

Teachers' and Students' Perspectives of English Language Assessment

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to address the current understanding of English Language assessment of both the teachers and students in a private language institute in Sirjan city, Iran. To achieve the purpose of the study, four English language teachers were invited for individual interviews. In addition, nine intermediate and pre-intermediate level students were chosen for two focus group interviews. These interview responses were compared to probe the related understandings and experiences of both the teachers and students.

Keywords: teachers' and students' perspectives, English language, assessment

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a process of identifying and gathering information about learners, in order to seek ways of addressing needs and means of overcoming barriers to learning. Teachers need to have a clear understanding of different language tools including the strengths, weaknesses and appropriate use of each tool and processes, so that they can make informed judgements about how to use these tools with English language learners (MoE, NZ, 2006).

Assessment of learning (often described as summative assessment) aims to provide a well-founded, clear and up-to-date picture of a student's current capabilities or attitudes, progress overtime or further growth needs and potential, Crooks (2002). For decades, this summative approach to measuring bits of English Language knowledge has been in place, despite evidence of its negative washback effect (Riazi and Razavipour 2011). Assessment for learning is focused on enhancing student development, and often involves relatively unstructured interactions between student and student or teacher and student rather than a planned formal assessment event Crooks (p. 241, 2002). Teacher assessment is essentially an informal activity: the teacher may pose questions, observe

activities, evaluate pupils' work in a planned and systematic or adhoc way (Mccallum et al., 1993). Viewed from a sociocultural view of learning teachers' assessment literacy is taken to be dynamic process that brings together teachers' assessment knowledge, assessment skills, and their conceptions of assessment in relation to their contexts of practice (DeLuca et al. 2016; XU& Brown 2016).

In the Iranian EFL context, there is evidence that English teachers' language assessment literacy is, at least, partly responsible for teachers' failure to comply with a mandated reform requiring teachers to assess communicative-competence rather than discrete bits of language knowledge (Razavipour & Rezagah 2018). In regard to English language testing, Iran has a rather long tradition of discrete-point English tests that test bits of language knowledge rather than the ability to communicate. In fact, to every class teacher and student in Iran' the notion of a language tests is the same to a set of discrete-point, often multiple choice, written tests items (Farhadi and Keramati 2009). Chappius (2008) suggested that both the teachers and the students use formative assessment results to make decisions about what actions to take to promote further learning. They indicate that assessment is an on-going dynamic process.

This study aims to address the understandings of both teachers and students about English language assessment in Arman English Institute in Sirjan, Iran including the challenges teachers find in implementing English language assessment in the curriculum. Implications for policy to modify the English assessment system will be discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Black & William, (1998b) advocate that teachers need to know about their students' progress and difficulties with learning beyond what test results reveal. Therefore, teachers need to find out the types of activities that are useful to provide feedback to the students. The term 'assessment' refers to all those activities undertaken by the teacher and such assessment become formative assessment when the evidence is used to meet the students' needs. Messik furnished scholars with a theoretical aid to study the relationships between tests and their educational impacts. However, the relationship has increasingly proved to be complex, messy, and multifaceted (Alderson and Hamp lyons, 1996; wall and Alderson 1993; Watanabe 2004).

Impact of formative assessment on teacher and learning

Formative assessment is often considered to be one of the most effective strategies for promoting high student performance. It is also important for improving the equity of student outcomes and developing students 'learning' to learn skills. It is a way of identifying the present position of learners and teachers about learning and teaching, to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to go there. Studies show that formative assessment is vital component of classroom practice and its use can raise standards of achievement (Black & William, 1998b).

The recent shift from assessment of learning (AOL) (i.e., use of assessment to determine the extent to which students have achieved intended learning outcome) to assessment for learning (AFL) (i.e., when teachers use assessment evidence to inform their

instruction). (Black & William 2018, p. 3) has substantially affected the conceptualization of teachers' assessment competencies (Brook hart 2003). Hence, in-formed by sociocultural theories, the context of assessment has been integrated in the conceptualization of teachers' assessment literacy including "teachers' assessment knowledge, conception of assessment, and their responses to the external contexts embedded with actual constraints and affordances in the environment" (Xu & Brown 2016, p. 157).

Previous Studies on English Language Assessment

In the literature of language testing, all three components of LAL including assessment knowledge, assessment skills, and principles of assessment (Brindley 2001; Davis 2002) are considered essential for different stakeholders. Therefore, a body of research has investigated LAL for language teachers. Among the published works, Firoozi (2019) investigated the assessment needs of 15 Iranian EFL teachers in the wake of the new assessment reform. In-depth interviews were conducted. In addition, documents related to the curriculum reform were also closely examined. Inductive coding of the data showed that to meet the demands of the noted reform, teachers' current perceptions of language assessment need to change. Furthermore, teachers need training in both knowledge and skills of language assessment.

Concerning Razavipour's (2018) study, four teachers participated in a focused group interview session. Teacher-made tests were also collected and scrutinized. The results revealed that managerial, institutional, and individual barriers stand in a way of the reform. First, the managerial technocratic approach to reform implementation has caused teachers not to take ownership of the reform. Secondly, at the institutional level, two obstacles were identified in the way of reform. Finally, regarding professional competencies, teachers appeared to be largely unprepared to conduct language assessment consistent with the LAR demands.

A study conducted by Hamid and Baldauf (2008) with six rural secondary school teachers in Bangladesh which conducted semi-structured interviews, which CLT often fails to create sufficient opportunities for genuine interaction in the language classroom as most of the teachers are not familiar with the aural-oral method of CLT. Furthermore, all six teachers in this study, including the training recipient, admitted that they have limited understandings how to design speaking activities during practice and production.

As negative note, the curriculum guidelines mainly focus on summative assessment for assessing students' performance and this testing regime unable to assess many of the important objectives of students' needs. The fact that there is no system for formal testing for speaking and listening potentially undermines the levels of English language skills of the students and for that reason they face difficulties in higher level education. To help narrow this gap, the current study seeks to investigate how to engage the learners in the formative activities to motivate them without rewarding marks/grades for their activities and whether English as foreign language (EFL) teachers have the required competencies to conduct language assessment.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative approach to investigate the essential elements of English language assessment of both the teachers and students in Arman English Institute in Sirjan.

Participants

The participants of this study were four language teachers for individual interviews and nine students for focus group interviews (FGI) in three levels of intermediate, pre-intermediate and upper in Arman English institute. The participant teachers included four females, all of whom were from Sirjan, a city in the southwest of Iran. They all held M.A degree in English language teaching or TEFL. The researcher invited them in to semi-structured interview (see Table one for more information about teachers for semi-structured interviews). Their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 10 years, respectively. The teachers were considered 'key in-formants' (Patton 2014) who had the necessary knowledge and experience to supply relevant information about the phenomenon under investigation in this study.

Data collection

The data for this study were collected from two sources: semi-structured, interview and focus group interview (FGI). To understand students' opinions and needs in classroom assessment, data collection was conducted through focus group interviews. Compared to semi-structured interviews, FGI offers a number of advantages to qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009). In the first place, it is economical; larger volumes of data can be collected in a shorter period of time. The relaxed environment and the sense of community participants allows them to feel safe during on FGI facilitate and caused more natural spontaneous data. Finally, the interaction among the participants often leads to the elicitation of data not necessarily anticipated by the research (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009).

However, to understand teachers' perspectives and needs in classroom assessment, data collection was conducted through semi-structured, audiotaped interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 20 min. interview questions focused on (a) the participants' perceptions of the assessment policy expectations for classroom teachers (b) teachers' assessment needs to assess English language skills. The audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim by the interviewer after each interview session.

Table 1. the information of the teachers for semi-structured interviews

Serial No	Name of the Participants	Teaching Experience	Gender	Education	Interview the teachers faced
1	Razieh	10	Female	MA (English)	Twenty mins semi-structured interviews for each teacher
2	Fatemeh	7	Female	MA (English)	Twenty mins semi-structured interviews for each teacher
3	Zahra	5	Female	MA (English)	Twenty mins semi-structured interviews for each teacher
4	Samira	3	Female	MA (English)	Twenty mins semi-structured interviews for each teacher

Data analysis

According to Taylor & Bogdan (1998) "data analysis in qualitative research is a difficult part as it requires thinking and reasoning, rather than mechanical and technical process. It is an inductive process" (p. 140) drawing on iterative collaborative analysis process (Hall et al. 2005). At first the author examined the interview transcriptions and documents inductively to get the data about the teachers' and students' opinions of English language assessment in Arman English institute. Interview transcripts were analyzed through iterative process involving reading, focused coding, reflection, writing, and rereading to make connections between codes. Some data belonged to multiple codes. Therefore, codes with a high degree of shared construct were reframed into broader themes. To ensure inter coder reliability, the induced codes, themes, definition of the themes, and examples were discussed by the authors. As such data on the basis of assessment knowledge and assessment perceptions were grouped into three headings such as 'understanding of language assessment', 'practices and assessment of language skills' and 'major challenges' and each main heading then contained several sub-headings. However, there were some unasked questions/information and these unasked and unanswered questions provide limitation of the data analysis.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were analyzed and considered under headings related to the research questions. For this analyzation the data has been grouped under three main headings such as 'Understandings about language assessment', 'Practices and assessment of language skills' and 'Major challenges related assessment, curriculum and school context'. To elaborate these heading for each of the main headings it has been considered different sub-headings.

Awareness in language assessment

This section has been designed under two sub-headings. Teachers' awareness and Students' awareness in assessment. All of the teachers who participated in this survey were agreed about assessment necessities that is, their focus on the relationship of learning and teaching by mediation of assessment. But their assessment literacy was not enough to design well-formed summative assessment. In the other hand, although majority of students' awareness was only limited to summative form of assessment (as final exam) and they had not enough understanding about formative assessment but the necessity of assessment was clear in their point of view.

Similarities between teachers' and students' beliefs and understandings

There are similarities between teachers' and students' beliefs and understandings about assessment. Both the teachers and the students agreed that classroom interaction, sharing learning outcomes and giving feedback bring positive change in students' development.

Teachers' and students' understandings of the relationship between teaching and assessment

There is a close link between teaching and assessment. Teachers in this study described that teaching and assessment are interrelated and that one influences another. For example, Raziye and Fatemeh mentioned that teaching and assessment were very closely related and through assessment the teacher is able to identify students' problem, plan and give more effective feedback. These teachers also added that assessment helps students to understand their learning. Another teacher added that it also improves motivation and positive effect of teaching. Focusing on the importance of assessment is such an important event that three of the teachers considered without assessment, teaching and learning cannot take place. Generally, less teachers can identify students' needs and learning outcomes. Without assessment students cannot respond or be aware of their own learning needs. However, most students in this study articulated the links between teaching, learning and assessment. They revealed that through assessment students are able to identify their own problems and try to overcome them and teachers can plan to address them.

Teachers' and students' understandings of curriculum guidelines and the existing assessment system

The teachers in this study were concerned with addressing the gap between the curriculum guidelines and existing assessment system. In order to achieve a standard assessment system, they were willing to express their personal opinions regarding this issue. All four teachers considered that though the present curriculum guidelines focus on the assessment of four skills, examinations are based on mainly two skills; reading and writing. They added that although listening and speaking are not included in the assessment process, majority of students are aware of the importance on these two skills but they faced some problems in this progress. One of the teachers remarked that the curriculum focus is on the summative assessment. She considered that these assessments should be revised as they are more likely to develop students' creativity and emphasize on students' performance during the term. Accordingly, another teacher expressed a need for teachers to undergo training in order to build teaching capacity. The teachers reinforced the need for policy makers and curriculum designers to consider the issue of inclusion listening and speaking skills in the assessment process and they considered that external examiners should be appointed to reduce teacher bias. In addition to this, Fatemeh, one of the head teachers in Arman institute, suggested that in order to achieve the best outcomes, teachers should test the listening and the speaking skills at regular intervals during the term and assess on the basis of their performance over a period of time instead of assessing in only one session as an oral exam. Students will then be more motivated to develop their listening and speaking skills. Priority should be given to both written and oral strands of language. All nine students in this study identified a real need to include the assessment of oral language in the classes. In response to the present curriculum guidelines and current assessment system, students expressed some meaningful opinions regarding the issues. For example, one of them considered that the present assessment system is not appropriate for speaking and listening skill. This is why

students do not pay much attention to listening and speaking skills. Besides this, another student thought, “our assessment system is not properly appropriate as we are just focusing on our text books; we are focusing much on grammar but not vocabulary and other skills”. She acknowledged that “though curriculum guidelines emphasize the four skills, the examination is based on two skills. In this case all the skills should be given equal importance”. All nine students therefore identified a real need to include the assessment of oral language in the classes because they believed.

Teachers’ and students’ understandings of classroom culture in assessment practices.

Teachers’ understandings of changes of assessment activities in the curriculum.

‘Practices and Assessment of language skills’ Teachers’ assessment of reading skills.

Teachers’ assessment of writing skills.

Teachers’ current assessment of listening and speaking skills in the classroom.

Different assessment strategies by the teachers

Students’ practices of reading and writing assessment

Students’ opinions about present assessment of reading and writing

Students’ practices of listening and speaking skills

The way English teachers’ help students’ learning practices.

The challenges teachers face in language assessment

The teachers face many challenges while assessing the students in the classroom. Some of these challenges are related to students’ ability, some are related to students’ and teachers’ knowledge background, while some are related to institutional factors.

The challenges that Teachers face towards change in assessment

All six teachers in the study admitted that assessment for learning is very essential for students’ development. However, Samira, one of the teachers, considered that, in Arman most teachers like a traditional approach, and use mother tongue in the class and focus on completing syllabus within the limited time. She elaborated that the present curriculum and text books are based on a communicative approach which focuses on student centered activities, interactive approaches and more student participation. Yet the ELT situation does not reflect this. Most of the teachers are untrained and not familiar with the CLT approach. She stated that most teachers continue to emphasize grammar and translation methods. They have a lack of knowledge on different activities and also their command on English is not sufficient. The attitude of the teachers, students and parents can also be as a negative factor. Teachers’ do not want to change partly because it is always a challenge to break with traditional approaches. Fatameh mentioned that in most cases students are not willingly to take part in the class activities and want to focus on completing the syllabus and acquiring good scores in the examination. Teachers think that in the new communicative approach it is difficult to involve the learners in activities because of not having suitable classroom environments, physical facilities and modern teaching aids.

The challenges of prioritizing curriculum requirements

Most teachers in the study comment that teachers of Arman institute are faced with extensive curriculum requirements. Fatemeh, one of our teachers, was insistent that the nature of the problem was that most teachers focus on examination-oriented teaching and students obtaining good scores. Because of having a large syllabus which has to be completed by the due time outlined in the guidelines, it becomes difficult for them to put emphasis on activity-based learning. She elaborated further claiming that another main reason behind this is that the attitude of the authority and also the attitude of the guardians who want that the teacher to complete the course/syllabus in time. Their main focus is to prepare the students to get better scores in the examination; they do not concern themselves with the actual learning of the students. The performance of the institution is measured on the percentage of failure/success of students in the public examination. Zahra, another teacher, agreed with Raziye's acknowledgement that syllabus should be shorter as they cannot complete the syllabus within the limited time. They cannot practice activities and the skills in the classroom. Fatemeh mentioned that another problem was our examination system as students are always trying to gather information related to the examination, although the teachers are focusing on the skills, the students are not always receptive. She also added that the examination system needs to be moderated and teachers need to get the appropriate focus. Some students in the study also commented that because of having huge workloads the teacher cannot pay much attention on the text-based activities, rather he/she tries to complete the syllabus within the limited time and prepares the student for the examination.

How the teachers attempt to overcome the challenges

In this study some attempts to overcome challenges has been suggested. First it needs a lot of effort on the part of teachers and requires some attitude changes as well. Teachers need training in creating English teaching- learning environment in the classroom, curriculum guidelines need to be changed, and teacher -student ratio in the class should be reduced. Zahra an English teacher, illustrated this to some extent in the following words. "To overcome the drawbacks of reading and writing, I request the students for peer checking and as a teacher I give them common feedback. Subject based skilled and trained teachers should be appointed". Raziye considered that that teachers needed to be prepared and familiar with new ideas: "to overcome the drawbacks, teachers should take preparation before coming to the class and use new concepts to motivate the students". She also thought that changes were needed at a curriculum level to make what was to be covered more realistic and manageable, as she said: "Teachers who take the class should create English teaching learning environment in the class. Teachers should change their attitude. I think, syllabus should be shorter as we cannot complete the syllabus within the limited time. We cannot practice more activities in the class. So, the syllabus should be moderate". Fatemeh elaborated saying that she tried to motivate the students with her own techniques, although she tried to focus on practices of language skills, students tried to focus on examination-oriented learning. She said: First of all, she (teacher) tries to improve herself with her techniques and they are trying to develop some teaching aids. They (teachers) are thinking how they can attract the students'

attention, preparing attractive teaching aids. Another problem is the present examination system as students are always trying to look for information related to the examination; they are focusing on the skills, so the students are not eager to take the things. She commented that "changes are taking place as teachers are being trained. Now, we have the idea that formative assessment is more effective than summative in the classroom situation. Assessment is for making the students correct and develop his/her teaching". She claimed that English is a tool, and teachers should think how they can apply the tools. Zahra expressed the similar comments. As a result, they are trying to change from the traditional, teacher dominated method to the new approaches. Some more innovative institutes have already started teaching using participatory approaches. To bring a change, it needs a lot of support from the stakeholders and also funding from private sectors. Two of the teachers considered that for assessing reading and writing, previously seen text should not be given to the students because their use of strategies and interpretation of meaning will be affected through having read the text previously. So, totally unseen/ unknown texts should be given to the students to assess comprehension. Some teachers in the study considered that if the policy included testing the listening and speaking skills in the process-oriented examination, it would be easier for the teachers to motivate the learners to practice these two skills in the class. Today most institutes have become test-based institutions rather than learning based institutions. Some teachers come from a poor educational background and this is also a major problem. Therefore, she thought that observation, monitoring and accountability should be enhanced to develop overall standard of language teaching and assessment. To conclude it could be argued that various negative factors work as the barriers to assessment and implementation of language assessment in Sirjan, Iran. All four teachers and the students in this study agreed that teachers' competency level and confidence, students' level of understanding and their socio-economic background, classroom setting, modern teaching aids, lack of connection between the classroom practices and that of assessment system are the main challenges. Therefore, to overcome challenges in language assessment both the teachers and students believe that the managers should pay more attention to these areas and provide sufficient funding. An effective language policy should be developed to create opportunities for training for the teachers aimed at building their capacity.

DISCUSSION

The selected students for the focus group interviews were not necessarily typical of students in Sirjan. A representative group of students were selected with varying degrees of competence in English, who were able to express clearly their ideas (mostly upper-intermediate level). Both the teachers, students and parents of each school were very aware of the necessary changes they needed to implement. From the findings it was evident that the teachers had developed clear understandings among themselves as a group. The students also had a high level of consciousness about their own learning needs that were expressed in the data. Students in this study showed very positive attitudes about their understandings of assessment and their comments indicated that the purpose of assessment is for better learning, that classroom interactions were essential and they

also believed that the teacher -student relationship is vital for developing learning. They suggested that classroom interactions and better relationships with the teacher made them confident and empowered them when working together in the classroom. The evidence from the study indicated that it was not only the teachers who are involved in the language assessment process, but also the students who are actively constructing knowledge about language assessment through their prior and current experience with assessment tasks, and in their interactions with each other. The study revealed that current assessment tasks do not emphasize all the aspects of the curriculum that focus on the continuous evaluation process. Likewise, assessment does not address a wide range of important skills, knowledge and understandings, comprehension ability and development of critical thinking. This study used semi- structured individual interviews with four English teachers and focus group interviews with two groups of students (nine). These were highly situational. To date very little research has been done in the field of English language assessment, in terms of how teachers have developed their understandings on assessment, how they face the challenges, and how they adjust their practices. The data provided rich and up-to-date information of English language assessment operating in Sirjan language institute in Iran. Both the teachers and the students were of the same opinion that successful assessment creates learning opportunities for the students, develops teacher- student relationships and provides guidelines for continuous change and improvement which can therefore enhance the quality of teaching.

Suggestions to overcome some of the challenges

The teachers in the study appreciated and acknowledged the fact that the stake-holders have recently taken a number of initiatives to ensure the quality of education and to bring some positive changes in the assessment system (from summative to formative). The curriculum specialists willing to develop training programs for English teachers, head teachers, educational administrators both in governmental and private educational systems. To train teachers as an on-going process the institutes need to develop permanent infrastructure and institutional capacity. In order to meet the current and future needs and challenges of the socio-economic developments of the country, a paradigm shift in the educational system not only in Sirjan but also in all parts of Iran is continually undergoing in reforms.

The results of this survey show that in an institute like Arman in Iran the development of language assessment and language planning needs to be provided more attention in order to improve the teaching in English classes. For example, the English curriculum would shift from teacher-oriented to student-oriented approach. Class activities such as presentation skills, class participation, and appropriate tasks should be given priority to improve learners speaking and pronunciation. As teachers plan, they would identify the purpose of assessment, plan the assessment itself, involve students in self-and peer assessment, know the curriculum and collaborate with other teachers when possible. In Iran the new education policy in primary school assessment was established in 2014 to address some major changes in the formal educational system. However, it is time to consider necessary changes in private institutional assessment as well as English classes

at formal schools. From the analysis of the results of this study it is evident that the teachers and the students consider that assessment is an inseparable part of teaching. The teachers in this study mentioned that they are still not well informed about the system of formative assessment and its efficacy. Besides this, because of the gap between the stated objectives of teaching English and the assessment system, communicative based language teaching is not working well because of teachers' level of competency and want of effective classroom environment. Both the teachers and students in this study had not enough information on formative assessment. Teachers considered that there is a hopeful change in their value, beliefs and attitudes and they are trying to bring a change from the traditional to the new approaches and they welcome to training classes related to assessment literacy.

CONCLUSION

This research has been conducted in order to explore teachers' and students' understandings of language assessment at Arman institute in Sirjan, Iran. The study of literature review which has done in Iran revealed that summative assessment seems to have the main role in the language assessment system. The study shows that both the teachers and the students consider formative assessment provide better learning opportunities for increasing students' motivation. However, as there are apparently many barriers for effective teaching to occur, teachers find challenges in implementing formative assessment practices. Both the teachers and the students have addressed the need to include all the language skills in the assessment process, and they have given greater focus on developing physical facilities in the classroom for better language teaching.

At the end the finding of this survey showed that both the teachers and the students have willing to shift from a traditional approach to a new communicative approach of language teaching. A hopeful change is noticed in the practice of classroom teaching. Both the teachers and the students appreciated the different teaching -learning strategies practiced by them which helped them with better understandings. Both the teachers and the students emphasized the value of assessment. More students' engagement using different learning activities such as group work, pair work, role play, demonstration for more effective learning and they addressed the need for some changes in assessment process, the need to reduce student- teacher ratio and overcome the classroom barriers by developing physical facilities. The findings revealed that both the teachers and the students are very much aware of their learning needs (for example for improving their speaking skill) and they can identify the gap between the curriculum guidelines, by their suggestions, and the present assessment system and have addressed the need for training for building teaching capacity of the teachers.

The implication and recommendations in this paper highlights a number of challenges that need to be addressed if continued progress in the implementation of a broader understanding and forms of assessment is to be made. These issues include the implication for training classes as well as implications for resourcing and policy.

In implication for resourcing materials as some sources are the essential components for effective classroom teaching. For developing the students' motivation and to engage them in the activities and to make the classroom more interesting in authentic atmosphere teachers need to use teaching aids frequently. However, the classrooms in private institute in Sirjan are not well equipped with resources/teaching materials. Because of financial constraints of the institutes, the stake-holder or teachers cannot provide these materials. As a result, teachers are sometimes limited in providing effective learning opportunities. Therefore, to ensure quality in teaching more support from the part of the private sectors are immediately needed. For developing listening and speaking skills of the students, the education authority could create better opportunities for the students to practice in the classroom using modern technology such as audio/video, and TV. In implication for policy a well- defined language teaching policy should be formulated with an effective curriculum that includes the guidelines for assessing all the four English language skills, in not only private institute but also in formal school education. Input from teachers, students, parents and administrators may create a greater awareness of the need to develop a more effective system for the overall development of language skills so that the students are better equipped to meet challenges of second language learning, particularly in oral competencies. A focus on the selection, recruitment and the professional development of teachers of English is crucial. It is necessary to adjust the teacher training curriculum so that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement a range of assessment practices. If real changes in teaching and language assessment throughout the language institutes are to happen, policies need to be strengthened and a deeper investment in implementation must occur. The stake-holders need to address the gaps between the breadth and depth of English language curriculum to ensure economic development and more equitable outcomes.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study were location sample which has been taken from the city. It could be better if the samples were chosen from the diverse sources all over the country in Iran and other countries. Another limitation in the study was the sample size (four English language teachers and nine students from upper-intermediate level) have been included for semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. More teachers and students from diverse groups could reflect more accurate results for the study. The last limitation, classroom observation was not included in the study that could have provided rich data on classroom interactions and realities what is going in there between the teachers and the students.

Further study in different aspects of assessment can solve many unanswered questions that have arisen in this regard. This paper was based on quantitative format, mixed study and taking a large sample of teachers and students from different areas of the country could provide more insight about the current language assessment situation. In conclusion, to improve the ELT situation in Iran institutes, curriculum guidelines will need to be changed and all the strands of English included in the assessment process. Therefore, some reforms of the examination system are required. The development of resources and more training for the teachers are integral to the success of these reforms.

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