

Research paper

Assessing Autonomy: A Comparative Analysis of Teacher, Self, and Peer Assessments in EFL Contexts


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Abstract

This study examines the impact of different types of assessment, teacher-assessment, self-assessment and peer-assessment, on Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' autonomy. Initially 110 learners from Goyesh English Language Institute in Karaj, Iran were involved and then the sample was reduced to 90 intermediate female students after administering the Preliminary English Test (PET). Participants were randomly divided into three groups: Peer-Assessment Group (PAG), Teacher-Assessment Group (TAG), and Self-Assessment Group (SAG), each with 30 learners. A pre-treatment Learner Autonomy Questionnaire was used to collect the data which was validated through expert review and pilot testing to ensure the reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87). Semi-structured interviews were also used to collect the data. Assessments were conducted over 12 sessions (90 minutes each) across six weeks as follows: in TAG, the teacher evaluated the students' essays; in PAG, students assessed their peers; in SAG, learners self-assessed their essays. The same questionnaire was administered as a post-test after the treatment. There was a significant difference in autonomy as revealed by ANCOVA, with the highest mean score achieved by PAG, followed by SAG and TAG. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating peer-assessment strategies within EFL contexts in order to develop learner autonomy. Implications on EFL teachers focus on the necessity of incorporating collaborative assessment techniques within their teaching materials to promote a more autonomous learning atmosphere within their classrooms.

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Introduction

Background of the Study

Recent research has underscored the significance of learner autonomy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. For instance, Liu (2015) identified a robust positive correlation between learner motivation and autonomy, particularly emphasizing that engagement in learning activities is critically associated with increased autonomy. Rahman (2018) posits that autonomy can be effectively fostered through clear goal-setting, the identification of preferred learning strategies, enhancement of motivation, and the incorporation of technology into learning environments. Additionally, peer assessment has been recognized as a valuable tool for promoting learner autonomy by diminishing reliance on teachers and bolstering students' confidence in their learning abilities (Shen et al., 2020). However, it is important to note that peer assessment may not uniformly enhance all dimensions of learner autonomy.

The perceptions of EFL teachers regarding self- and peer-assessment tools are generally positive, particularly in the context of writing instruction. Despite the time and effort required to implement these assessments, teachers believe that such methods can effectively promote learner autonomy (Mohammed & Hussein, 2023). These findings collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of learner autonomy, which encompasses dimensions such as responsibility, engagement, and perceived competence (Liu, 2015). Furthermore, they highlight the potential role of diverse assessment techniques in nurturing autonomous learning within EFL classrooms.

In exploring the impact of various assessment types on EFL learners' autonomy and related factors, self-assessment and peer assessment have been shown to enhance not only learner autonomy but also metacognitive awareness and writing skills (Ebrahimi et al., 2021). It has been observed that while teacher assessments tend to be more stringent, peer assessments often adopt a more lenient approach, with self-assessments typically positioned between the two. Notably, self-assessment has proven particularly effective in fostering goal-orientation compared to both peer and teacher assessments (Zarei & Usefli, 2015). Despite the acknowledged time constraints, EFL teachers generally recognize the potential of self and peer assessments as effective means for enhancing learner autonomy in writing (Mohammed & Hussein, 2023).

While existing studies highlight the benefits of self and peer assessments, a significant research gap remains regarding the comparative effectiveness of these assessment types across various educational settings. Specifically, the relative impact of teacher, self, and peer assessments on learner autonomy in diverse EFL contexts has not been extensively explored.

This gap is particularly concerning given the increasing emphasis on learner-centered pedagogies and assessment practices that promote autonomy and motivation.

The existing literature consistently emphasizes the critical role of classroom assessment practices and intrinsic motivation in EFL learning environments. Thomas and Oldfather (1997) argue that social constructivist assessment practices not only support students' intrinsic motivation but also enhance self-determination and competence. Berger (2014) applies Self-Determination Theory to EFL contexts, identifying autonomy, competence, and relatedness as essential components for fostering intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, Gan et al. (2019) found that interactive informal assessments between teachers and students, as well as student self-assessments, serve as the most potent predictors of intrinsic motivation in EFL classrooms. Finch (2012) advocates for the implementation of Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) in EFL settings, suggesting that such practices promote autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and self-esteem while simultaneously developing critical thinking and language awareness.

Collectively, these studies support the notion that assessment practices centered on student autonomy, self-determination, and interactive feedback can significantly enhance intrinsic motivation and learning outcomes within EFL contexts (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997; Berger, 2014; Gan et al., 2019; Finch, 2012).

In light of these insights, this study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of teacher, self, and peer assessments in EFL contexts to delineate their relative effectiveness in promoting learner autonomy. By grounding this discussion in relevant theoretical frameworks, such as Self-Determination Theory, this paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of how diverse assessment practices can be strategically employed to foster learner autonomy in EFL classrooms. This exploration not only addresses the identified research gap but also highlights the potential implications for pedagogical practices aimed at enhancing learner outcomes in EFL education.

Rationale for Assessing Autonomy in EFL Contexts

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, the assessment of learner autonomy is crucial for several reasons that significantly impact language acquisition, motivation, and overall educational engagement. Learner autonomy involves students taking charge of their learning processes, setting goals, and engaging in self-assessment (Shelton-Strong, 2018; Liu, 2015). It encompasses responsibility, engagement in learning activities, and perceived ability, with motivation strongly correlating to these components (Liu, 2015).

The real key in attaining effective second language acquisition is the ability of learners to access autonomy. A student who is able to make decisions in his/her learning will experience an increased sense of responsibility to the learning material, and apply their language skills in meaningful contexts. This self-regulated approach fosters a deeper understanding of the

language and leads to improved proficiency. Thus, according to the definition, learning by oneself enhances personal experience with language.

When it comes to training in a particular language, motivation is essential, and autonomy evaluation with the students' own achievements plays a crucial part in increasing the motivation levels. Independently motivated students are more committed in education (Liu, 2015). Autonomously motivating students may easily become involved in self-assessment, which assists in increasing their intrinsic motivation since they are prone to follow their growth and their possessions from the path. Through self-assessment and peer assessment, the students feel proud and better reflect on their process of growth, therefore feeling that the teacher has created an atmosphere in which it is feasible to brag about one's achievements. Such success would increase the intrinsic motivation of students while further encouraging them to learn the language as more students stick it out in the face of a struggle.

Peer assessment not only encourages the cultivation of autonomy but also provides learners chances to interact socially and work together. Through assessing peers' work, students learn to think critically and understand different perspectives in dealing with learning problems. As Kartika (2018) suggests, working in this collaborative environment allows students to learn from and appreciate each others strengths and weakness. This interdependence that peer-assessment creates for the most part, leads to a better overall learning experience; hence, improved language skills and social competence as stated by Shelton-Strong (2018).

Autonomy assessment provides valuable feedback to educators regarding their teaching practices and the effectiveness of their teaching strategies. A combination of assessment (standardized test), teacher assessments, self-assessments and peer assessment can help teachers keep a lookout for the challenges a student may face and when to change their instructional strategies. The feedback loop promotes how instructors can fit the demands of each student in EFL contexts and enhance language learning more efficiently.

Self-assessment helps the students to build in critical reflective skills that are so important for lifelong learning. Simply the ability to take stock in what you have accomplished and grown, followed by pinpointing moments you wish to improve upon builds stronger self-regulatory and goal setting. This skill is particularly important in language learning, where continuous practice and adaptation are necessary for success. Teaching students how to assess their learning fosters a culture of self-improvement and resilience (Alrabai, 2021), equipping them with the tools to navigate their educational journeys independently.

Finally, the evaluation of autonomy adds to the promotion of a self regulated environment with greater flexibility for students and self efficiency for teachers. Students are most attentive and ready to learn in a most profound and active manner when a sense of ownership for what goes on in the classroom is embedded within them. It is this active engagement that aids them

not only in language but also imbues them with self-belief and self-efficacy that are crucial in any academic endeavor (Kartika, 2018; Shelton-Strong, 2018).

To sum up, the scope of work considering autonomy in the EFL context is more than just a mechanical exercise; it is one of the principal activities that is aimed at creating optimal conditions for language mastery, motivation, systematic interaction, and didactic facilitation. Language is a skill that has to be worked on continuously. For instance, discovering, nurturing and celebrating learner autonomy through certain assessment approaches can enable teachers to lay a stronger foundation for simultaneous development of other aspects to achieve a pleasant learning environment for students where they can flourish in their English language learning activities (Liu, 2015; Shelton-Strong, 2018). Such an explanation supports the relevance of evaluating autonomy for the improvement of students' results and does such responsiveness in the context of the more complex and general problem of EFL teaching.

Literature Review

Definition of Learner Autonomy

In EFL environments, learner autonomy describes learners' ability to assume responsibility for their learning, which is vital to nurture proper motivation for maintaining the willingness to learn the language. This literature review examines the interrelation of various types of assessment: teacher assessments, self-assessments, and peer assessments, in relation to their role in the fostering and measuring learner autonomy. The results of teacher assessments are in most cases dictated by previously established criteria and/or learning goals which in turn may restrict student's scope of initiative and engagement. In contrast, learners are not the only ones who 'assess' themselves, but also have been given the responsibility to control their learning process (Mohammed & Hussein, 2023). Such involvement during lessons encourages a greater sense of autonomy, especially when students are encouraged to evaluate their peers' work and contribute more critically to the discussions, thereby promoting an engaging atmosphere of the classroom. In addition, this section highlights the need to use different forms of assessment when devising appropriate evaluation strategies that facilitate autonomy and do not detract from the process of language learning.

Previous Studies on Assessment Types in EFL Contexts

Recent studies have examined various assessment approaches tailored for EFL contexts, revealing the complexity of evaluating language proficiency. An important student-centered strategy in writing is the peer assessment in writing, which is also a good practice, but the use of peer assessment can be complex as it means students needing to engage with constructive commentary and evaluation processes (Gupta et al. 2019). There exists a requirement for organized training in peer review and extended instructor support for students and teachers to maximize the advantages of the assessment.

The impact of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) towards assessment is also high. A CEFR, assists in consistently defining levels of language in proficiency and evaluation of the language in speaking or writing. Proficiency and performance assessments aligned with CEFR standards have emerged as predominant evaluation types in various educational contexts. Research indicates a positive correlation between CEFR-oriented assessments and academic achievement; when assessments are aligned with established proficiency standards, students tend to perform better academically (Mirici & Şengül, 2020). This alignment clarifies expectations for both instructors and students, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the assessments utilized.

Moreover, the landscape of classroom assessment practices in ESL/EFL university settings showcases considerable variability influenced by factors such as assessment planning, coursework weighting, and method selection (Cheng et al., 2008). The rise of alternative assessment approaches, particularly qualitative methods, has gained prominence in research within EFL settings (Saadi, 2024). These diverse strategies not only aim to enhance language learning but also seek to provide a comprehensive evaluation of students' abilities, offering a richer understanding of their language development. By adopting a variety of assessment approaches, educators can create a more holistic and engaging learning environment that addresses the diverse needs of EFL learners.

Methods of Assessment in Language Learning

Assessment in language learning includes a variety of approaches geared toward promoting learner independence and autonomy. Teacher assessments are often considered a standard method though these can be negatively designed as solely grade-based and can discourage self-direction. On the other hand, self-assessment helps students view their learning in the past, plan personal goals, and work towards the goals making them more independent (Phan, 2021).

Assessment by students fosters collaboration among individuals with diverse skills and promotes critical thinking (Mohammed & Hussein, 2023). The integration of these methods creates a comprehensive framework that enhances learner autonomy, as evidenced by studies indicating that peer assessment has a more significant impact on EFL learners' autonomy and speaking skills compared to self-assessment (Ashraf & Mahdinezhad, 2015). Nonetheless, the implementation of self and peer assessments can be time-consuming and resource-intensive (Mohammed & Hussein, 2023). Despite these challenges, these assessment types are increasingly integrated into language classrooms, yielding benefits such as heightened learner responsibility and improved language performance, particularly in writing skills (Mohammed & Hussein, 2023; Phan, 2021).

Teacher Assessment

Teacher assessment literacy is crucial for enhancing learner autonomy and academic performance. Research indicates a positive relationship between teachers' assessment literacy, professional identity, and effectiveness in fostering student autonomy (Yazdani & Ghasedi,

2021). However, many educators lack the necessary skills to cultivate autonomy effectively, highlighting the need for ongoing professional development in this area (Yazdani & Ghasedi, 2021; Varatharaj, 2018). Long-term professional development programs have been shown to significantly improve teachers' assessment literacy compared to short-term workshops (Koh, 2011). Enhanced assessment literacy facilitates more effective assessment design, positively impacting students' learning outcomes, particularly in writing development (Larsari, 2021). Furthermore, teachers with higher assessment literacy are better equipped to implement educational policies such as School Based Assessment (Varatharaj, 2018). These findings underscore the importance of integrating assessment literacy and autonomy-promoting practices into teacher education programs to improve overall educational outcomes.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment is crucial to achievement and success in different cultural setups in context of learning. According to a study by Shen et al. (2020) peer assessment improves students' self-concept and reduces their dependence on teachers, and enhances speaking skills in language learning (Ashraf & Mahdinezhad, 2015). It facilitates cooperative learning as well as critical thinking skills development essential for self-regulated learning (Sambell et al., 2006).

The integration of technology, such as Moodle-based workshops, can increasingly support peer assessment activities, helping students to access and review peer inputs flexibly (Rosyid & Vonti, 2022). In a learning activity, students are able to look at each other's work and provide an assessment which helps broaden their understanding of the topic being covered. It is not unusual for the effectiveness of peer assessment to differ across the types of learner autonomy but generally, peer assessment outshines self-assessment in building the autonomy and other necessary skills one might need (Ashraf & Mahdinezhad, 2015; Shen et al., 2020).

Self-Assessment

Thus, the key to developing learner autonomy is self-assessment and reflection. This is true in the language classroom, especially where learners are given the opportunity to assess themselves and reflect on goals and failures (Warchulski, 2015; Mohammed & Hussein, 2023). Ultimately, the results of the studies show that assessment can be done, online and face-to-face, which allows students to achieve autonomy as learners (Thanh, 2020; Mohammed & Hussein, 2023) but also helps with better student writing and achievement as well. The only caveat is that when students assess themselves, they provide a bit of feedback to teachers, which downplays their abilities in how well they think they've done on certain projects. Yet this is only a small fraction of the feedback given, and as the majority of self-assessments validate teacher assessments, this makes the assessment process and final outcome reliable and successful (Warchulski, 2015). Some teachers believe that self-assessment is a time-taking activity and at the same time much challenging to apply (Mohammed & Hussein, 2023). Therefore, it is beneficial for enhancing autonomy in language learners and directing effective motivation toward language ability, specially for the case of listening and speaking skills (Thanh, 2020).

This section emphasizes the importance of a multi-dimensional approach to assessment in developing learner autonomy in the context of EFL learning. It is evident that enriched educational environment in which students' agency and language learning outcomes are enhanced, requires integration of teacher assessment as well as self and peer assessment. In future, researchers should aim at addressing the gaps in the present literature by identifying the assessment frameworks, and investigating the effect of emergent technologies on various assessment practices.

Method

Design

The present study has a quasi-experimental design, in which quantitative research methodologies is incorporated to explore learner autonomy among EFL learners. In this research, three groups of EFL learners undergo pretest and posttest; the independent variables are self, peer and teacher assessment as different assessment types, and the dependent variable is learners' autonomy. The self-assessment group is indicated by SAG, Peer Assessment Group is shown as PAG, and Teacher Assessment Group is abbreviated as TAG. This quantitative methodology offers a comprehensive understanding of the research issue under investigation.

Participants and Setting

Convenience sampling was adopted for participants' selection. 110 EFL learners from the Goyesh English Language Private Institute in Karaj, Alborz were targeted, and from among them, 90 female learners were selected based on their scores on Preliminary English Test (PET). The scores of the target participants were within one standard deviation below and above the mean score. The participants were all Persian speakers aged between 13 to 22. This age range was chosen to address different groups of learners that undergo different stages of cognitive as well as affective development. This can ultimately affect their level of engagement and responsiveness to assessment methods. Convenience sampling is employed in this study which may raise concerns regarding the generalizability of the findings; However, this approach was necessarily taken due to the context of the study and the target population. The participants were then randomly assigned to three groups, each comprising 30 learners: the peer-assessment group (PAG), teacher-assessment group (TAG), and self-assessment group (SAG).

Instruments

Preliminary English Test (PET)

The respondents were given a sample PET to provide a coherent set of test-takers according to their respective levels of proficiency. It is divided into four sections, namely: reading and writing, paper one; listening, paper two; and speaking, paper three. Reading, lasting 1.5 hours, comprises five sections, with 35 questions, each section assigned to specific areas of reading skills. It assesses the candidate's proficiency in written English at various levels and constitutes 25% of the overall mark. The writing section is divided into three parts with eight questions; it

tests the fundamental ability to write English and also constitutes 25% of the total mark. The listening section takes 30 minutes, has four parts of dialogues and monologues, and contains 25 questions, which account for 25% of the total mark. Finally, the speaking section takes 10-12 minutes and includes an interaction with both an examiner and examinee. It measures the ability to communicate effectively and also accounts for 25% of the overall grade. Although PET is a validated test with regard to language proficiency, there are a number of limitations to its construct validity in relation to specific constructs of learner autonomy, meaning that it basically measures proficiency and not autonomy.

Learner Autonomy Questionnaire

A valid and reliable learner autonomy questionnaire based on Gholami (2016) was used as both a pre-treatment and posttest to assess students' autonomy. It includes 44 statements across nine characteristics related to language learning, with responses measuring students' control over various aspects of their learning. Participants spent approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Chosen for its comprehensiveness and content validity, the questionnaire was piloted with 20 similar students, retaining its original content and demonstrating acceptable reliability ($r = .81$). Three TEFL Ph.D. holders verified its content validity, leading to adjustments based on their feedback. However, it is important to note that while the questionnaire is designed to assess autonomy effectively, its self-reported nature may introduce bias and may not capture the full spectrum of learner autonomy experiences.

Research Objectives and Questions

The current study will attempt to investigate the impact of different assessment tools: teacher-assessment, self-assessment, and peer-assessment on the autonomy of Iranian EFL learners. More specifically, this research aims at finding out how effective these assessment methods are in developing learner autonomy among intermediate level female learners at Goyesh English Language Institute.

The research seeks to address the following questions:

1. To what extent does teacher-assessment increase learner autonomy among intermediate female EFL learners at Goyesh English Language Institute?
2. How does self-assessment support the development of learner autonomy in that same setting?
3. What is the impact of peer-assessment on the self-directedness and regulation of learning processes for these learners?

Data Collection Procedures

A total of 110 intermediate EFL learners participated; of these, 90 with respective PET scores were selected. This number was randomly allocated to one of three assessment groups: a teacher assessment group, a self-assessment group, and a peer assessment group; 30 learners in each group. Each group was instructed in the writing of essays in five genres of essays, with

identical instructional materials, time limits, and learning conditions. The instruction process entailed a two-step process approach: one session was for idea generation through brainstorming prior to beginning the actual writing process.

To allow for a reliable evaluation process, a standardized checklist adapted from Meletiadou (2021) was applied to all participant groups across the board. In the TAG, the trainer carried out evaluations of the students' written compositions. In the SAG, learners conducted self-evaluations based on the same criteria. Similarly, in the PAG, students assessed their peers' work after receiving training on how to use the checklist. Training in peer and self-assessment included explicit instruction on using the checklist, followed by practice assessments under instructor supervision to increase reliability and validity.

After the course, the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire was again administered to the students to measure possible changes in students' perceptions of their writing abilities. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. First, for each assessment, means and standard deviations were calculated as descriptive statistics. Then, a one-way ANCOVA was employed for the post-test means among the three groups to test the hypothesis of the study. Before the administration of ANCOVA, data were checked for normality using skewness and kurtosis indices to meet the assumptions for parametric testing. Covariates of the learners' primary proficiency levels and demographic features were also included in the analysis to control for the impact on the final results.

By analyzing quantitative data from the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire, this research aims to provide a detailed understanding of the way different assessment procedures impact student perceptions of autonomy. The findings aim at informing EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and stakeholders about the advantages of integrating various assessment practices to encourage a more autonomous learning environment. This study, therefore, seeks to enrich the existing literature on language assessment and learner autonomy within EFL contexts.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study, focusing on the comparative analysis of teacher, self, and peer assessments in fostering learner autonomy among intermediate female English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at Goyesh English Language Institute. The results are structured to address the research questions concerning the extent to which different assessment modalities enhance learner autonomy, the specific contributions of self-assessment, the impact of peer assessment on self-directed learning, and the perceived effectiveness of each assessment method in promoting autonomy. The analysis begins with descriptive statistics of the Performance Evaluation Test (PET), which serves as a foundational measure of learner outcomes in this context.

Table 1 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics for the PET scores among the participants.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics of the PET*

	N (Total)	Mean	SD
PET	110	29.84	2.26

The descriptive statistics of the PET reveal that the average score of the participants is 29.84 with a standard deviation of 2.26. The results indicate a generally homogeneous performance among the group, with most participants scoring near the mean. Further analyses, such as inferential statistics or comparisons across different groups, may provide additional insights into the factors influencing PET performance and can inform educational or training interventions aimed at optimizing performance in future assessments.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics; Pre-test of Learner Autonomy*

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pre-test				
Peer-assessment	11.55	.011	11.296	11.552
Self-assessment	10.82	.013	10.623	10.818
Teacher-assessment	11.36	.012	11.011	11.356

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Autonomy-pretest= 11.2433

As displayed in Table 2, peer-assessment group had the highest mean on pre-survey of LA before receiving treatment ($M = 11.55$). This was followed by teacher-assessment ($M = 11.36$) and self-assessment ($M = 10.82$) groups, respectively.

The report analyzes post-survey data on learner autonomy following three assessment treatments: peer-assessment, self-assessment, and teacher-assessment. The findings indicate that peer-assessment is the most effective method, with a mean score of 14.28 and a narrow confidence interval, reflecting strong participant agreement on its positive impact. Self-assessment follows with a moderate mean score of 12.75, while teacher-assessment has the lowest mean score of 11.64, characterized by a wider range of participant opinions. The results highlight significant differences in perceived learner autonomy across the assessment strategies, suggesting that collaborative peer evaluations enhance autonomy more than teacher-led assessments. The report calls for further exploration of these perceptions and methods to integrate the strengths of peer and self-assessment into teacher assessments to better support learner autonomy.

Table 3*Descriptive Statistics; Post-test of Learner Autonomy*

Posttests	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Peer-assessment	14.28	.017	14.223	4.278
Self-assessment	12.75	.019	12.641	12.748
Teacher-assessment	11.64	.019	11.429	11.635

To answer the research question, a set of ANCOVA was run to compare the EFL students' means on post-survey of learner autonomy.

Table 4*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects*

Dependent Variable: Autonomy Post-survey						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Corrected Model	3781.485	5	756.297	25.896	.000	
Intercept	365.764	1	365.746	11.369	.000	
Group	1048.642	2	524.321	17.458	.000	
Pre-survey	1058.751	1	1058.751	39.984	.000	
Error	1657.048	86	19.268			
Total	326941.521	90				
Corrected Total	2567.851	89				

According to Table 4, it turned out to be significant as the observed sig (.000) is lower than .05, thus, demonstrating that there is a significant difference among the three groups in terms of their autonomy level. However, as ANCOVA alone does not indicate the direction of the differences among the groups, pair-wise comparisons were done to decide about the direction of this difference. Table 5 below, summarizes the results of these comparisons.

Table 5
Pairwise Comparisons

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Peer-assessment	Self-A	1.700*	1.29	.000	.570	2.82
	Teacher-A	1.20*	1.29	.000	.658	1.82
Self-assessment	Peer-A	-1.70*	1.29	.000	-.820	-2.03
	Teacher-A	1.50*	1.29	.003	.965	1.62
Teacher-assessment	Peer-A	-1.20*	1.29	.000	-1.32	-.070
	Self-assessment	-2.50*	1.29	.003	-3.62	-1.37

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Based on the results depicted in Table 5, it was indicated that EFL students had a significantly higher mean score on post-treatment of autonomy after receiving peer-assessment treatment ($M = 14.28$) than engagement in self-assessment ($M = 12.75$). Furthermore, EFL students had a significantly higher mean score of learner autonomy after receiving peer-assessment ($M = 14.28$) than the group who received teacher assessment ($M = 11.64$). EFL learners who engaged in self-assessment treatment ($M = 12.75$) showed a significantly higher mean score than their counterparts who received teacher-assessment ($M = 11.64$); Therefore, there was a significant difference among the means of the groups in the posttest.

Discussion

The present study reveals significant disparities in learner autonomy among EFL students contingent on the type of assessment treatment employed. Particularly, participants who were treated by peer assessment showed the highest scores on the post-treatment of learner autonomy, followed by those engaged in self-assessment, while the teacher-assessment group scored the lowest among all. These findings are in line with previous investigations indicating that both peer and self-assessment positively influence learner autonomy (Ashraf & Mahdinezhad, 2015; Gholami, 2016; Shen et al., 2020). Nevertheless, previous studies have emphasized the benefits of peer assessment and our findings suggest that the cooperative nature of this assessment method may be a notable factor in enhancing autonomy among EFL learners. Peer assessment not only encourages students to be responsible for their own learning but also helps them to develop critical thinking skills that are necessary for lifelong learning.

Notably, qualitative interviews conducted with the peer-assessment group underscored an enhancement in assessment literacy. This is suggestive of the idea that peer assessment not only encourages autonomy in EFL learners but also equips them with the required skills to critically assess their learning procedure. On the other hand, participants in the self-assessment group indicated significant improvements in metacognitive skills. This finding is in line with Ebrahimi et al. (2021), who noted that self-assessment helps to higher metacognitive awareness and autonomy. Whereas both peer and self-assessments enhance learner autonomy, their function and mechanisms are generally different. While Peer assessment encourages social interaction and collective responsibility, self-assessment promotes individual practices and self-regulation. This finding denotes that a combination of both assessments types may be most effective in enhancing learner autonomy.

The results from the teacher-assessment group do, however, raise a concern in that the students depend on instructor assessment a bit more; such reliance could be detrimental to the development of intrinsic motivation, self-regulated learning, and just learner autonomy in general. This directly challenges the idea that teacher assessment is somehow a gold standard and provides a pathway towards a balanced view that respects agency in students.

These current findings are also supported by various other studies that point to the effectiveness of various assessment methods in promoting both cognitive and metacognitive strategies. According to Ebrahimi et al. (2021), peer assessment, maybe the most helpful of them all, appeals to a lot of writing skills development.

The collaborative nature of peer assessment enhances student engagement, as articulated in previous literature. Additionally, prior research indicates that peer raters often adopt stricter evaluative criteria than self-raters, underscoring the role of collaboration in improving both assessment accuracy and social skills (Chang et al., 2012). This raises important questions about how peer assessment can be structured to maximize its benefits, suggesting a need for further investigation into effective training and implementation strategies.

In synthesizing these findings, it is evident that well-implemented peer assessment significantly enhances learner autonomy among EFL students and aligns with existing literature advocating for the efficacy of collaborative assessment methods (Ashraf & Mahdinezhad, 2015; Ebrahimi et al., 2021). However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study, particularly regarding the generalizability of the results. The sample was exclusively drawn from the Tehran and Alborz provinces, suggesting a need for further research that incorporates a more diverse participant pool across varying proficiency levels and diverse social and educational backgrounds. Additionally, the gender homogeneity of participants and the quasi-experimental design may limit the findings' applicability. A broader approach could yield insights that are more representative of the wider EFL learner population and enhance the applicability of the findings across different educational contexts.

The evidence presented supports the assertion that peer and self-assessment methods are instrumental in fostering learner autonomy while also highlighting the need for ongoing investigation into the dynamics of assessment practices in language education. The incorporation of these assessment techniques can substantially contribute to developing not only language skills but also essential metacognitive abilities among learners, ultimately leading to a more engaged and autonomous student body in EFL contexts.

Conclusion

This study has revealed the effects of the three different types of assessments, namely, teacher assessments, self-assessments, and peer assessments, on the autonomy of Iranian EFL learners. From results, it is shown that peer assessment encourages learner autonomy more than the other assessment types, while teacher assessment very much inhibits the development of independent learning. Some insights given by other participants also show that peer assessment very often promotes collaborative learning contexts and enhances the level of assessment literacy, whereas self-assessment aids in developing metacognitive skills and self-regulation.

Such considerations are extremely relevant for EFL teachers and curriculum developers. Thus, they can maneuver toward having much more engaged and autonomous learners by incorporating peer and self-assessment strategies into their teaching. Educators are encouraged to implement training for students on how to peer-assess each other properly, as well as to introduce self-assessment tools that encourage reflection and metacognitive awareness among learners. Future research should also look into the impact these assessment strategies have on diverse educational contexts such as those with geographic and demographic diversity for greater insight into their effectiveness and adaptability.

This study contributes to insight on learner autonomy in language education and motivates teachers to implement some innovative assessment practices, thus empowering the EFL learners into a self-study setting. In view of this study's limitations, future research may build upon these results to produce a more comprehensive understanding of how assessment practices can be structured for effective nurturing of learner autonomy across different settings.

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