DA in their classrooms.

Table 6 indicates that items 10 (44.4%) and 9 (38.2%) had the greatest percentages in the 'very easy' column. These two items are related to *'managing the time to interact and work with every individual student*' and *'managing the time to integrate teaching with assessment*'. It is worth noting that the issue of lack of time for institute teachers is significantly more acute than it is for high school teachers. This finding can be accounted for by the fact that institute classes are not crowded, whereas language high school classes are substantially bigger, making DA implementation much harder. A closer analysis of the column labeled 'very easy' reveals that items 13 (15.4) and 7 (17.6) obtained the lowest percentages. Items 8 (19.9) and item 6 (19.4) I were considered very hard with the highest percentage of the responses.

As Table 7 displays, the result of the descriptive data analyses of the teachers' responses to the items (1-16) showed that there was a substantial degree of variations among the two groups of teachers in two different teaching contexts. The difference in the mean scores of the teacher groups were considerably different in their perceptions of DA practicality.

Table 7. The means and the standard deviations of teachers' responses to DA practicality questions

Context of teaching	**Number**	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**
High school	23	15.04	.42
Language institute	22	35.5	.59

As reported in Table 7, the mean scores of the English institute teachers (35.5) were considerably different from English high school teachers (15.04). Thus, the perceptions were not equal across the groups of teachers in two different context of English language instruction. Furthermore, in order to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of Iranian English high school and institute teachers' of the DA practicality in the classroom, another independent samples t-test was employed the result of which are reported in Table 8. In addition, as reported, the result of the Levene's test (homogeneity of variances) for the teachers' responses was also not significant: $F_{posttest}$ (5.323) = -6.209, p = .029-at the .05 alpha level. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was justified for the teachers' responses to the questionnaire items, as well.

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Table 8. The results of independent samples t-test on teachers' responses to DA practicality questions

		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
DA practicality	Equal variances assumed	5.323	.029	-6.20	28	.000	-20.46	.537	-4.433	-2.234
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.20	22.28	.000	-20.46	. 537	-4.446	-2.221

As demonstrated in Table 8, the difference was statistically significant, t (28) = -6.209, at $p < .05$, 2-tailed. In other words, the average difference of -20.46 between teachers' responses to the questionnaire items was statistically significant. This further indicates that the English institute teachers' responses were statistically significant different from the English high school teachers' responses to the questionnaire.

4.1 Interview Analysis

Despite the notable variations in how teacher groups view the practicality of data analysis, a similarity in their opinions on using data analysis can be seen in the interviews. For example, both groups expressed similar worries about students' emotional factors during exams and performance evaluations when using DA.

Both groups displayed a notable emphasis on learners' ability to reflect on themselves and think critically, their motivation, and their understanding of the purpose of their learning and assessment. The two following excerpts further illustrate the above-mentioned patterns and in response to the following question:

Does learners' awareness of the reason behind what they learn and are assessed boost their motivation that enhances effectiveness of DA?

"Maybe learners develop a fluid and fluent oral proficiency and learn a few more vocabulary. But their perceptions remain intact. It's because they don't think about the reason of coming to institute; they don't know their needs; they don't know whether their needs and interest match."

"To succeed in applying DA, I always ask them to have a 'why' for what they do or want to do. I believe in developing learners' reflection to let them think; to help them deal with mismatches they encounter."

With regard to the effects of syllabus and materials on application of DA and formation of scoring system, both groups of teachers had a realistic view about application of DA due to its practicality and social acceptance. They believed in the crucial roles of education and the types of syllabus and materials proved and provided for teachers in their perception of DA. The following responses to the question below can help better illuminate the point:

How do syllabus and materials affect the application of DA in your classrooms?

"*Our assessment system is an orphan. It is neither qualitative nor quantitative; neither subjective nor objective. I cannot freely assess my students based on my familiarity with their competence and my choice of applying DA. Our culture demands a grading system and I have to apply it though I see it is not fair."*

"Designer methods were really appealing but they didn't last long because they didn't gain societies' acceptance. DA, like any other type of assessment, first should fit the needs and sociocultural characteristics of any context; then, it should be practical in that context."

"DA needs time and teachers' concentration. We are pressed in time to cover the syllabus within a two- or three-month term. This doesn't leave me enough time to assess 30-35 students one by one."

Regarding the effectiveness of learners' feedback in carrying out the DA principles in the classrooms, both groups reported perceiving feedback as a facilitator of learning. They also considered feedback as an indicator of

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effectiveness of instruction. The following excerpts clarify the participants' views of learners' feedback in response the following question:

Does learners' feedback, as a feature of DA, facilitate learning progress constantly, and the learners' feedback reflects efficiency and effectiveness of instruction?

"I think DA doesn't do a good job unless teachers observe classes to see learners' progress in each area. It can be through class performance, weekly quizzes, final and mid-term paper and pencil tests, or any other type."

"To me, relying on learners' feedback would be an indicator of learners' state of knowledge. I can use learners' feedback mostly for seeing their strengths and weaknesses".

Concerning teachers' understanding of DA as a classroom practice, their perceptions of DA in relation to the agency of the assessor, learners as its major targets', teachers' concerns towards application of DA as a social practice, and their role in general in applying the DA principles, both groups believed that teachers play a crucial role in this regard. The following excerpts clarify the teachers' perceptions about their role in DA in response the following question:

What are the roles of teachers in applying the principles of DA in their classrooms?

"Teachers should be familiar with theory of assessment and the criteria and application of DA as a classroom practice. Teachers would be facilitators of learning process via DA as they can be decision makers regarding classroom assessment through DA."

"Teachers' personal innovation in application of DA helps probe and enhance learners' learning process. Of course, teachers' interest in the application of DA will change during years of teaching experience. Thus, we need to be reflective and critical towards learners' performance to perceive learners' feedback and act on them accordingly."

Since the goal of DA is believed to be learners' improvement, teachers represented substantial concern to learners' variables including their affective domain and individual differences as elements affecting learning. Of their major concerns were institutional demands, the effects of syllabus and materials, sociocultural factors shaping scoring system, as well as ethics and fairness of DA compared with traditional assessment.

Moreover, some teachers highlighted the importance of social acceptance of DA, and its applicability and practicality due to the contextual constraints of a psychometric-based mainstream assessment system. The following excerpts clarify the teachers' concerns and challenges with regard to the application of DA in their classroom in response the following question:

Is the application of DA in classrooms a challenging teaching and learning opportunity for teachers and learners?

"I believe that DA is a challenging learning opportunity us. But, we need to consider an ongoing, long-term, continuous, and constant learners' feedback which promotes leaning is obtained through application of DA."

"The Institute, with its traditional way of assessment, considers only a small portion of total score for class activities and we should abide by the rules. There is no room for full application of DA."

"Some teachers are product-oriented and some are process-oriented. In dynamic assessment we should take a process-oriented approach so that we can hold a holistic view of learners' strengths and weaknesses."

"Teachers who know theories and principles of DA, know how to act in classroom to facilitate learners' understanding of and dealing with their own progress. For example, if teachers don't know what to observe and what to look for, observation cannot be an efficient alternative assessment. Teachers should be trained first."

5. Discussion

The purpose was to compare Iranian EFL public school teachers' literacy and perceptions of DA with those of English language institute teachers. The results of this study provided evidence that the teachers in two different contexts of teaching, high school and institute, had different rate of DA literacy. Similarly, the teachers' responses to the DA practicality questionnaire indicated that the teachers in two different contexts of teaching had quite different perceptions of DA implementation in their classrooms.

To examine if there was a significant statistical variance in familiarity rates between the two sets of teachers, a t-test for independent samples was conducted. The outcome showed that teachers in high school and institute settings had varying levels of familiarity with DA. In the same way, the striking results obtained from a separate independent-samples t-test on teachers' feedback regarding their views on the practicality of data analysis showed that educators in distinct teaching settings had varying opinions on implementing data analysis in their classrooms.

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The present study was done in support of employing the principles of DA that is considered as a well-established assessment trend for language learners and teachers. These results provide empirical support for the sociocultural effects of education on the application of DA which stands in contrast to the traditional psychometrics-based assessment system.

The dissimilarity of familiarity and perceptions of teachers may refer to the role of Iranian EFL teachers in language classrooms. Supported by Eshaghi Sardood (2011) who argues that often the dominant society of Iran influences the educational setting, the findings revealed that this dominance eventually leads to ignoring the teachers' sense of soundness and plausibility. The reason may refer to Iranian EFL high school teachers' working situation in which some pre-determined set of materials and methods are dictated to them to be implemented in the classrooms. However, this restricted view of language teaching methodology is mostly limited to state classrooms and in private language institutes, teachers have more freedom to decide on the appropriate methodology and materials to be applied in the classrooms.

As the teacher interviews clarified, both groups of teachers believed in the application of DA in their classrooms, showing that the trend of critical thinking is gaining momentum in Iranian EFL context so that practitioners can evaluate the current method of teaching and assessments. However, it has a relatively slow movement, according to Daneshfar, Aliasin, and Hashemi (2018). More specifically, they argue that Iranian EFL teachers cannot provide the existing educational context with a radical change in traditional testing and teaching situations. Moreover, as pointed out by Eshaghi Sardood (2011), there is not much tendency in this context to match with the movement of current paradigm shift in ELT and replace the status quo with DA or any other alternative assessment and teaching tools.

The results align with a previous study by Nushi and Momeni (2022) indicating that teachers in institutes may have more knowledge of DA, suggesting that these teachers may receive training on new assessment trends. Additionally, the lack of knowledge about DA among high school teachers could also be due to inadequacies in teacher-training programs that frequently do not cover assessment courses.

The issue of motivation could be a potential factor contributing to the differences in teachers' perspectives on the practicality of data analysis. Teachers in high schools in Iran lack the necessary motivation for professional development, including learning to implement DA, as stated by Rahmati, Sadeghi, and Ghaderi (2019). Some Iranian EFL teachers in high school are focused on financial concerns, preventing them from pondering their professional growth. Moreover, there are other contextual elements that can act as factors that lower motivation for teachers, including restrictions on the use of digital aids in classrooms, limited school resources, lack of student engagement, and educational challenges like overcrowded classrooms.

Furthermore, the Iranian assessment system is oriented on scores rather than on students' learning and progress (Ketabi & Ketabi, 2014; Mohammadi et al., 2020), which negatively influences students' creativity and absence of exposure to higher cognitive skills (Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012), as well as placing a significant pressure on students' personal lives, reducing their academic curiosity (Al-Amin & Greenwood, 2018). This score-based approach in the long-run may result in a repetitive educational system in which students prioritize good scores over anything else and at any cost, and students' fear of low performance may compel them to offset the risk of failing testing by cheating on examinations (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011).

Generally, discussing the findings, we may find several reasons for the differences of literacy rate and practicality of DA in two different contexts of EFL teaching practices. It is known that Iran's educational system is based on a top-down approach, which implies that the educational authorities determine how students should be taught and tested in class, leaving teachers with little say in these respects (Sadeghi & Jabbarnejad, 2012). In this regard, Iran's dominant pluralistic society takes no heed of practicality parameter of the post-method (Kumaravadivelu, 2012), which signifies that the teacher is spoon-fed with whatever information and theory theoretician generates.

6. Conclusion

The major contribution of this study might be to extend the typical dyadic format of DA and its feasibility in an EFL classroom. The DA framework considered in this study may facilitate the whole process of Da familiarity and application. It was found that teachers in both contexts accepted that, unlike traditional, Non-Dynamic Assessment (NDA) approaches, DA has a great bearing on them since they do not have a neutral role and should create a positive, dialogic relationship with the language learners. It is believed that such a relationship may be triggered by the principles underlying the SCT of learning, which suggests that adults and peers may influence individual learning by drawing on cultural beliefs and tendencies which affect teaching and learning processes.

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Therefore, it is essential to understand that technical infrastructures and facilities are indispensable if educational settings aim to implement DA principles in EFL classes. Numerous technical infrastructures and facilities are incorporated into EFL classes, such as group scaffolding and peer assessment. To sum up, it can be stated that DA, with its consistent characteristics, aims to identify learners who are facing difficulties. It also gives appropriate details on the origins of the issue, the growth of learners, and their ability to overcome challenges, aiding teachers in creating more effective remedial programs, ultimately enhancing education.

By offering the operational merits of DA, the findings proved that interaction and mediation can help teachers to play their roles as professional mentors. Given the immediate need for implementing DA instruction in language classrooms, future studies should explore the issue more rigorously to find better ways for teachers' utilization of DA techniques and its benefits for EFL learners.

The suggestion is that teachers who have finished a program in teaching English should receive training in assessment, and that training courses for teachers should be a top priority for education administration. At the same time, schools should steer clear of relying on non-experts to set up predetermined traditional exams, and teachers – crucial players in language assessment – should familiarize themselves with alternative assessments like DA.

Reshaping the teachers' conceptualization of DA and its related pedagogical, social, and contextual issues, especially reported in the interviews, stand as teacher identity that equips teachers to conceive of contextual and sociopolitical factors affecting all aspects of teaching, in this case, application of DA. Furthermore, this study echoes the teachers' voices, and as in the wake of new forms of curricular policy in many parts of the world, teachers are increasingly required to be agents of change that would hopefully encourage change at the discipline and in the institutional level.

Notwithstanding the strengths of the study as mentioned in the previous section, there are several limitations in this study that should be noted. This study suffers from some methodological limitations that are hoped to be addressed in future research. One of the limitations involved in the present study was the complexity of conceptualizing and comprehending the attitudes and beliefs of teachers since these are personalized and individual and cannot be physically measured.

Moreover, due to the sampling procedure and sample size of the study, which was a representative of a special context in Iran, the generalizability of results requires caution, and the findings cannot be extrapolated to the total population of EFL teachers in Iranian schools and language institutes. Therefore, the results may only apply to populations with similar educational backgrounds. Still, the results can be applied to the schools and institutes included in the sample and provide insight on potential outcomes with more participants and different sampling methods.

As the findings and the limitations and delimitations of the current study showed, future studies can be carried out with more numbers of participants. Greater and more active participations of teachers more likely result in better understanding of the pedagogical practices DA. Moreover, a triangulation of data collection procedure such as questionnaire, interview, and observation of teachers' practices of DA in their classes may give more detailed information in this regard. Regarding the results of the recent research examining how teachers view the practicality of dynamic assessment, future studies could concentrate on exploring the perspectives and attitudes of Iranian EFL students towards dynamic assessment and their use of it in classrooms to present a more accurate model.

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