Unveiling the impact of language assessment teacher education on EFL teachers' assessment agency and professional development trajectory: perceptions, opportunities, and challenges

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Abstract

In global trends and current curricular policy reforms in second language (L2) education, there is a great emphasis on repositioning of teachers as assessors and teachers' role as responsible agents in assessment. However, various factors affect the agency of teachers as assessors in the classroom. This study explored the ways English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers perceived the impact of the language assessment teacher education course on their agency as assessors. Likewise, it scrutinized the challenges and opportunities teachers confronted in leveraging the acquired knowledge and skills to enhance their assessment agency and contribute to their overall professional development. As for dataset, this phenomenological study targeted 50 EFL teachers, with 25 participants completing an open-ended questionnaire and the other 25 composing narratives. The research findings, using MAXQDA software (v. 20) for content and thematic analysis, revealed that EFL teachers perceived a significant positive influence of language assessment teacher education courses on their agency as assessors in the classroom. This led to their increased confidence and competence in assessment practices. They found limited institutional support and resources as their main challenges. However, they claimed opportunities would arise from collaborative professional networks and tailored mentoring to effectively apply knowledge and skills gained from language assessment teacher education courses for their professional development. The findings offer valuable implications for language assessment teacher education and professional development initiatives, illuminating the potential predicaments and expediters in enhancing teachers' assessment agency and fostering their continuous professional growth.

Keywords: Assessment agency, Assessment practices, EFL teachers, Language assessment, Professional development, Teacher education

Introduction

Classroom assessment plays a crucial role in supporting and describing the learning that occurs within L2 classrooms (Brookhart, 2004; Looney et al., 2018). Unlike externally imposed accountability testing, these assessments are created by teachers themselves, combining local and external standards (Martin-Kniep & Picone-Cochia, 2009; Wiliam, 2010). According to Segers (2003), effective assessment practices occur when teachers actively engage in the assessment process and share both responsibility and control with their assessors. Active involvement in assessment is essential for teachers' professional development and the enhancement of their teaching practices (Borko et al., 2010).

Existing research has shown increasing interest in the concept of agency in teacher education, including English language teaching. Teacher agency, defined as the teachers' responses to transitions and fluctuations in their instructional environment, is a critical aspect of teaching and teacher education (Pedaste & Leijen, 2020; Wang & Zhang, 2021). From the perspective of Kusters et al. (2023), Ashton (2022), and Ahmad and Shah (2022), teacher agency has a significant impact on shaping pedagogical quality, processes of decision-making, and ultimately student learning outcomes. It also shapes teachers' conceptions and practices of assessment, as they engage in purposeful decision-making or comply with externally mandated requirements (Mansouri et al., 2021; Xu, 2019). As proclaimed by Gao et al. (2018) and Sari (2021), in the field of L2 education, teachers' agentic practices become crucial for overcoming obstacles and restrictions brought about by educational reforms and shifts in instructional trends. Furthermore, Biesta et al. (2015), Meihami (2023), and Polatcan et al. (2023) claimed that teacher agency shapes L2 teachers' career conditions and professionalism.

English teachers have demonstrated agency through practices such as endurance, alteration, and conformity (Le et al., 2021). In the field of education, the ecological approach (Priestley et al., 2015), positioning theory (Davies, 2000), and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989), have been utilized to examine agency. In the ecological approach, agency is characterized as a process influenced by social engagement, directed by experiences from the past, driven by future goals, and implemented in the present (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). This includes examining the various facets of teacher agency such as iterational, practical-evaluative, and projective (Priestley et al., 2015). The iterational dimension encompasses teachers' personal and professional histories and trajectories, while the practical-evaluative dimension includes material, socio-cultural, and structural aspects that influence agency. The projective dimension considers the prolonged and interim objectives and activities that shape teacher agency (Kayi-Aydar et al., 2019).

Despite the increasing body of research on teachers' assessment practices there remains a scarcity of studies specifically focused on the agency of EFL teachers as assessors in the classroom, as well as the challenges and opportunities they encounter in applying their knowledge and skills to enhance their assessment agency and overall professional development. Therefore, the primary objective of this qualitative study was to address this research gap by examining the assessment agency of EFL teachers as catalysts for change and providing insights into the challenges and opportunities they encountered in their professional practice.

Literature review

Teacher assessment agency

Agency is a complicated and multicomponential phenomenon that has been studied in various disciplines. This concept has gained momentum in teacher education, particularly in educational assessment. Bandura (2006) describes agency as the ability to intentionally exert influence over one's own functioning and life conditions. It involves a sense of self-control, self-efficacy, and the vision that one's actions can eventuate some changes. In education, agency refers to teachers' capacity to actively shape and impact their professional practice.

Rogers and Wetzel (2013) emphasize that agency focuses on individuals' capacity to act purposefully and reflectively in their environment. Initially, there was a debate about whether individual efforts or social structures were more influential in shaping agency (Giddens, 1984). It was later recognized that agency is a dualistic concept, where individuals both shape society by their roles and activities and are influenced by the society in which they operate (Archer, 2000). Current conceptualizations of agency give more significance to an individualistic view and underscore the mediating role of human reflexivity (Akram, 2013). An ecological approach to agency gives prominence to the interconnections between individuals and their setting (Larsen-Freeman, 2019), finding them as interrelated and interdependent (Namgung et al., 2021).

Teacher agency is a central aspect of effective teaching and learning. The concept of teacher agency has been discussed in the literature with various definitions provided (Kusters et al., 2023). Teacher agency empowers teachers to engage in self-directed actions and make well-informed choices in their professional practices, supporting them in becoming active agents in their classrooms and making decisions that concur with their professional expertise, notions, and values. Hargreaves (2004), Guerrero and Camargo-Abello (2023) and Polatcan et al. (2023) suggest that teacher agency embodies a sense of responsibility and ownership for one's own professional growth, as well as the ability to adopt, adapt, and diversify in response to changing educational settings. Overall, as a socio-culturally mediated capacity for teachers, agency enables them to enact and make changes in their professional practices (Ghamoushi et al., 2022; Leijen et al., 2021).

To explicate teacher agency and teacher assessment agency, several theories and models have been proposed. One eminent framework that emphasizes the influence of social interactions and cultural contexts on agency is sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). According to this theory, the sociocultural setting in which they work, entailing curriculum, educational policies, and professional networks teachers' agency is shaped by. Another influential framework, proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), is ecological systems theory, which proposes that teacher agency is affected by interconnected systems, including the individual, classroom, school, and broader social contexts. This framework underscores the role of various elements affecting teachers' agency, such as their individual views, school leadership, and external accountability measures. Furthermore, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) offers insights into the motivational planes of agency, postulating that individuals tend to demonstrate agency when they experience autonomy, competence, and relevance. When applied to teacher assessment agency, this theory suggests that teachers' incentive to engage in assessment practices may be

affected by their autonomy level in designing assessments and the support they receive from colleagues and other administrators.

Teacher agency is influenced by past experiences, knowledge, skills, beliefs, professional engagements, goals, and contextual aspects (Priestley et al., 2015). There are also three general approaches to teacher agency and teacher assessment agency (Ghiasvand et al., 2023). The individual capacity approach focuses on personal control and decision-making (Bandura, 2001). The action-oriented approach emphasizes the influence of teachers' decisions on professional identity and teaching practices (Orland-Barak, 2017). The ecological vision recognizes that agency is achieved through the complex interaction between teachers and their setting (Priestley et al., 2015). Context is seen as the heart of the educational ecosystem, and research highlights that teacher agency can be fostered both collectively and individually through the support of collegiality and other relational environments (Ashton, 2022; Priestley et al., 2015; Vähäsantanen et al., 2020).

The ecological approach to teacher agency provides a comprehensive understanding of how policies influence teachers' actions and decision-making (Priestley et al., 2015). The ecological understanding of teacher agency considers three distinct dimensions pertaining to the influence of the past, orientations toward the future, and active engagement in the present (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Professional development and collegial collaborative practices contribute to the development of teacher agency (Namgung et al., 2021). The ecological teacher agency model (Fig. 1) includes the iterational dimension (past experiences, skills, and knowledge), the projective dimension (professional aspirations and objectives), and the practical-evaluative dimension (material resources, cultural, and structural) (Priestley et al., 2015).

While assessment policy reforms may encourage teacher agency, deeply entrenched test-oriented cultures can hinder their implementation. The significance of teacher agency spans over pedagogical decisions and practices to include the assessment
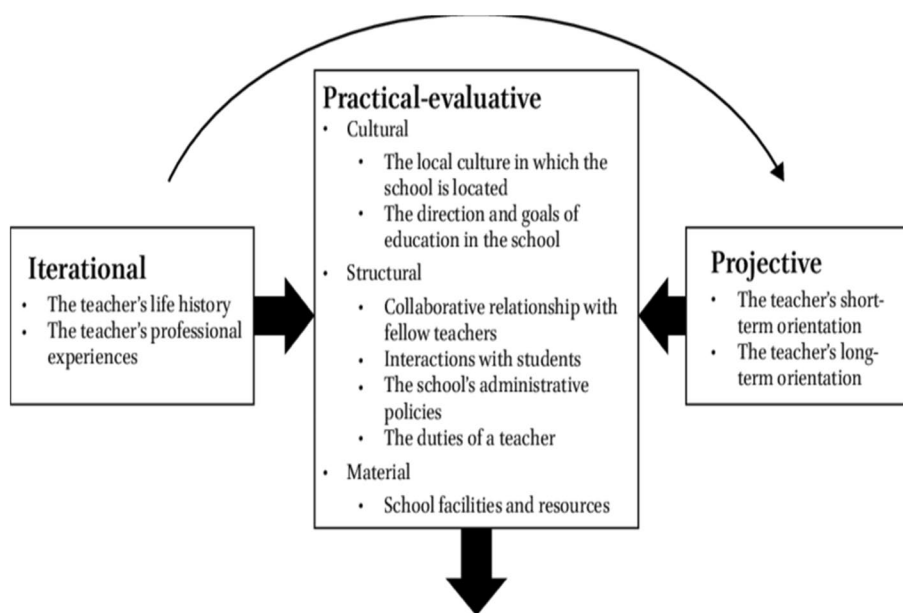

Fig. 1 Priestley et al.'s (2015) key dimensions of teacher ecological agency

domain. Teacher-based assessment (TBA) emphasizes teachers' involvement in the assessment process and allows students to be actively involved as well (Namgung et al., 2021). However, the implementation of TBA is hindered by pedagogical and sociocultural constraints. The relationship between teachers' conceptions of assessment and their specialized practices is highlighted, and the need for an all-inclusive approach to cope with the intricate dimensions of assessment is emphasized.

In the domain of second language education, teachers' agency in assessment involves judgements about classroom-based assessment, academic ends, and the integration of formative and summative assessment (Ghiasvand et al., 2023). According to Soini et al. (2015), assessment agency involves collaborative and transformative practices, judgment of competence, a learning-oriented approach, and reflective practices in the classroom. Teachers exhibit assessment agency when they view their training as a valuable learning opportunity, utilize their individual strengths, gather information about their practices at both the individual and community levels, and reflectively regulate their actions. Teacher assessment agency specifically spotlights the teachers' ability to engage in momentous and fruitful assessment practices. It covers the understanding, abilities, and mindset necessary for teachers to offer valuable feedback and evaluate student learning with precision. Nonetheless, certain teachers might oppose assessment reform and only adopt modifications that align with their current convictions and methods. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), the agency of teachers in assessment is crucial for enhancing student performance and enhancing teaching practices. It also entails managing the influence of high-stakes tests and harmonizing mandated assessments with the curriculum and classroom methodologies.

Numerous studies have examined teacher agency and teacher assessment agency, shedding light on their impact on teaching and learning outcomes. For example, a study by Smith and Gorard (2007) explored how teacher agency influenced student engagement and achievement. They found that teachers with a higher sense of agency were more likely to create a positive learning environment and promote student motivation and involvement. Another seminal research conducted by Black and Wiliam (1998) examined the influence of teacher agency in assessment on student learning. They contended that when teachers play an active role in the assessment process, they are able to offer more precise and prompt feedback, ultimately resulting in enhanced student performance. This research underscored the significance of empowering teachers to assume responsibility for assessment procedures.

In a recent study, Lee and Jeon (2024) investigated how EFL teachers' assessment agency is influenced by the affordances of information and communication technologies (ICT) in classroom-based language assessment. Their study examined the impact of the return to face-to-face classes after online teaching on teachers' assessment practices and perceptions. Some studies have examined teacher agency amidst evolving assessment policies and procedures and in test-focused educational communities, where teachers face strong pressure to align with high-stakes tests (Ali & Hamid, 2023; Willis et al., 2019). However, research on teachers' assessment agency from an ecological viewpoint is still in its early stages (Ashton, 2022; Willis et al., 2019). In their study, Ghiasvand et al. (2023) developed a questionnaire to measure teacher ecological assessment agency (TEAA) by collecting data from 539 Iranian EFL teachers. The scale consisted of

32 items grouped into 5 components: Iterational, Projective, Teachers' Practical-Evaluative View, Schools' Practical-Evaluative Effect, and Professional/Democratic Community's Practical-Evaluative Effect. The scale demonstrated good reliability and convergent validity. The findings of the study emphasized the significant part teacher agency played in shaping L2 assessment practices.

Additionally, alternative assessment techniques, such as formative assessment and negotiated assessment, have been explored in the context of teacher agency (Gosling, 2000; Poulton, 2020). Verberg et al.'s (2016) study examined teacher agency within setting of formative teacher assessment. They aimed to determine if teachers engaging in a formative assessment procedure felt a sense agency and if this agency was visible in assessment-focused meetings. The findings showed that teachers reported a high level of agency overall, but their agency was not consistently evident during the assessment meetings. The study highlighted the complexities of teacher agency and its manifestation in real-time decision-making during the assessment process.

The study by Jiang et al. (2022) also found that teachers recognized the value of formative assessment activities in developing student learning and enhancing their own teaching capacity, which underscored the importance of promoting and facilitating professional agency for sustainability in the teaching context. Figure 2 highlights the interrelated dimensions that enabled teachers to exercise their professional agency in the formative assessment process (Jiang et al., 2022).

In a seminal study, Namgung et al. (2021) examined the teacher agency of Korean secondary English teachers (KSETs) in assessment, using an ecological framework. The study utilized semi-structured interviews with 15 KSETs and focused on themes related to personal experiences, professional practices, and the impact of past and present educational environments on teacher agency. The findings revealed that the historical emphasis on standardized testing continued to shape teachers' perceptions and agency in the current assessment practices guided by systemic restructuring of the curriculum. The study highlighted the importance of teachers analyzing their experiences from a
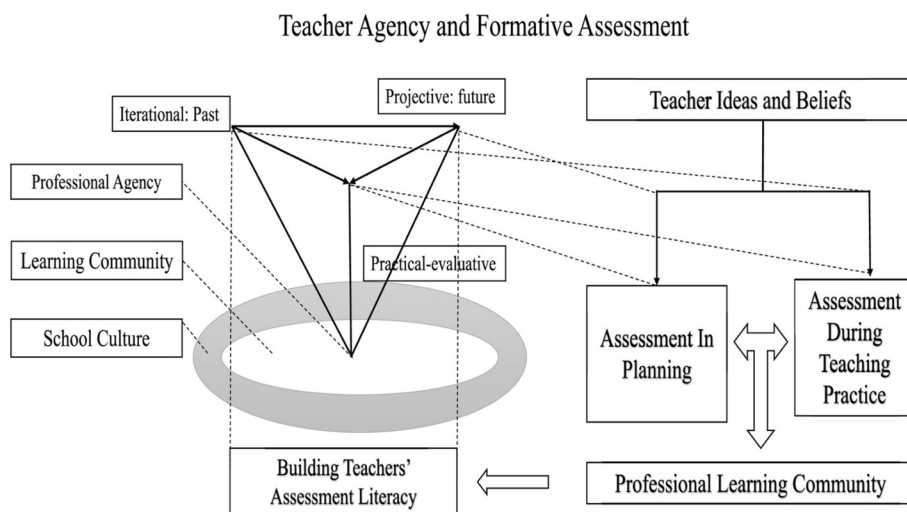

Fig. 2 A framework of teachers' professional agency in formative assessment implementation (Jiang et al., 2022)

critical perspective, their awareness of present opportunities, and future aspirations in enacting teacher agency in assessment. However, teachers faced challenges in negotiating their agency within the existing environmental conditions, leading to struggles and the need for ecological transformation.

As mentioned, various theories and models provide insights into the factors that influence teacher agency, and previous studies have highlighted the positive impact of teacher agency on teaching and learning outcomes. Teacher agency is considered crucial in teacher education, as pre-service teachers may have limited agency levels (Soini et al., 2015). It is important for pre-service teachers to develop assessment skills and be exposed to a variety of assessment methods during their training. Despite the growing body of literature on teacher agency, there is a lack of research specifically focusing on L2 education, especially in relation to assessment contexts (Ali & Hamid, 2023). Moving forward, it is essential to continue exploring and supporting teacher agency to enhance assessment practices, addressing the critical roles of assessment agency and professional development in the field of EFL teaching.

Teacher assessment agency and professional development

Professional development embodies a variety of measures, activities, and processes designed to foster teachers' professional teaching knowledge, skills, and values to enhance student learning (Arthur, 2016; Guskey, 2000). It not only assists teachers in raising their understanding of effective teaching, but also creates a platform for them to share their experiences and concerns. The goal is to enrich teachers' knowledge, expertise, skills, and values in order to support student learning. Similarly, Richard and Farrell (2005) argue that professional development is intended to assist teachers in understanding teaching and their role as educators. Craft (2000) sees teachers' professional development as a transformative process that requires a combination of engagement, support, challenge, and success.

Given its crucial part in L2 education, teacher agency has been considered in conjunction with education quality and teachers' professional growth (Lai et al., 2016). Although scholars have found it challenging to reach a consensus, they generally recognize agency as a "socio-culturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112), which is an essential aspect of teachers' professional growth aimed at empowering them to take proactive measures and enact transformations (Ghamoushi et al., 2022; Leijen et al., 2021).

Agency reflects teachers' ability to act proactively and effectively to direct their own professional growth as well as that of others (Calvert, 2016). Imants and Van der Wal (2019) have suggested a model of teacher agency that specifically concentrates on school reform and professional development in the Netherlands, offering a potential instrument to examine the multi-dimensional intricacy of school reform and professional development. Durrant (2019) considers teacher agency as fundamental side of school enhancement and professional growth, aiming to offer viable ideas and tactics to notify and appraise policy and practice.

Teachers' prior assessment experiences, beliefs, and power relationships influence their assessment decisions, underscoring the importance of recognizing teacher agency in assessment practice and the urgent need to consider teacher assessment agency in professional development (Fazel & Ali, 2022; Ghiasvand et al., 2023; Mansouri et al.,

2021). Understanding pre-service teachers' conceptions of assessment is crucial for providing appropriate professional training and helping them develop a more balanced view of assessment (Brown & Remesal, 2012; Levy-Vered & Alhija, 2018).

An ecological perspective recognizes the growth of teacher agency through the implementation of professional development initiatives and collaborative interactions with colleagues. Teacher professional development courses and programs should take account of these findings and provide EFL teachers with guidance, instruction, and feedback on their assessment performance. This approach can effectively support teachers in enhancing their professionalism and agency in the domain of language assessment. Teacher support and professional development are crucial in fostering active participation and agency within the educational ecosystem, ultimately contributing to its overall prosperity.

Successful assessment reform revolves around two critical elements: Teacher professionalism and creating an environment that facilitates co-regulation between teachers and students (Laveault, 2016). It is crucial to prioritize regular and targeted in-school professional development for teachers. This approach enhances their assessment literacy, fosters an effective assessment culture, and recognizes the professionalism of teachers while addressing the specific needs of their students (Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2014). Several recent studies have focused on cultivating assessment capacity in teacher education programs. For instance, Hendawy Al-Mahdy et al. (2024) found that principal leadership, teacher trust, and teacher agency influence teacher professional learning in Oman. Their findings suggest that fostering a supportive school environment and promoting teacher agency can significantly contribute to teachers' professional development. DeLuca et al. (2024) also explored the development of assessment competency in teacher education. They show that promoting assessment competency is a central component of teacher professionalization.

Furthermore, recent studies emphasize the significance of assessment practices for shaping student identities (Nieminen, 2024) and teacher identities (Estaji & Ghiasvand, 2023, 2024), as well as the importance of feedback and formative assessment in the classroom (Khan et al., 2023; Phakiti & Steinhoff, 2023; Samaie & Valizadeh, 2023; Varier et al., 2024). International comparative studies by Härmälä (2023) and López (2023) also contribute to understanding teachers' assessment practices. The research indicates that teacher assessment agency and their professional development are closely linked and crucial for the quality of instruction and student learning. These studies underscore the significance of teacher assessment agency in promoting effective classroom assessment practices and supporting teachers' professional development. By cultivating assessment literacy and agency, teacher education programs can better prepare EFL teachers to navigate the challenges and opportunities in language assessment.

Overall, the literature on teacher assessment agency and professional development has demonstrated the significance of teacher agency in assessment practice and the role of professional development in promoting assessment literacy and educational reform. To gain a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics involved regarding the role of teacher education courses in teachers' agency in assessment and their professional development, the following research questions were raised in this study.

1. How do EFL teachers perceive the influence of a language assessment teacher education course on their agency as assessors in the classroom?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities faced by EFL teachers in translating the knowledge and skills they gain through a language assessment teacher education course to promote their assessment agency and contribute to their overall professional development?

Methodology

Research design

This research study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore the firsthand experiences and perspectives of EFL teachers regarding the influence of language assessment teacher education on their assessment agency and professional development. Phenomenology allowed for a focus on the subjective accounts of teachers, providing in-depth insights into how they enacted and made sense of their assessment agency. Informed by the works of Richardson (1999), Croker (2009), Sin (2010), and Stolz (2020), the study aimed to uncover the essence of the teachers' experiences related to language assessment teacher education, capturing detailed and contextualized viewpoints. This methodology provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities encountered by EFL teachers in their professional development within the language assessment domain. It enabled the collection of rich and contextualized data that would reveal the complex nature of teacher assessment agency in the EFL context.

Participants and setting

The research study comprised 50 EFL teachers selected through purposive sampling from an initial pool of 60 teacher participants. The participants, all Iranian EFL teachers ranging in age from 22 to 53 years old, consisted of 30% male ($n = 15$) and 70% female ($n = 35$), with substantial teaching experience (5 years or more) and holding either an MA (80%, $n = 40$) or a PhD (20%, $n = 10$) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). These participants were deliberately selected for their expertise and firsthand experience in the research topic. Initially, 25 Iranian EFL teachers were targeted to complete a teacher perception questionnaire, sharing their valuable insights on how language assessment teacher education impacted their role as assessors in the classroom. This approach allowed for a focused exploration of the perceptions and experiences of qualified EFL teachers with a deep understanding of the impact of language assessment teacher education course on their assessment agency.

Concurrently, 25 teachers from the initial pool of participants were purposively selected to provide narratives and descriptions of the challenges and opportunities encountered in translating the knowledge and skills gained through language assessment teacher education into the enhancement of their assessment agency and overall professional development. By employing purposive sampling, the study ensured the inclusion of participants who had experienced the central phenomenon being explored, thus enriching the qualitative data collection with diverse and comprehensive perspectives. This deliberate selection of participants with extensive teaching experience and advanced qualifications aimed to capture a nuanced understanding of the impact of

language assessment teacher education on EFL teachers' professional growth trajectories and assessment agency within the specific context of Iranian EFL classrooms.

Instruments

Considering the study's purpose and its qualitative nature, different qualitative tools were utilized. The research tools comprised an open-ended teacher perceptions questionnaire and a narrative frame.

Open-ended questionnaire

To demystify EFL teachers' perspectives and personal experiences as for the impact of a language assessment teacher education course on their assessment responsibilities in the classroom, the researcher utilized an open-ended questionnaire. This questionnaire aimed to elicit detailed and varied responses from teachers, assisting them to express their thoughts openly. The questions were meticulously designed by the researcher, drawing on the existing literature in teacher's educational assessment, with a particular emphasis on teacher assessment agency (Appendix 1). The questionnaire comprised three sections: (A) Informed Consent, which obtained participants' written consent for ethical compliance, (B) Demographic Information, which gathered details like age, gender, teaching experience, educational background, and institutional context, and (C) Open-Ended Questions, which explored participants' perceptions of the language assessment teacher education course's impact on their professional practice as EFL language assessors through six questions.

To ensure the content validity of the open-ended questions, three experienced language experts in teacher education and educational assessment reviewed the questions for language and content quality. These experts, known for their publications in the field, offered valuable feedback on clarity, relevance, and appropriateness. Incorporating their insights, the questions were refined to improve their quality and effectiveness in prompting meaningful participant responses. Additionally, the Content Validity Index (CVI) was utilized by the researcher to assess the questionnaire's content validity, guaranteeing a comprehensive exploration of teachers' experiences and insights related to teacher assessment agency.

Narrative inquiry

In this study, narratives were utilized to capture the firsthand experiences and viewpoints of EFL teachers who have experienced a language assessment teacher education course. By employing narratives, the researcher sought to offer a detailed insight into the challenges and opportunities these teachers encountered in applying their knowledge and skills to enhance assessment practices and advance their professional growth. This narrative approach facilitated a thorough exploration of participants' experiences within their teaching contexts and career development. The study focused on personal experience narratives, where participants reflected on their personal encounters and provided detailed descriptions of challenges, opportunities, and insights stemming from the language assessment teacher education course they have experienced.

The narrative inquiry comprised six specific points to prompt reflective and detailed responses from participants (Appendix 2). The participants were encouraged to share

specific examples and insights to enrich their narratives, enabling a comprehensive examination of their experiences. To ensure the content validity of the narrative framework, three experts in teacher education and educational assessment evaluated its alignment with the research objectives and its ability to capture the nuanced experiences of EFL teachers in applying their knowledge and skills. To confirm that the narratives gathered were pertinent and meaningful to the study's goals, the CVI was employed.

Data collection procedure

The stages taken to carry out the study can be outlined as follows: Primarily, the researcher developed two qualitative instruments, an open-ended questionnaire and a narrative inquiry, in compliance with the research objectives. Content validity of the items in both tools was ensured before administration. The data were collected through the distribution of the open-ended questionnaire and the written narrative frame among 25 EFL teachers each. All the research participants ($n = 50$) were required to complete the questionnaire and narratives within a stipulated time frame of ten days after being informed of how to do so. The dataset was gathered by distributing the open-ended questionnaire, which consisted of three main sections, and the narrative frame to teacher participants via WhatsApp and Telegram. After the data collection, the researchers double-checked the gathered data from both the questionnaire and the narrative for missing parts and typos to ensure completeness and accuracy. Once the data verification was completed, the researcher embarked on content analysis to analyze the participants' answers to the instruments. Content analysis was conducted to gain insights into the participants' conceptions and lived experiences, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by EFL teachers in translating the knowledge and skills gained through a language assessment teacher education course.

Data analysis

In this study, the researcher attempted to be impartial and incubate her own experiences and worldviews as a university professor of the same education context to maintain researcher positionality. To analyze the data, the researcher employed a content analysis approach to analyze the respondents' answers to the open-ended questionnaire and narratives. This method involves the systematic classification of data to uncover patterns and generate well-supported interpretations (Friedman, 2012). The researchers adopted the summative approach to content analysis and particularly used phenomenographic qualitative analysis (PQA) based on the model by Stenfors-Hayes et al. (2013), encompassed seven stages that involved becoming familiar with the data, summarizing it, making comparisons and contrasts, grouping related information, articulating key findings, and providing a final label or categorization.

The content analysis was conducted using the latest version of MAXQDA software (version 2023) to promote the reliability of the analysis, as employing Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) can bolster the credibility of the findings (Baralt, 2012). To ensure the credibility of the findings, the process of content analysis was carried out independently by three coders. The intercoder reliability (ICR) was measured through Cohen's Kappa (κ), and the coefficient was found to be 0.96, demonstrating a high level of agreement between the coders. Furthermore, the technique of

Table 1 Impact of language assessment education on teachers' classroom assessment agency

| Themes	Sub-Themes	Percentage
Enhanced Approach to Assessment	Deeper Understanding of Assessment Methods and Techniques	92%
	Emphasis on Performance-Based Assessments	56%
Increased Confidence and Competence	Ability to make informed and contextually relevant decisions	80%
Impact on Autonomy and Decision-Making	Empowerment in Decision-Making and Autonomy	64%
Enhanced Opportunities for Peer Collaboration and Professional Development	Enhancements for Supporting EFL Teachers	56%
Shift in Attitudes and Beliefs	Changes in Attitudes Toward Assessment	40%
Improved Assessment Tools and Techniques	Broader Repertoire of Assessment Tools and Techniques	24%
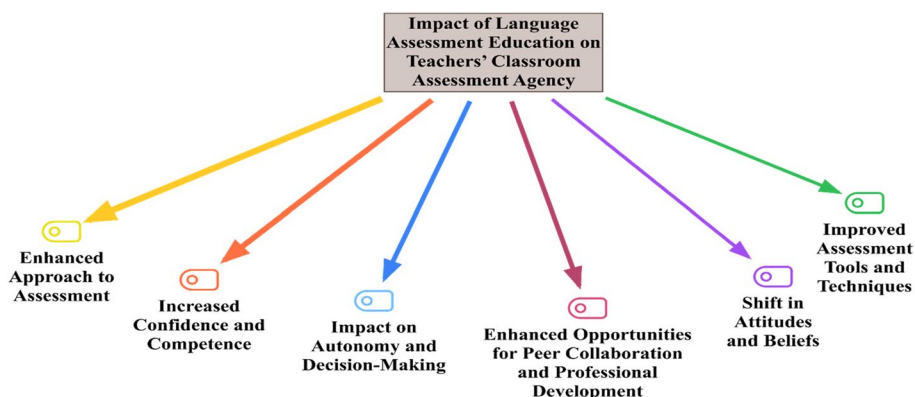
Fig. 3 Impact of language assessment education on teachers' classroom assessment agency

respondent validation was employed to strengthen the credibility of the analysis. This involved checking 5 open-ended questionnaires and 5 narratives to assess the precision and accuracy of the generated themes and subthemes against the datasets.

Results and discussion

Perceptions of EFL Teachers on the impact of language assessment education on classroom assessment agency

To respond to the first research question, an open-ended questionnaire was designed whose outcomes revealed the following dimensions (Table 1, Fig. 3) regarding the impact of language assessment teacher education on their approach to assess students' language skills in EFL classroom: Enhanced approach to assessment, increased confidence and competence, improved assessment tools and techniques, shift in attitudes and beliefs, and Impact on autonomy and decision-making.

Figure 3 also indicates that the vast majority of participants (92%) found *Enhanced approach to assessment* as the most prominent influence of a language assessment teacher education course on their agency as assessors. In other words, they found the course profoundly influential in their assessment practices in several ways. The respondents affirmed that the language assessment teacher education course has

strengthened their evaluation methods for assessing students' language abilities. This change is attributed to the course's emphasis on adopting a comprehensive and fair approach that includes all skills, rather than just reading and writing.

> *The main benefit of course has been giving me a deeper understanding of various assessment methods and techniques, enabling me to utilize a more comprehensive and balanced approach to assessing my students' language abilities. (T17)*

The participants (56%) specially emphasized the positive influence of language assessment courses on the implementation of performance-based assessments. These assessments, which include activities like role-plays, presentations, and projects, accurately reflect real-life language use.

> *I have learned to develop performance-based assessments that authentically represent real-life language use. (T9)*

Likewise, the participants expressed their belief that enrolling in such courses (80%) would *enhance their confidence and proficiency* as assessors. They acknowledged that these courses would provide a comprehensive understanding of assessment principles and techniques, resulting in more accurate and effective evaluations. Notably, some of the participants (24%) reported *acquiring new assessment tools and techniques* through the course. This has enabled them to design assessments that are tailored to align with specific learning objectives and student needs. The participants stressed how the course has expanded their repertoire of assessment methods, allowing for the creation of versatile and effective evaluations that cater to diverse language proficiency levels and individual learning preferences.

> *Through the course, I familiarized with a big range of assessment tools and techniques. I got better orientation regarding how to design more varied and effective assessment practices that adjust to different language proficiency levels and learning preferences. (T6)*

Moreover, they proclaimed that (40%) completing the teacher education course has led to a positive *shift in their attitudes and beliefs* toward language assessment. They underscored their current prioritization of formative assessment, which accentuates ongoing feedback and progress rather than solely relying on summative evaluation. The participants predominantly focused on the evident shifts in their perspectives toward language assessment subsequent to their engagement in the teacher education course. The participants suggested using diverse assessment methods to evaluate different aspects of language proficiency and reducing reliance on traditional standardized tests.

> *By knowing about the significance of using multiple assessment methods, I learned how to capture the diverse aspects of language proficiency, moving away from relying solely on traditional, standardized tests. (T22)*

Similarly, some participants (64%) thought that the course has empowered them to *exercise greater autonomy and decision-making* in assessment practices within their EFL classroom. It has encouraged them to adapt assessments to suit individual

Table 2 Contributions of language assessment teacher education to teachers' classroom assessment agency

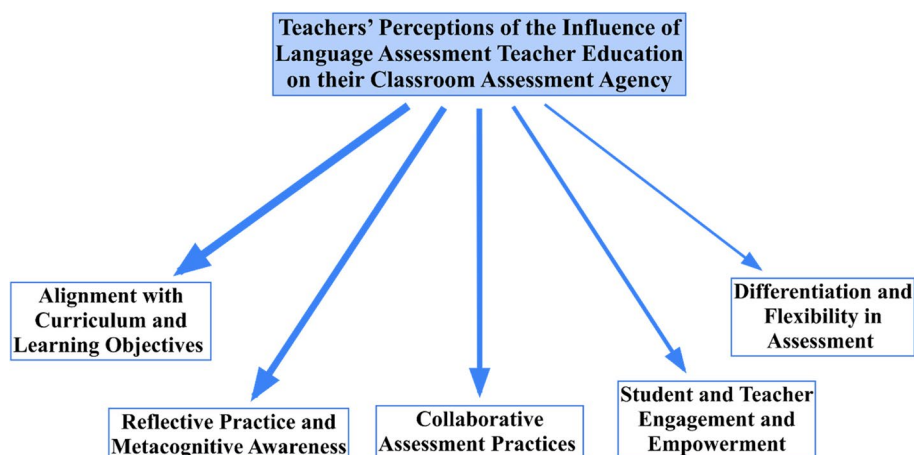| Themes	Percentage
Alignment with Curriculum and Learning Objectives	76%
Reflective Practice and Metacognitive Awareness	52%
Collaborative Assessment Practices	36%
Student and Teacher Engagement and Empowerment	28%
Differentiation and Flexibility in Assessment	12%

Fig. 4 Contributions of language assessment education to teachers' classroom assessment agency

student needs and learning styles. This theme highlights how the course has empowered the teachers to make more informed and contextually relevant decisions regarding assessment design, implementation, and interpretation.

> *I feel that I can currently make more informed and contextually relevant decisions regarding assessment design, implementation, and interpretation. (T5)*

More than a half (56%) expressed the need for *practical training*, examining various scenarios and critical incidents, and *collaboration opportunities* to enhance their understanding and application of assessment concepts in real classroom. They also recommended *ongoing professional development* focused on emerging assessment and technologies to ensure teachers stay updated.

> *For supporting EFL teachers in their role as language assessors, I believe that incorporating more practical, hands-on experiences and opportunities for collaborative assessment design and analysis would be beneficial. (T9)*

Moreover, some other themes were extracted from EFL teachers regarding how they perceived the influence of the language assessment teacher education course on their agency as assessors in the classroom (Table 2, Fig. 4). The participants found "Alignment with Curriculum and Learning Objectives" (76%), "Reflective Practice and Metacognitive Awareness" (52%), "Collaborative Assessment Practices" (36%),

"Student and Teacher Engagement and Empowerment" (28%), and "Differentiation and Flexibility in Assessment" (12%) as the major impacts of the language assessment teacher education course on their classroom agency as assessors. More specifically, the participants perceived the course's contribution to their ability to "*align assessment practices more closely with the intended curriculum, learning objectives, and standards*". The participants referred to the "*development of their reflective skills and metacognitive awareness in their assessment practices*" as a result of the language assessment teacher education course. They asserted that the course facilitated their capacity to "*critically evaluate their assessment approaches*" and "*identify areas of need for improvement and continual enhancements*". They noted that "*the course prompted them to deeply reflect on their methods of assessing students and explore alternative strategies*". I realized that I had certain beliefs and preferences when it came to testing, but now I understand how they can affect my students I constantly think about how my choices in assessments can impact the way my students learn".

The teachers shed light on the influence of the course on their ability to "*engage in collaborative assessment practices*", such as "*co-designing assessments*", "*moderating scoring*", or "*sharing assessment data with colleagues*". They stressed how the course empowered them to involve students more actively in the assessment process, such as through "*self-assessment, peer feedback, or student-generated assessment tasks*" that would in turn impact "*student motivation*", "*ownership of learning*", and "*overall engagement*". "*Seeing the positive impact of involving students in assessment design and peer feedback has been incredibly rewarding. They are taking ownership of their progress in ways I never thought possible*". Likewise, the teachers perceived the impact of the course on their ability to "*design and implement differentiated assessment strategies to cater to the diverse needs and learning styles of their students*", leading to increase in "*flexibility and adaptability in their assessment practices and agency as assessors*".

The responses and themes identified underscore the impact of experiencing a teacher education course on understanding assessment methods, expanding the repertoire of assessment tools, emphasizing performance-based assessments, shifting attitudes toward assessment, empowering decision-making and autonomy, and the need for further support and enhancements for EFL teachers. Likewise, the findings indicate that the language assessment teacher education course would have a profound impact on the EFL teachers' classroom assessment agency, enhancing their ability to align assessments with curricular objectives, fostering reflective and metacognitive practices, promoting collaborative assessment approaches, empowering both students and teachers, and enabling greater differentiation and flexibility in their assessment strategies.

Challenges and opportunities in translating language assessment education for EFL Teachers to enhance their assessment agency and professional growth

To respond to the second research question, a narrative frame was designed whose findings revealed the following dimensions (Table 3, Fig. 5) regarding the challenges and opportunities faced by EFL teachers in translating the knowledge and skills gained through a language assessment teacher education course to enhance their assessment agency and professional development: Adapting Assessment Methods to Diverse Student Population, Designing Authentic and Meaningful Assessments, Effectiveness of

Table 3 Enhancing EFL teachers' assessment skills through language assessment education

| Themes	Sub-Themes	Percentage
Need for Continued Training and Collaboration	Continued training, mentorship, and Collaboration	92%
Adapting Assessment Methods to Diverse Student Population	Applying theoretical assessment concepts into classroom practices	80%
Designing Authentic and Meaningful Assessments	A more student-centered approach to assessment	60%
Effectiveness of Formative and Performance-Based Assessment	Techniques to integrate knowledge and skills into teaching practices	52%
Critical and Reflective Stance Toward Language Assessment	Developing a more reflective perspective	24%
Focusing on Emerging Assessment Trends and Technologies	Implementing innovative assessment strategies	12%
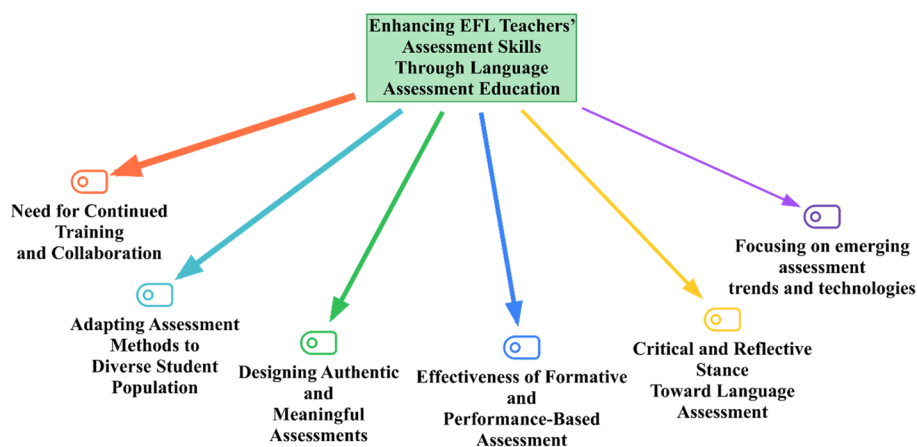
Fig. 5 Enhancing EFL teachers' assessment skills through language assessment education

Performance-Based Assessments, Critical and Reflective Stance Toward Language Assessment, Need for Continued Training and Collaboration, Advocacy for Student-Centered Assessment Practices.

Figure 5 also indicates that most of the teachers (80%) referred to the challenge of *adapting new assessment methods and techniques* to suit the specific needs and proficiency levels of a diverse student population as their main impediment. They emphasized the difficulty in ensuring fair and inclusive assessments due to varied language backgrounds and learning styles of their students.

The main challenge for me is effectively applying theoretical assessment concepts, such as reliability and validity, into practical classroom assessment practices. Indeed, implementing assessment principles seamlessly in day-to-day teaching remains a big challenge for me. (T9)

The main predicament I have faced is the need for adapting some novel assessment methods and techniques to suit the specific needs and proficiency levels of my diverse student population. (T23)

In addition, more than a half of the teachers (60%) focused on the opportunity identified in applying the knowledge and skills from the course to promote the assessment agency by *designing more authentic and meaningful assessments* that truly reflect the students' language abilities. They specifically suggested engaging in discussions with colleagues and administrators about the importance of using diverse assessment methods to capture the multifaceted nature of language proficiency.

> *To enhance my assessment agency, an opportunity that stands out in applying the knowledge and skills from the course is the possibility to design more tailored and effective assessments that concur with student needs and learning objectives. This creates a conducive learning environment and results in a more student-centered approach to assessment. (T20)*

> *To promote my assessment agency, an opportunity that I have identified is the ability to design more authentic and meaningful assessments that truly reflect my students' language abilities. (T14)*

Some teachers (52%) referred to the *effectiveness of incorporating formative and performance-based assessments*, such as role-plays and project-based assessments, into teaching practice. They stressed out the benefits of these assessments in providing more accurate reflection of students' language abilities and creating an engaging and interactive learning setting.

> *When incorporating the acquired knowledge and skills into my teaching practice, I assume that formative assessment techniques and strategies have been particularly fruitful as they improve learning outcomes and not only provide valuable feedback to students but also inform instructional decisions. (T22).*

> *In integrating the acquired knowledge and skills into my pedagogical practices, performance-based assessment, such as role-plays and project-based assessments, has been particularly influential. (T5)*

One fourth of the participants (24%) thought of the impact of the language assessment teacher education course in *developing a more critical and reflective stance* toward language assessment. They highlighted the deeper understanding gained regarding the impact of assessment on language learning and the need for continuous improvement in this area.

> *The course has helped me to develop a more critical and reflective perspective toward language assessment. It has given me a deeper understanding of the influence of assessment on language learning and the need for continuous improvement in this area. (T19)*

The vast majority of teacher participants (92%) underscored the need for further support or resources in the realm of *ongoing professional development and collaboration.* They emphasized the importance of access to continued training, mentorship, and opportunities for collaborative assessment design and analysis to successfully integrate new assessment practices into teaching repertoire.

In terms of contributing to my overall professional development, the language assessment teacher education course has significantly enhanced my ability to design and implement assessments that are fair, valid, and authentic. This has improved both my assessment practices and elevated the quality of my teaching and student learning experiences. (T2)

Access to continued training, mentorship, and opportunities for collaborative assessment design and analysis would greatly support the successful integration of new assessment practices into my teaching repertoire. (T24)

Few teachers (12%) discussed concentrating on the *emerging assessment trends and technologies* and the leveraging of the knowledge and skills acquired to play a more active role in advocating for student-centered, authentic assessment practices within the institutes. They underlined the aim collaborate with colleagues to incorporate innovative assessment practices and develop a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to language assessment, ultimately enhancing the teacher's role as an EFL teacher and assessor.

Collaborating with colleagues will definitely develop a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to language assessment. It can enhance my role as an EFL teacher and assessor and promote a more robust assessment culture in the classroom context. (T21)

To effectively translate the knowledge and skills gained from the course into practice, a specific area where I believe further support or resources are needed is ongoing professional development focused on emerging assessment trends and technologies. For sure, staying updated with the latest advancements in language assessment is needed to ensure continuous improvement in assessment practices. (T6)

Looking ahead, by implementing innovative assessment strategies, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and actively contributing to the professional development of both myself and my students, I envision enhancing my role as an EFL teacher and assessor. (T13)

Besides, as major challenges faced by EFL teachers in translating their language assessment knowledge and skills into practice to foster their assessment agency (Table 4 and

Table 4 Challenges confronted by EFL teachers in translating their language assessment knowledge and skills

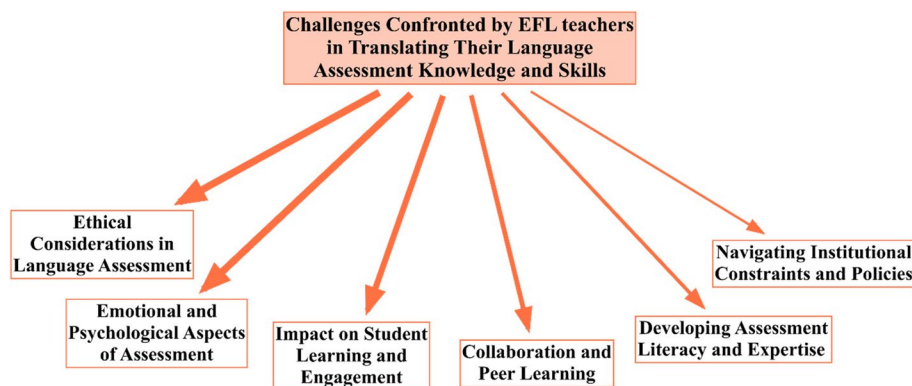| Themes	Percentage
Ethical Considerations in Language Assessment	68%
Emotional and Psychological Aspects of Assessment	64%
Impact on Student Learning and Engagement	48%
Collaboration and Peer Learning	36%
Developing Assessment Literacy and Expertise	24%
Navigating Institutional Constraints and Policies	16%

Fig. 6 Teachers' challenges in translating their language assessment knowledge and skills

Fig. 6), the participants referred to the "Ethical Considerations in Language Assessment" (68%), "Emotional and Psychological Aspects of Assessment" (64%), "Impact on Student Learning and Engagement" (48%), "Collaboration and Peer Learning" (36%), "Developing Assessment Literacy and Expertise" (24%) and "Navigating Institutional Constraints and Policies" (16%). In particular, EFL teachers addressed issues such as "*bias*", "*fairness*", and "*inclusivity*" in assessment practices, as well as the importance of maintaining "*confidentiality and privacy*" when collecting and analyzing the assessment data. They also stressed the emotional and psychological challenges they faced when implementing novel assessment approaches, such as "*anxiety*", "*resistance*", or "*self-efficacy*" concerns. Likewise, they discussed how they coped with and managed the emotional labor involved in promoting their assessment agency and professional development. One participant claimed that "*Trying to change my assessment practices has been incredibly stressful. I constantly worry about whether I'm doing it right, and I often feel self-conscious when my students struggle with the new assessment formats*". Another one felt that "*It can be very tiring and challenging to keep promoting student-centered assessment methods, especially when facing resistance from parents or administrators. However, I remain committed to this because I believe it is the best way to support my' learning*".

The teachers also reiterated how the application of their assessment knowledge and skills influenced "*student learning outcomes*", "*motivation*", and "*engagement*" and highlighted the need for "*teachers' reflections on the positive and/or negative impacts of their assessment practices on students*". As one stated that "*When I implemented the performance-based assessments I learned about, I noticed a significant increase in my students' motivation and engagement. They displayed more dedication in their learning journey and assumed responsibility for monitoring their own learning and progress*". The participants concentrated on the role of "*collaboration with colleagues*", "*subject-matter experts*", or "*assessment specialists*" in supporting EFL teachers' efforts to apply their assessment knowledge and skills. In preparing them for the practical challenges of classroom-based assessment, they considered the strategies by which they can "*develop their assessment literacy and expertise over time*", and "*the factors that contribute to or hinder this process*". The teacher participants also underscored the challenges posed by "*institutional policies*", "*curricula*", or "*administrative requirements*" that may hinder their ability to implement the knowledge and skills gained from the language assessment teacher

education course. This challenge is represented in one participant's remark as stated that "*I have been working hard to promote student-centered assessment practices, but my department's head is reluctant to embrace change and continues to favor traditional testing methods, despite my efforts to demonstrate how alternative approaches can enhance student learning*".

The narratives provide invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by the teacher in translating the knowledge and skills gained from the language assessment teacher education course. The themes identified reflect the teacher's experiences and aspirations related to promoting assessment agency and contributing to overall professional development. Besides, the findings revealed that EFL teachers encountered a range of challenges in applying their language assessment expertise, including navigating institutional policies and constraints, developing their overall assessment literacy and expertise, leveraging collaboration and peer learning opportunities, addressing the emotional and psychological aspects of assessment, considering the ethical implications of their practices, and evaluating the impact on student learning and engagement.

Discussion

This study was an attempt to explore the impact of language assessment teacher education on EFL teachers' assessment agency and professional development track. Likewise, the findings shed light on teachers' perceptions of the challenges and opportunities faced by EFL teachers in translating the knowledge and skills gained through such a course to promote their assessment agency and contribute to their overall professional development.

The findings of the first research question demonstrated several facets of impact, including enhanced approach to assessment, increased confidence and competence, improved assessment tools and techniques, shift in attitudes and beliefs, and impact on autonomy and decision-making. Studies by Black and Wiliam (1998), Darling-Hammond (2010), Smith and Gorard (2007), and Soini et al. (2015) have similarly highlighted the positive impact of teacher education on assessment methods and techniques and practices. The majority of participants proclaimed that the language assessment teacher education course enhanced their approach to assessment by providing them with an in-depth understanding of assessment methods and techniques. This finding represented the prominence of providing teachers with comprehensive knowledge and skills in assessment to enable them to design assessments that accurately reflect students' language abilities (Priestley et al.*,* 2015). Moreover, the participants emphasized the positive influence of the course on their confidence and competence as assessors, in tune with the perspectives of Hasselgreen et al. (2004), Vogt et al. (2008), Vogt and Tsagari (2014), advocating that the course contributed to their professional growth in assessment.

The participants also reported that the course improved their assessment tools and techniques, enabling them to have a broader collection and selection of assessment methods. This finding suggests that the course equipped the teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to design assessments that accommodate with specific learning objectives and student needs and expectations. Additionally, the participants spotlighted a shift in their attitudes and beliefs toward assessment, evincing the significance of formative assessment and reducing reliance on traditional standardized

tests. This finding reflects the impact of the course on teachers' perspectives and their adoption of student-centered assessment practices (Namgung et al., 2021). Furthermore, the participants reported that the language assessment teacher education course empowered them to exercise greater autonomy and decision-making in assessment practices within their EFL classrooms. This finding suggests that the course provided the teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed and contextually relevant decisions regarding assessment design, implementation, and interpretation (Fazel & Ali, 2022; Ghiasvand et al., 2023; Mansouri et al., 2021). The participants also illuminated the need for practical training, collaboration opportunities, and ongoing professional development to boost their understanding and application of assessment concepts in real classrooms (Brown & Remesal, 2012; Levy-Vered & Alhija, 2018). This finding highlights the significance of providing teachers with continuous support and opportunities for growth in assessment.

The participants identified other major impacts of the language assessment teacher education course on their classroom agency as assessors. The effects encompassed various aspects such as aligning with curriculum and learning objectives, promoting reflective practice and metacognitive awareness, fostering collaborative assessment practices, enhancing student and teacher engagement and empowerment, and facilitating differentiation and flexibility in assessment. Some researchers like Lee and Jeon (2024) as well as DeLuca et al. (2024) found that the participants attested to the effectiveness of the teacher education course supporting the alignment of their assessment practices with curriculum and learning objectives. They also noted that the course would improve their reflective skills and metacognitive awareness (Härmälä, 2023; López, 2023). Additionally, the participants would engage in collaborative assessment practices, such as co-designing assessments and sharing assessment data with colleagues (Cong-Lem, 2024; Varier et al., 2024). The course would also empower them to involve students actively in the assessment process (Phakiti & Steinhoff, 2023; Yin & Park, 2023). Furthermore, it would enhance their ability to design and implement differentiated assessment strategies (Khan et al., 2023; Samaie & Valizadeh, 2023).

The second research question revolved around the challenges and opportunities faced by EFL teachers in translating the knowledge and skills gained through a language assessment teacher education course to enhance their assessment agency and professional development. The findings showcased several dimensions of challenges and opportunities, including adapting assessment methods to varied student population, designing authentic and meaningful assessments, the effectiveness of performance-based assessments, critical and reflective stance toward language assessment, the need for constant training and collaboration, and focusing on emerging assessment trends and technologies. The participants identified adapting assessment methods to a diverse student population as a major challenge. This finding highlights the intricacy of assessment in diverse classrooms and the need for teachers to consider students' perceived needs and proficiency levels when designing assessments (Guerrero & Camargo-Abello, 2023; Hargreaves, 2004), Polatcan et al., 2023). The participants also posited particular emphasis on the opportunity to design authentic and meaningful assessments that truly reflect students' language abilities. This finding

suggests that the knowledge and skills gained through the course can empower teachers to create assessments that align with student needs and learning goals.

The participants also pinpointed on the effectiveness of incorporating formative and performance-based assessments into teaching practice. This finding implies that these assessment techniques can strengthen student learning outcomes and provide students and teachers with valuable feedback (Ghiasvand et al., 2023; Gosling, 2000; Poulton, 2020; Soini et al., 2015; Verberg et al., 2016). Moreover, the participants referred to the seminal role of developing a critical and reflective stance toward language assessment, which is in accord with the worldviews of Rogers and Wetzel (2013) and Soini et al. (2015), advising that teachers need to constantly promote their assessment practices and stay abreast of emerging assessment trends and technologies. The participants determined the need for constant training, collaboration, and ongoing professional development as crucial for translating the knowledge and skills gained through the course into practice. This finding highlights the significance of providing teachers with constant support and opportunities for growth in assessment (Namgung et al., 2021; Soini et al., 2015). The participants also accentuated the seminal role collaboration with colleagues played in developing a comprehensive and inclusive approach to language assessment.

Several challenges were specified by the teacher participants in translating their language assessment knowledge and skills into practice to foster their assessment agency. The challenges presented in this study encompassed ethical aspects within language assessment, addressing issues like bias, fairness, and inclusivity. Additionally, the significance of maintaining confidentiality and privacy during the gleaning and analysis of assessment data was emphasized. Consistent with the recent research by Nazari et al. (2024) and Faryabi et al. (2024), participants in this study stressed the emotional and psychological hurdles encountered while adopting innovative assessment methods, including feelings of anxiety, resistance, and self-efficacy concerns. Additionally, the participants discussed how the application of their assessment knowledge and skills influenced student learning outcomes, motivation, and engagement, emphasizing the need for teachers' reflections on the positive and/or negative impacts of their assessment practices on students which supports the findings of Nieminen (2024). Concurring with the findings of Krulatz et al. (2024) and DeLuca et al. (2024), the participants in this study underscored the role of collaboration with colleagues, subject-matter experts, or assessment specialists in supporting their efforts to apply their assessment knowledge and skills, and considered strategies to develop their assessment literacy and expertise over time. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the challenges posed by institutional policies, curricula, or administrative requirements that may hinder their ability to implement the knowledge and skills gained from the language assessment teacher education course, all acknowledging the results in Yin and Park's (2023) and Ekin et al.'s (2024) study.

Overall, the findings showcase the significance of comprehensive teacher education programs that equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to design assessments that accurately reflect students' language abilities and promote student-centered assessment practices. The findings also underscore the dire need for constant support, collaboration, and ongoing professional development to intensify teachers' assessment agency and contribute to their overall professional growth. While this study contributes

to the literature on teacher assessment agency, further empirical evidence is required to more deeply explore the complex interplay between teacher professional development, assessment practices, and the multifaceted contextual factors that enable or hinder teachers in exercising their assessment agency within the classroom.

Conclusion and implications

The research findings indicate that the language assessment teacher education course has drastically impacted EFL teachers' approach to assessing students' language skills in the classroom. It has promoted the teachers' assessment agency and contributed to their overall professional development in the field of EFL teaching. The course has improved teachers' understanding of assessment methods and techniques. It has raised their confidence and competence in assessment, and enriched their assessment tools and resources. It also fosters a shift in attitudes, enabling teachers to exert greater autonomy and decision-making in assessment. The study also illuminates the need for enduring support and development opportunities, including practical training, collaboration, and professional development focused on emerging assessment trends and technologies. Adjusting assessments to diverse student populations is identified both as a challenge and an opportunity to design more authentic and meaningful assessments. The effectiveness of formative and performance-based assessments is recognized as a valuable approach. Likewise, a critical and reflective stance toward assessment is emphasized. Constant training, collaboration, and advocacy for student-centered assessment practices are underlined as important power meters for EFL teachers to pursue.

As for implications of the study, firstly, the study stresses the importance of providing EFL teachers with language assessment teacher education courses that enhance their assessment agency and professional development. These courses should prioritize developing teachers' understanding of assessment methods and techniques, enhancing their confidence and competence in assessment practices, and empowering them to have more autonomy and decision-making in assessments. It is important to provide continued support opportunities for growth to EFL teachers, including practical training, collaboration, and professional development that focuses on current assessment trends and technological advancements.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of addressing the challenges faced by EFL teachers in translating the knowledge and skills gained from language assessment teacher education courses. Teacher educators and language and education policymakers should offer support and resources to aid EFL teachers in adapting assessment methods to miscellaneous student populations, designing authentic and meaningful assessments, and developing a critical and reflective standpoint toward language assessment. Persistent training, mentorship, and collaboration opportunities should also be presented so as to buttress EFL teachers in integrating new assessment practices into their teaching repertoire and upholding student-centered assessment practices.

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study was conducted with a specified group of EFL teachers in a determined context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research should seek to replicate the study with a more gigantic and varied sample of EFL teachers to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Future research can also take advantage

of multiple data collection methods to extend our apprehension of the impact of language assessment teacher education on EFL teachers' assessment agency and professional growth path. Secondly, the study hinged on self-reported data from EFL teachers, which may cause bias and social desirability effects. Mixed-methods approaches can be also employed to triangulate the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of language assessment teacher education on EFL teachers' assessment agency and professional development trajectory.

Further research is needed to build upon these findings and explore the impact of language assessment teacher education in different contexts such as ESL and EAP settings and with different groups of EFL teachers, including novice and experienced individuals. It is recommended to provide language assessment teacher education courses for teachers of virtual classes, focusing on assessment methods and developing their confidence and competence in assessment practices. Ongoing support and professional development opportunities should be offered, including practical training, collaboration, and awareness of emerging assessment trends and technologies like technology-enhanced assessments and assessment in the digital environment, among others. Additionally, an interesting line of further research could explore the contribution of assessment agency to teacher assessment identity. Prior studies by Author (2023, 2024) have emphasized the significant role of assessment agency in shaping teachers' assessment identity and professional growth. Examining the interplay between these constructs could yield valuable insights into how language assessment education can better support the development of EFL teachers and their classroom practices. Finally, the other avenue of research could be exploring the long-term effects of language assessment teacher education courses and programs on teachers' assessment agency and student learning outcomes.

Appendix 1
Open-Ended Questionnaire

1. How has the language assessment teacher education course influenced your approach to assessing students' language skills in the classroom?
2. In what specific ways has the course enhanced your confidence and competence as an assessor of students' language abilities?
3. Can you provide examples of how the course has impacted your ability to create and use effective assessment tools and techniques in your EFL classroom?
4. Have you noticed any changes in your attitudes and beliefs toward language assessment since completing the teacher education course? If so, can you describe these changes?
5. How do you perceive the impact of the course on your autonomy and decision-making as an assessor in your EFL classroom?
6. In what ways do you think the course could be further improved to better support EFL teachers in their role as language assessors?

Appendix 2

Narrative Inquiry

As an EFL teacher who has completed a language assessment teacher education course, I have encountered various challenges and opportunities in translating the knowledge and skills I gained to promote my assessment agency and contribute to my overall professional development. In this regard, I would like to seek your insights on the following points:

1. One of the main challenges I have faced in translating the knowledge and skills gained from the language assessment teacher education course is _____ _____.

2. An opportunity that I have identified in applying the knowledge and skills from the course to promote my assessment agency is _____.

3. When it comes to integrating the acquired knowledge and skills into my teaching practice, I find that _____.

4. In terms of contributing to my overall professional development, the language assessment teacher education course has helped me to _____ _.

5. A specific area where I believe further support or resources are needed to effectively translate the knowledge and skills gained from the course into practice is _____ _____.

6. Looking ahead, I envision that by leveraging the knowledge and skills acquired, I can _____ to enhance my role as an EFL teacher and assessor.

Abbreviations

CAQDAS   Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CVI   Content Validity Index
EFL   English as a Foreign Language
ICR   Intercoder reliability
KSETs   Korean secondary English teachers
L2   Second language
PQA   Phenomenographic qualitative analysis
TBA   Teacher-based assessment
TEA   Teacher ecological assessment agency
TEFL   Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Author's contributions
The study was conceptualized, conducted, written, edited, and approved for publication by a single author acting independently throughout the research process.

Availability of data and materials
The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate
All procedures performed in the study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all the individual participants included in this study.

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