
An Evaluative Case Study: Reflection-focused Assessment

MEHDI MAHDAVINIA

Islamic Azad University, Tehran South Branch, Iran

BADRI MODARRES TABATABAEI

Islamic Azad University, Tehran South Branch, Iran

ALI RAHIMI

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, University of Kashan, Kashan, Iran

Bio Data:

Ali Rahimi is an assistant professor in TEFL. He obtained his PhD degree from Shiraz University, Iran (Persia) 2004. He is now affiliated with the Department of Foreign Languages at Kashan University, Kashan, Iran. He is interested in Sociolinguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics, and Materials Development. He has published five books on Critical Discourse Analysis, Reading skill, Globalization, Translation Theories, and Teaching Mythologies. He has written some articles and presented papers at both national and international conferences.

Abstract

This study is an assessment procedure which focuses on the learners' reflection administered as an alternative assessment strategy at a Teaching Language Course, Azad University, Tehran South Branch at graduate level. In fourteen sessions, thirty participants were involved in a progressive learning through reflection-focused assessment and learner-centred education in contrast to the traditional approaches to education. This inquiry has expanded as a reflective, ongoing, formative, performance and authentic assessment. The purpose is concerned with the worth of an ongoing assessment program as a whole by focusing on the learners' reflective outcomes and making them more reflective, self-regulated and providing the sense of individuality. The results are used to determine whether to continue or terminate reflective-focused assessment at graduate levels of education, and also to help language teachers and learners to be aware of the effectiveness of different types of assessment. The significance of the study is to create an anxiety-free atmosphere for the learners to reflect their knowledge, educational strengths and weaknesses and difficulties and also to assess and evaluate both teaching and learning process by the use of learners' reflections. Providing timeliness feedback, note taking by the teacher and preparing remedial programs

based on the learners' reflections and needs are other great significances of the study. The study explores to what extent reflection-focused assessment satisfies the objectives of the curriculum and real needs of the learners and make them reflective. A qualitative design was used to gather the data through triangular procedure: reviewing available documents such as reflective essays, course evaluation papers and teacher's notes, observation, voice and video recording and interviewing. Data were analyzed by descriptive and narrative methods. The findings showed that most of the curriculum objectives were satisfied; participants mastered the skills, grasped the related knowledge, become reflective, self-regulated learners and their sense of individuality were satisfied. The conclusion showed that reflective-focused assessment could be an approach focusing on the process rather than product and also it could work as a viable means to evaluate any level of education.

Keywords: alternative assessment, formative assessment, timeliness feedback, progressive assessment, reflection- focused assessment, reflective essay

Introduction

Assessment is a *sin qua non* for any effective teaching/ learning process and have defined and focused on from different perspectives. Payne (2003) stated that "assessment is the systematic evaluative appraisal of an individual's ability and performance in a particular environment or context". Sommer (1989) defines assessment as the process of finding out who the student are, what their abilities are, what they need to know, and how they perceive the learning will affect them (cited in Peñaflorida, 2002). Nevertheless, for years this unrivaled segment of educational process has been pulled apart from teaching stream and use of mere tests to measure the final product downgraded the capacity of assessment. Increased focuses on assessment manifested capabilities and high quality of assessment. Assessment trends such as "Alternative assessment" integrate assessment into instruction and learning. Reflection-focused assessment is a type of alternative assessments and achieves via integrating instruction and assessment. It focuses on both teacher and learners reflection throughout the educational process.

The problem is that, although many new teaching and assessment approaches and methods have been emerged, the assessment method in Iran has stopped behind the past trends. The mention of assessment strategies tends to be absent from what the teachers describe; very often assessment is, at best, an afterthought to instruction (Popham, 2008). Gibbs and Simpson (2004 to 2005) stated that "the influence of assessment in teaching means that 'there is more leverage to improve teaching through changing assessment than there is in changing anything else'" (cited in Bloxhem & Boyd, 2007, p.3). Thus our educational system like many other countries needs assessment methods which support learning through student involvement in assessment that prompt feedback and are flexible, unbiased, fairness, progressive and formative. The requirement is a

remedial system of assessment which integrates all parts of the teaching/learning process that is planning, teaching and assessment and could put clear goal to achieve, make the teacher and learner reflective, fill the instructional gaps, show learners' strengths and weaknesses, give timeliness feedback, provide learner-centred education and pay attention to learner's educational needs.

This project concerns a summative evaluation of a reflection-focused course which focuses on the learners' reflection. It was administered as an alternative assessment strategy which was conducted in a teaching skills course in graduate level of Iranian TEFL learners at Azad University, South Tehran Branch Faculty of Humanities English Department by a professor who views assessment as a part of language teaching/learning process. The purposes of the study is practically concerned with the worth of an ongoing assessment program as a whole by focusing on process, plan and the reflective outcomes of the learners on satisfying curriculum objectives, learners needs, making them self-regulated, and promote their sense of individuality. The significance of the study is to create an anxiety-free atmosphere for the learners to reflect their knowledge, educational strengths and weaknesses and difficulties and also to assess and evaluate both teaching and learning process by the use of learners' reflections. Providing timeliness feedback, learner-centred assessment, individualization and preparing a remedial programs based on the learners' reflections and needs are other great significances of the study. To guide the project the researcher posed three questions.

1- To what extent do reflection-focused assessment techniques (portfolio keeping, writing reflective essay, discussion, group works, and talking about experiences) satisfy the course objectives and learners' educational needs?

2- To what extent does the course provide the learners the opportunity to become reflective, self-regulated, self-assessment and to find sense of individuality?

3- To what extent do the learners internalize the course materials to use in real-life situation by the reflective practice?

The results will be used to determine whether to terminate reflective-focused assessment at graduate levels of education and also researcher hopes that in this way can help the language teachers and learners to be aware of the effectiveness of different types of assessments especially reflective practice and could shed light on the dark path of traditional assessment methods.

Literature Review

Assessment is an integral part of any educational process promising beneficial of backwash effects on the syllabus, materials, and teaching (Tomlinson, 2005). "Assessment and learning are two sides of the same coin" (National Research Council [NRC], 1996, p.5) and the object of this value is learners' learning. For years, assessment was made apart from the instructional process and chiefly standardized tests have been relied heavily on factual knowledge and conceptual understanding and used as a device to measure the learners' final products; however, these methods do not accurately measure students' problem-solving, reasoning, critical thinking skills, work habits, ability to cooperate, or sense of

responsibilities. Focus on alternative assessment increased to alleviate the assessment problems over the last decade and in order to help students become reflective and independent learners. Thus experts offer a creative format for evaluating students' understanding (Loungo-Orlando, 2003). Learners are expected to perform an activity, produce a response, or create an idea. According to Huerta-Macías (1995) "alternative assessment is an ongoing process that involves the student and teacher in making judgments about the student's progress in language using by non-conventional strategies" (cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002, p.337). "Ongoing and systematic use of formative assessment and formative feedback is critical to reduce existing learning gaps among student population" (DiRanna, et al. (2008). Formative assessment provides information about students' achievement which allows teaching and learning activities to be changed in response to the needs of the learners and recognizes the huge benefit that feedback can have on learning (Black & wiliams, 1998a; cited in Bloxham & Boyed, 2007, p.15).

A particularly useful type of performance or formative assessment that involves collecting and evaluating students' works is reflective practice or reflective assessment. Theories behind the reflective practice are rooted in ancient Greek thought. It is deduced from constructivist theories of John Dewey and Jean Piaget. Dewey considered reflection central to all learning experiences, enabling "... us to act in a deliberate and intentional fashion... (Dewey 1993, p.212)". In this method reflections and learning process are assessed and evidences from these assessments are used to inform learning goals, guide instruction, and revise assessment. On integrating assessment practices and satisfying learners' educational needs in reflective method, William and Thompson (2008) articulate this view: The "big idea" is that evidence about learning is used to adjust instruction to better student needs- in other words, that teaching is adaptive to students learning needs (p.64). Learners become the ultimate users of classroom assessment information that is elicited to improve learning (Black & William 1998, p.139-148). In this method learners are not evaluated or compared with the other but their relations are cooperative. Gass and Mackey stated that "individualization is a learner-centred approach to teaching in which (a) goals and objectives are based on needs of individual learners and (b) allowances are made in the design of curriculum for individual differences in that students wish to learn, how they learn, and the rate at which they learn "(cited in Bishop, 2009, p.254). They are not mere examinees, have active role in learning, involved in the assessment process and into classroom experience and offered the opportunity to reflect upon what are learning. In relation to self-assessment through reflective practice Earl and LeMahieu (1997) say that "assessment is not owned by tutors or anyone else." While is unlikely that students will become competent judges of quality on their own, effective assessment practices empower students to become experts assessors (pp.149-167). The role of teachers in learner-centered method is facilitator. John Dewey (1964) advocated placing the learner at the center of experiences, and defined the teacher as the leaner's "co-partner and guide in a common enterprise-the child's education as an independent learners and tinker". (p.10). Timeliness feedback is of critical importance if students are to be engaged in reflective assessment processes (Bond,

2006). It is mutual process that provides precious information for both teacher and learners to monitor and regulate themselves and also fill the gaps if any.

Hatcher and Bringle, (1997) "believe that effective reflection activities (a) link experience to learning objectives, (b) are guided, (c) occur regularly, (d) allow feedback and assessment, and (e) include the clarification of values" (p.157). Classroom management and interaction is other vital aspect in this method. Creating an anxiety-free atmosphere for the learners to reflect their knowledge, educational strengths and weaknesses and difficulties will help both teacher/learners and learner/learners interaction. Piaget theorized, learners' interactions lead to structural changes in how they think about something as key assimilate and accommodate new information (Gredler, 2001).

Regarding previous research two case studies are presented in this part. They extracted from Richards and Lockhart (1996/2007), thus only page numbers are given in this case.

1- The project was carried out by two teachers in a primary school to investigate learners' strategies by focusing on their reflections. They were interested in learning strategies used by successful learners in their ESL classes and to find how the learners were responding to their teaching. They identified two children, both age seven, who they believed were good language learners and seemed to be learning English more successfully in the class. The data collected through the class observation, learner's journals and interview. The results was not very surprising but was useful to confirm and explicit some things which they knew intuitively. They have learned useful strategies to use in order to more effectively facilitate their students' learning. (pp. 69-71)

2- This project was carried out by a secondary school teacher in an EFL context. He was interested in finding out whether his students would use English more if they had more say in what and how they were learning. Also he felt that if students' played a larger role in planning the types of activities used during lessons, they would be more motivated and hence use the target language to a greater extent. Since he was interested how negotiation of the curriculum affects the use of the target language, he posed a question to guide his action project: Does negotiating the lesson content and structure with students increase their use of the target language? Data was gathered through questionnaire, activities such as games and observation. Results showed that negotiation of activities with his students was successful. The students' use of the target language increased as well as their motivation to learn English. His beliefs that (a) students learn best by doing, and (b) students will learn a language successfully if they are able to have some into what and how they are learning were confirmed. (pp. 91-92)

Methodology

The main concern of this study is to evaluate the effect of reflection-focused assessment on satisfying the curriculum and the learners' objectives and providing the opportunity for the learners becoming self-regulated, self -assessment and

finding sense of individuality. Thus the independent variables is the reflection-focused assessment (its techniques) and dependent variables are curriculum objective which is satisfying educational needs of the learners, making them self-regulated, self-assessment and individualisation, and internalizing knowledge by the learners.

Participants

Because of the nature of the study which is a case study, a TEFL class at MA level including approximately thirty students were involved in this project. The population sampling was non-randomization sampling method. The classes were conducted in Faculty of Humanities, English Department of Islamic Azad University (Tehran South Branch). Mean of the participants' ages was 30 and from both genders. The participants are almost at the same level as long as their background in general English and education is concerned, thus they were considered almost homogenous. Class participation was once a week, each session was 90 minutes and almost 14 to 16 sessions were conducted during the semester.

Procedure

Based on the nature of the assessment method and the objectives different techniques were applied throughout the course. To explain the nature of the course and activities a part of a Learner's reflective essay is presented bellow.

. . . . our professor gave us our syllabus paper to read individually for five minutes and then he talked about, analyzed and explained our tasks. Different tasks were included in the syllabus paper such as studying the course materials, writing one reflective essay for each session, writing an argumentative essay at the end of the course, presenting a lecture in the same subjects, writing and conducting a lesson plan for one language skill, writing course terminology and its annotated references. He stated that each session we will have a lecture based on each session previous topic which is remedial to fill the gaps and he will give us an argument paper which is included argumentative activities and we should participate in the activities such as discussions, drawing, and group works and so on. He also explained the portfolio keeping and that all documents of the activities should be collected in our portfolio and will be given to him at the end of the course and after assessment and giving marks by him it will be returned to us. . .

It should be mentioned here that in order to guide the participants in their journey toward self-regulation and self-assessment through writing reflective essays, a self-assessment and reflection checklists were distributed among them. The procedure of data collection is based on the type of data required. Qualitative data gathering was applied in this research. Reliability, or consistency, in qualitative research is often ensured through *triangulation* means. It refers to the combination of methodologies to strengthen a study design (Patton, 1987; cited in Huerta-Marcías, 1995). Thus qualitative data were gathered through using of available documents such as reflective essays and transcribed voices and videos, questionnaires, interview meetings and observation. In this regard first step was collecting available documents such as reflective essays, drawings, syllabus

writings, lesson plans, voice and video recordings and the paper of arguments which every session were given to students by the professor. Evaluation questionnaires that are distributed by the professor and were filled by the students at the end of the course are the other part of the available documents. Then professor's and participants' questionnaires which are included multiple-choice items were distributed and collected as second step. Also a few open-ended questions were prepared to interview with the professor and the participants. The content of recorded interviews were transcribed and used as data in this research. It should be mentioned that to increase the reliability and validity of research besides the experience of the researcher as a participant and an observer, two other experts as observer perused the recorded documents and a part of their reports is also documented in this research. The data were analyzed, described and narrated through findings and discussion part.

Findings and Discussions

Available Documents

Available documents such as reflective essays, drawings and transcription of recorded voices that are mirrors to reflect the depth of the learners' understanding and learning are used as evidences to support or reject the hypothesis and to answer the posed questions. Because of limitation some samples of data are presented below.

Samples of participants' reflective essays.

- *"...I think motivating students is demanding task due to complexity of human being. They come with different images of learning another language and different needs and purposes, but de motivating eager students is very easy!!!"*

Feed-back: Yes I do agree.

- *"...to sum up we used to be real learners not consumers of thrown-away methods produced by other. I believe it time to go back to our origin." **Feed-back:** How? You might elaborate on this. What kind of identities you are talking about? Lets' discuss it.*

- *"...words by themselves have no value; it is the process of stringing them together that gives them value. **Feedback:** "nice metaphor" "How they are strung together determines the level of value. Now our education system is becoming a system that memorizes the dictionary." **Feedback:** "Yes you are right."*

- *"...assessment is another part of education. Learning process doesn't happen without assessment. Reflective essay that is written in this course is a kind of assessment that actually can be called self-assessment." **Feedback:** "Yes, exactly."*

- *...the professor showed us a picture of a baby who was looking at his foot. He was touching his foot curiously and trying to learn about it. Showing the picture the professor wanted to make us know that this is what actually happens in education. **Feedback:** "yes." Educators should make learners motivated and curious about learning, make them to have their own questions and try to find the answers to these questions rather than just raising questions and giving the answers as what happens in teaching. Educators should make the students to think and have their*

own ideas." **Feedback:** "yes". In this way teachers will help learners to grow mentally. Actually students should learn how to learn. The old teaching system is not accepted anymore. It does not meet students' needs. **Feedback:** "Yes I do agree. Very good."

- ...another point which was discussed last session was the fact that some learners resist to work cooperatively. Some love to be isolated and think they can have better results. But it's a good teacher duty to apply strategies to motivate those learners too, although we should bear in mind when motivating learners we shouldn't impose our ideas. Everyone is free to have his/her own way of thinking and opinion. **Feed back:** "It was wonderful; I enjoyed reading your concise paper very much. Would you choose your presentation as "Holistic education"? I can provide you with enough sources if you want."

- "... I liked this technique because I was involved with it more than other techniques; moreover all four skills receptive one (reading and listening) and also productive skill (writing and speaking) were all activated." **Feed-back:** "Yes of course and thank you."

- "I think I've made progress in my writing skill since the beginning of this semester by comparison to previous semester. Would you please tell me your idea about my writing reflections?" "Thanks." **Feedback:** "Yes I do believe that you have progressed very much. Furthermore I believe that you enjoy all characteristic of a real teacher."

- ...later on, you asked each and every one of the students to share their experiences about how they teach grammar in their own class. Almost all my classmates participated in that discussion while I was miles away; actually there was something wrong with me, that is why I couldn't express my idea very well. So I feel O we you an apology. **Feedback:** "I believe you had and always have a good contribution in class." ...and also I should hereby share my experience about how I teach grammar. Actually in my classes, grammatical accuracy is an integral part of proficiency. **Feedback:** "yes." But it is always a means to an end rather than an end in itself. I know students have different learning styles so I use different techniques. First I try to involve them in guessing the rules if they can't guess the rules, then I explain them. **Feedback:** "Wonderful strategy."

- Honestly your words and my friends' ideas enlightened a new path in my mind to work more on my classes and even myself (Soul), too. I believe "as a man sows, so shall he reap" but I want to know how should I sow? I know I have to find my way by myself but how? Could I ask you to share your experience with me or at least tell me how should I've done this mission?! **Feedback:** "Sure. It would be a pleasure for me to share my experience with you. We can discuss them along with your interest and come to a conclusion."

- ... I like two by two and group works, because they offer this opportunity to all participants to speak and share their ideas, and also it is more learner-cantered than traditional method where teachers were the only addresser. In general I would like to use these techniques in my classes because I think it is good for learners who do not often participate in class discussion and would prefer to be silent (or better to say listener). **Feed-back:** "O.K. yes. You can use it and share your experience."

- ...I have experienced the Alternative Assessment in one of my classes.

Our teacher uses the new paradigm in education. He has own lesson plan and his own curriculum. In this class there is not any anxiety, and stress. We all love it. Each session we participate in the class, listen to the teacher and other peers. We discuss about the topics, sometimes we right something and read it to the class. We give lectures based on the syllabus, we ask and answer questions, and correct each other. We give our ideas, talk about our feelings and desires, we also criticise each other, and in fact we have a real-world in which we live altogether. This is a kind of view known as holistic view. The main assessment in this class is done bases on our portfolio which are consisted of our reflective essays and our activities. To write these essays we should study some books and articles and also we can use internet to get new and fresh information. Students exchange their information can also they support their ideas.

• ... One o f the students disagreed that by giving autonomy to the students, teachers can't follow their syllabus and manage the class properly. He believed that students cannot decide correctly on the material to be thought and it is teachers' duty to arrange a lesson plan to be followed in the class." **Classroom feedback:** The professor answered as a teacher you are aware of what your students don't know. You are aware of their needs, so as teachers you have to give them a chance to be aware, put them in a situation to meet their own needs. Other student said a good teacher has a great role in motivating the students. **Classroom feedback:** The professor mentioned actually when a teacher tries to help students to be motivated he is helping himself. **Feedback:** "Mr... You have developed a rigorous reflective paper."

In order to answer to the research questions: The limit samples extracted from learners' reflective essays show participants' reflectivity, self- assessment, and self-regulation. The feed-back which is provided to each paragraph, middle of the paragraph and whole essays stimulate the learner's sense of individuality. It shows them that they are not compared with each other but as an individual their reflection and knowledge are evaluated based on their needs and capabilities. The available data show that the learners internalize the grasped knowledge and can use them in real-life situations.

Samples of drawings.

Figure 1. Reflection toward holistic view

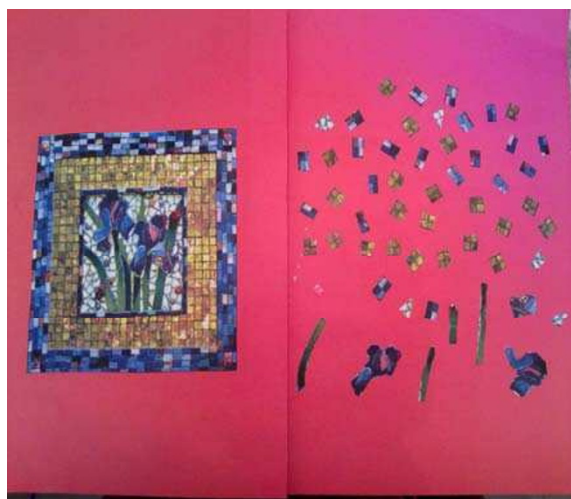


Figure 2. Reflection toward holistic assessment



Figure 3. Reflection toward education and its education and components



Figure 4. Reflection toward holistic theory



1. Reprinted by permission in J. C. Richards & W.A. Renandya (2007, p. 344).

The figures 1 to 4 are small parts of participants' class reflections towards the teaching methods, assessment and holistic view. Drawings show that the participants internalize the materials and provide new images from those views. They manifested clearly that some of the learner's psychological attributes such as creativity, individuality, and reflectivity are satisfied in this method that are completely ignored in traditional methods.

Course evaluation paper used by the teacher at the end of the course. At the end of the course (Teaching Language Skills) evaluation papers which were called "Participants Feedback Sheet" were distributed by the teacher in order to gather the participants' opinions the course. Some of the open-ended questions are presented below.

1. What, if anything, did you like about the course?
2. What, if anything, did you dislike about the course?
3. What, if anything, surprised you about the course?

Sample of the given answer answers to teacher's evaluation question one.

"The issue I like the most was cooperation in the class."

"Cooperative learning, free to say our opinions and experiences and the most interesting was the lecture about child-centred education, which helps me to learn about children's world and use them in my life."

"I like the course because of the environment of teaching. You allow the student to state their point of view freely."

"In my opinion, the best element was to create an atmosphere to recall our insights, experiences and maybe our studies about teaching skills."

"Engaging and involving the learners during course activities encouraged all the learners. We were not passive students. This was what satisfied me."

The answers were different but the majority of the participants are in agreement with the method and had positive view toward the course, satisfying the objectives and its ongoing procedure.

Questionnaires

Professor's and learners' questionnaires were distributed in order to evaluate the course outcomes. The data derived out from the questionnaires are analyzed as follows:

Research question no. 1. To what extent do reflection-focused assessment techniques (portfolio keeping, writing reflective essay, discussion, teacher note taking, group works, and talking about experiences) satisfy the course objectives and learners' educational needs? Item 3, 12, 14, 15, 21, and 43, 44, 48, 49, 50 of the professor's and learners' questionnaire respectively are referred to in order to answer research question No.1. The sum of the answers is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Professor's and the Learners' Views Regarding Question No.1

Participants	Scales				
	<i>Quite a lot</i>	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>little</i>	<i>Very little</i>
Professor	5	----	----	----	---
Learners	59	44	27	10	
Total %	42.6	29.3	18.	6.6	3.3

The data in Table:1 show that about 71.9% of the participants (included professor and participants) marked *Quiet a lot* and *A lot* scales in the questionnaire and supported that the content of the curriculum are covered by the reflective assessment method and learners' needs were satisfied. About 18% of the participants marked the *Average* scale in order to accept the case. In *Little* and *Very little* scales, 9.9 % of the participants put asterisks to reject the case. Then the majority of the answers are positive to first research question.

Research question no. 2. To what extent does the course provide the learners the opportunity to become reflective, self-regulated, self-assessment or to find sense of individuality? In order to find appropriate answers to the second question in this research, items 2 ,4, 6, 7,10, and 18 of the professor's questionnaire and items 3 to 11, 13, 16, 17, 24 to 31, ,33, 35 to 42 and 47 of the learners' questionnaire are concerned. The answers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Professor's and Learners' Views Regarding Question No.2

Participants	Scales				
	<i>Quite a lot</i>	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>little</i>	<i>Very little</i>
Professor	4	2	----	----	---
participants	366	281	150	55	19
Total %	42.2	32.3	17.1	6.3	2.1

he data in Table: 2 show that about 74.2% of the participants (included professor and participants) marked *Quiet a lot* and *A lot* scales in the questionnaire and supported

that the course provided the learners the opportunity to become reflective, self-regulated, self-assessment or to find the sense of individuality. About 17% of the participants marked the *Average* scale in the questionnaire in order to accept the case. In *Little* and *Very little* scales, 8.4% of the participants put asterisks to reject the case. Then majority of the answers are positive to the second research question.

Research question no. 3. To what extent do the learners internalize the course materials to use in real-life situation by the reflective practice? Items 11, 13 and 34, 49 of the professor's and learners' questionnaire are referred to respectively in order to answer research question No.3. The sum of the answers is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Professor's and Learners' Views Regarding Question No.3

Participants	Scales				
	<i>Quite a lot</i>	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Little</i>	<i>Very little</i>
Professor	2	---	----	----	----
Learners	27	21	8	2	----
Total %	48.3	35.	13.3	3.3	0.0

The data acquired from Table: 3 show that about 78.3 % of the participants marked *Quite a lot* and *A lot* scales in the questionnaire that the learners internalize the course materials to use in real-life situation by the reflective practice. About 13.3 % of the participants marked the *Average* scale in order to acceptance the case. In *Little* scales, 3.3% of the participants put asterisks on the questionnaire. In *Very little* scale there is no any asterisks to reject the case. Then majority of the answers are positive to the third research question.

Sample of Interviews

Two interviews were carried out with professor and two/third of the participants who were randomly selected from the participants in the mentioned class. Professor's and three of the participants' recorded voices transcribed and their results are presented here as samples in relation to the learners' knowledge, improvement, needs and sense of individuality.

Interviewer: Do you think that the learners' knowledge; improvement and needs should evaluate as properties of a unique individuals or in compare with the other learners?

Professor: *I believe any individual's improvement should be measured by her/his own reflections rather than by comparing it with other individuals' achievement. Furthermore, learning should be personalized and ought to help any person meet his/her own needs. In my opinion 'compare and comparison' will never show individual's progress along with their own actual needs.*

Interviewer: Did the answers, feed-backs or course activities satisfy your sense of individuality? (It means that the answers or feed-backs had been specialized for you to satisfy your educational needs, your works evaluated without any contrast or analogy with other participants' works and you were perceived as a unique individual.)

Interviewee one: *“Yes, It made me satisfied a lot. That was the first time I’ve been in a class that the Prof. praised for his students’ ideas and their identity. From now on, I really wanna be Unique in my carrier.”*

Interviewee two: *Well to be honest I did not get the underlying meaning of the question that the interviewer is trying to get across. However, based on my understanding I can say as an individual student my knowledge about teaching skills was influenced by the kind of activities done in the course.*

Interviewee three: *Yes, the activities were reviewed by the professor and the proper feed backs and comments were provided for each of us. In this class we have opportunity to reflect our ideas and our perceptions toward the topic under discussion. Each point of view was praised and was paid attention. Our view and activities are not compared with others, and then my sense of individuality was satisfied.*

Interviewee four: *“Yes. It was a good atmosphere in the class. I didn’t feel that I compare to my classmate. We work cooperatively in class. When there is educational problem or misconceptions, enough time and attention were given to each of us to satisfy our needs.”*

Interviewee five: *Well, I could say the course was different from other courses that I had before. There was not any comparison and each of us works for ourselves and beside our friends but not in opposite direction. We could feel that here are no differences between us, I mean that we were equal but were not compared to each other, and our works evaluated based on our improvements and in response to our needs.*

The data derived from samples indicated that most of the participants’ answers were positive to the interview question. It means that the sense of individuality was provided to many of the participants.

Observation

It should be noted that the researcher was one of the participants of the class who participated all the sessions. Because the course procedure explained as a quote of one of the participants in methodology section (procedure), is not repeated here again as observation document, but to promote the reliability and validity of the evaluation the recorded documents were perused by two other experts to observe and evaluate the process. The observer used structured checklists to evaluate what they observed. A part of one of the observer’s points of view toward the course procedure is quoted below.

... the participants can see each other because of semi-circle arrangement of the chair. They could work together individually, cooperatively and in group works. The learners’ participations in the discussions were encouraging. Both the professors and learners’ were involved in education because many teaching experience were mooted. Different aspects of a topic or a component of language were discussed and the teacher as a facilitator cooperatively guided the procedure. Feedback was provided to both teacher and learners mutually. Question and answer and discussion were the prominent characteristic of the class activities. Various activities such as drawing, writings, peer and self-assessments were ordinary activities in this method. Each participant gave the opportunity to reflect his/her ideas. The atmosphere was anxiety-free and full of peace and no one fear to pose his/her reflections. The reflective actives such as reflective essays after review were given back to the participants with feedback and comments. Evaluation and measurement of the participants’ knowledge and

development was based on each participant's reflection not by comparison to the other participants' works or developments. Progressive assessment flowed over whole teaching/learning processes by focusing on reflection...

Conclusion

This study is an evaluative case study that has offered a new insight into the positive effects of reflective assessment which is an alternative assessment and its objectives are to show the nature of reflective strategies. Reflective assessment as an instructional practice means is far away from being a traditional, punitive, and judgmental approach to teaching even at graduate level. It creates a new atmosphere for the class and the course in which the teacher and participants have interactional relations in addition to giving timeliness feedback. The evidences from different sources in this research show that not only the course objectives and learners' educational needs are satisfied but also the participants provided the opportunity to become reflective, self-assessors and self-regulators. In this regard the participant's sense of individuality and feelings brought into account and satisfied. Also the documents show that the students internalized the subject matters and then they can use the grasped knowledge and attained competences in real-life situations.

The study highlights significant implications with respect to teacher/learner education programs in EFL settings. In conclusion, reflective assessment provides evidence of knowledge, dispositions, and skills. They offer authentic information about the progress of students. It can be used as a means of helping students to overcome their shortcomings in learning and become real learners who know and reflect how to learn. In addition to aforementioned benefits the results show that the educational context can be taken into consideration in reflective assessment and it could work as a viable means for evaluation at any level of education, thus implementation of reflective assessment into the education practice is promising. Because this study was a case study and had many limitations, then the opportunity for further studies on different levels and subject matters will be open for others who may like or concern the authentic and alternative assessment methods in Iran.

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