A New Dilemma for Language Teachers and Students: Self-assessment or Teacher Assessment*

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Abstract

Transitioning smoothly from traditional learning of language to independent learning and consequently, moving from teacher-assessment to self-assessment faces teachers with a dilemma of deciding on learners' final improvement. To assist to eliminate this dilemma and to compare learners' self-assessment of reading comprehension skills with those of teacher assessment, the present study was set out. To this end, 190 B.S. Iranian engineering students were selected based on intact classes. The participants' proficiency was determined by the Oxford Quick Placement Test. Prior to the instruction, the participants' ability to use two reading skills, i.e. scanning and skimming was assessed by their instructor and by themselves through using a Likert Scale questionnaire. After instructing each skill, the participants received post-tests, both self-assessment and teacher assessment. Following the post-self-assessment, the participants answered an open-ended questionnaire to reflect on their assessment. To analyze the data and understand the differences and correlations between the two types of assessments, SPSS was performed. Intriguingly, the results from self- and teacher-assessment were pro-self-assessment. Besides, the outcomes of the open-ended questionnaire indicated that it is time to trust learners and allow them to assess their own learning and decide on their learning process.

Keywords: *self-assessment, teacher-assessment, reading comprehension*

1. Introduction

Over recent decades, a shift has been seen in the way of research addressing students' learning and assessment. It is not considered as a simple learning process grounding on the transmission of information from teacher to student anymore. Recently, it has been regarded as a process by which students contribute actively in their learning and constructing their own knowledge and skills instead of memorizing and rote learning of transmitted information. In line with changes in teaching approaches, alterations also have been seen in testing and assessment methods. In recent views, assessment is not deemed as a separate activity from teaching and learning but it is thought of as a constituent part of instruction. Consequently, today's challenge is linking teaching and learning to the assessment to enable learners to achieve high levels of competence through critical thinking and problem-solving abilities to use their information and knowledge in their appropriate contexts. In this perspective, i.e. 'learning-centered learning', it is students' interaction with the subject and discussing it with others that leads to meaning internalization and connection with their schema (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Along with this shift in the conceptualization of teaching and learning and assessment, a parallel shift has emerged in higher education but at a slower pace. In Higher education, teaching and particularly assessment and the generated feedbacks are still mostly controlled by the teacher, a system which has been recently challenged by some influential researchers like Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006), Yorke (2003), Boud (2000), and Sadler (1998). Because through this procedure, understanding of how students empowered and developed the required self-regulation skills to be able to learn outside of universities is difficult (Boud, 2000) and the transmitted feedback from the teacher to students is not easily transformed to action (Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2001). Sadler (1998) argues that the intention of formative assessment is generating feedback to improve and enhance students' learning. Then, he continues his argument that this kind of assessment and feedback are recommended to be used in higher

education to enable students to form a self-regulation construct whereby the students set their ambition, thinking, and behaviors to reach defined goals. In addition, from the perspective of teachers' workload, due to growth in the number of students and classes, the teachers' workload increases in higher education every year. One effective way of dealing with this concern is to transfer the assessment responsibility to students themselves or perform co-assessment, which needs teachers' trust in students' self-assessment. Considering the university students' needs to develop self-regulation skills and lightening teacher's burden, training and using self-assessment in higher education seems essential.

2. Review of literature

Traditional tests' failure to enable students to demonstrate the multidimensional aspects of their learning process lead researchers and teachers to shift attention from traditional one-shot testing to more authentic methods which are performed by the cooperation of teachers and students i.e. the method of evaluation changed from psychometric to educational assessment. Consequently, the world of language teaching and testing has witnessed the emergence of new assessment terminologies throwing light upon both semantic and conceptual changes. One of these terminologies is *Alternatives in Assessments* which was introduced and came into vogue to motivate and encourage learners to examine and take advantage of their cognitive, socio-cognitive, and social dimensions. Of important objectives of this paradigm was to inspire critical thinking and creativity in the learners. In other words, learners are assessed in terms of their ability to create, produce, and perform instead of recall and reproduce (Brown, 2010). By including several methods of assessments such as portfolios, journals, peer/self-assessment, observation, alternatives attempt to focus on process as well as product and transfer some of the power to the students regarding judgment on their learning (Coombe, Folse, & Hubley, 2007). Student-involved assessment can be carried out to adjust the instruction according to the individual(s) needs. It also can provide the possibility to continually reflect on and revise the instruction based on the results (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002).

Considering as an essential component of the teaching-learning process, McNamee and Jie-Qi, C. (2005) divided assessment into three types: a) assessment of learning, b) assessment for learning, and c) assessment as learning. In the first type, i.e. 'assessment of learning', the focus is on assessment as an indication of success, not on its cause. In other words, in this paradigm, the students are considered as passive without any engagement in the process of producing information. In contrast, in the "assessment for learning, the aim of the assessment goes beyond the mere measurement and concentrate on engaging and motivating students' learning. 'Assessment as learning' using different assessment strategies including self-assessment focuses on metacognitive skills and promotes students to be lifelong learners. For an assessment to be more effective, it is required that both students and teachers take responsibility (Boud, 2010). Boud also continues that formative assessment and particularly assessment for learning includes more promising assessment strategies to nourish and enhance student-centered approach implying the use of participative strategies like self/peer-assessment and co-assessment. Therefore, we can conclude that self-assessment can be a starting line for students to take part in the process of assessment and learning. Lorente-Catala´n and Kirk (2016, p. 79) argue that

Assessment has to be diagnostic, inclusive, connected with other units and balance summative and formative strategies. Assessment tasks have to be aligned with learning outcomes, clarifying assessment expectations, engaging them in criteria setting, providing feedback and self-regulation through participative strategies of assessment as self-assessment and peer-assessment.

Despite the rising interest in understanding and applying new trends in language testing, alternatives in assessment, our knowledge of these trends, and also, teachers' perceptions of its practices and subsequent results are still quite limited. In this regard, different research also studied the teachers' perceptions and practices of assessment as learning and concluded that teachers do not apply formative assessment and mostly resort to summative ones although they showed positive

beliefs and attitudes toward formative ones (Büyükkarcı, 2014; Andrews, 2016).

2.1. Self-assessment

Considering self-assessment as a fundamental element in learning, Crooks (2001) asserts that in order to have effective feedback on assessment, students should accept the possibility of their works' improvement. Also, they need to realize what elements of their work can be improved and enhanced. Accordingly, evaluation statements such as 'great', 'good' or 'week' or use of grades like 'B' or 6/10 are of limited value to indicate teacher's feedback on students' performance. To put it in other words, they can not communicate to students what they have accomplished and what they need to improve. When students are trained and supported to evaluate and give feedback on their own work, assessment can powerfully promote students' learning. Coombe, et al. (2007, p. 141) refer to the necessity of self-assessment to build learners' autonomy and writes "Students will not always have a teacher to guide them. As they progress through life, they will usually have to rely on their assessments of what they know and don't know…teachers can promote learner autonomy through self-assessment". However, it should be mention that when it is talked about students' involvement in the process of assessment, it does not parallel to students' contribution in the decision-making process concerning the content of learned and tested materials or assigning grades. Rather, it means that students are provided with the possibility to assess information to direct their learning and consequently decide on their position on the defined continuum of learning targets and plan their next steps.

On the surface level, self-assessment seems to be a simple action including mere checking off the answers and grading, but it is much more in deeper levels. McMillan and Hearn (2008, p.41) explain self-assessment as a process whereby students obtain the abilities encouraging them to monitor and evaluate their thinking and learning process as well as to find strategies to improve their understanding and skills. They conceptualize self-assessment as "the combination of three components related in a cyclical, ongoing process: self-monitoring,

self-evaluation, and identification and implementation of instructional correctives as needed". These authors assert that if self-assessment implemented appropriately, it can lead students to foster their intrinsic motivation, control their efforts internally, be a master in orienting their goals and participate in their own learning process by providing useful feedback on their work and internalizing the external criteria of success. As students assess their work and generate feedback, they gain the ability to regulate themselves by controlling their own learning, that is, by this shift from teacher assessment to self-assessment, learners are seen to have a proactive role not reactive in generating and taking advantage of the feedbacks (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). After observing their students' ability to use feedbacks, Boud (2000) and Yorks (2003) concluded that teachers need to try to strengthen the self-assessment skills in their students as well as attempt to improve the quality of feedback. In the literature, different objectives are mentioned for self-assessment. Here we point to five which are common: 1. promoting learning, 2. improving goal orientation, 3. raising the level of awareness, 4. Sharing responsibility and burden of assessment, 5. Constructive long-term effects (Brown, 2010; Coombe, Folse, & Hubley, 2007 & Mousavi, 1999). Research shows that if self-assessment set up and performed appropriately, it can lead to substantial motivation and enhance learning (McDonald & Boud, 2003; Taras, 2001, 2002, 2003).

As mentioned, most of the studies which have been done in the literature, have insisted on the correct implementation of self-assessment and confirm that only under this condition it can lead to promising feedback. But how can it be carried out? What strategies needed? Atkin, Black, & Coffey (2001) described a formative assessment model in which learners constantly seek answers to the following questions: "where am I trying to go?", "where am I now?" and "how do I close the gap?". To answer these questions, first students ought to clearly articulate their learning targets. In that, learning happens when learners are aware of their goals and the purpose of reaching those goals. So, it is the teachers' responsibility to help

students by asking students to clarify their goals of lessons. Then, to distinguish their positions (answering the second question), students can use the feedback from the teacher or compare their own work to a high-quality model to reflect on their own learning with the anticipated learning. At the third stage, after understanding their position and the existed gap, they need to plan to close it by answering questions like "How can I improve my work?", What changes do I need to make in my learning process?", "How can I make these changes?", "Can I get help? and from whom?", "What sources can I use?". Training these models of question-and-answer strategies leads learners to benefit from self-assessment and generated feedback (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002).

2.2. Statement of the problem

The reciprocal relationship between teaching and testing leads testing trends to experience alterations following changes in teaching approaches. In the traditional education systems, teachers make decisions on students achievement; however, with the shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches emphasizing fostering autonomous learning and along with it, shifting from *assessment of learning* to *assessment as learning*, learners' role in the education system and making decisions about their learning process was highlighted. They have become more responsible in their learning through being involved in the process of assessment. Fostering an autonomous learning environment is one of the objectives of alternatives in assessment, which seems to be a challenging job for university teaching and learning (Zabalza, 2001 cited in Lorente-Catalan & Kirk, 2016) especially in contexts with an exam-oriented culture like Iran. In these contexts, students are typically assessed by summative tests at the end of the course prepared by the teachers or the institutes implying a product-oriented pedagogy without concerning the processes indicative of students' improvement. As the university is the last educational context to learn self-assessment strategies and self-regulation skills to be an autonomous learner after the university, it is required that students be familiar with these types of assessment and regulations especially in contexts like Iran. However, maybe due to

administrators and teachers and sometimes even students' mistrust in self-assessment, they mostly avoid self-assessment in practice. Considering this issue and the scarcity of study on the accuracy of self-assessment and students' perspective on it in the higher education context, the present study was set off and the following research questions were raised:

1) Is there any significant difference between the means of Iranian EFL engineering students' self-assessment and that of their teacher's assessment?
2) Is there any correlational relationship between Iranian EFL engineering students' self-assessment and assessment of their teacher?
3) What is the students' feedback on their own assessment? Could they trust their own assessment?

3. Method
3.1. Participants
Participants of the present study consisted of 190 B.S Iranian first-year students majoring in engineering at the University of Tabriz and Sahand University of Technology. The participants are in both genders having been selected randomly on the basis of intact classes. Six intact classes were selected at the University of Tabriz and Sahand University of Technology, Iran. Considering that reaching a complete homogeneity is not possible in foreign language learning contexts, the Oxford Quick Placement Test was administered to reach a relative homogeneity regarding the participants' English language proficiency. Their proficiency levels were determined according to their scores on the test. The data were collected during normal university classes. All the participants took the General English course as a compulsory subject.

3.2. Materials
3.2.1 Oxford Quick Placement Test (version 2)
In order to eliminate the effects of language proficiency levels of participants on their performance and assessment, OQPT, Oxford Quick Placement Test, was administered prior to the study. This test consists of two parts, including 60 multiple-choice items, supposed to

be completed with 30-45 minutes. The participants, then, were placed in basic, elementary, and intermediate proficiency levels, according to the scores in the OQPT test.

3.2.2 Reading comprehension texts

In this study, nine reading comprehension texts taken from *Inside Academic Reading* series were used. These books are published by Oxford University Press in different proficiency levels to provide useful academic reading texts. The participants in each proficiency level received two texts. It is mentionable that each of these prepared texts followed by explanatory questions relating to reading skills, taken from the books themselves, were used by teachers in the pre-test, post-test.

3.2.3 Self-assessment questionnaires

Coombe, et al. (2007) introduce several self-assessment including student progress cards, rating scales, checklists, learner diaries, and questionnaires. In the present study, due to the large population, we decided to use the Likert Scale questionnaire to be able to check all the participants' self-assessments. As McLeod (2019) points out, a Likert Scale with its fixed choice format provides the possibility to measure opinions objectively due to yielding quantitative data. In this questionnaire, we used statements about their abilities like "I know how to find keywords in the text". Also, at the end of the post-self-assessment questionnaire, an open-ended questionnaire was used to have the participants' feedback on their assessment. To consider in detail, we purposefully selected 40 of these post-questionnaires in which open-ended items were answered. It is mentionable that the questionnaires were prepared in the participants' native language, i.e. Persian to avoid any misunderstanding of statements.

3.3. Procedure

In the present study, a mixed research methodology was used. Callahan (2006) believes that regularly presenting self-assessments at the beginning and end of the class provides the students with time to evaluate themselves regarding how well they have grasped the targeted concepts and new skills. Self-assessments before and at the end of the instruction offer the opportunity to the learners to perceive

what and how much they have learned and what is their existing challenges. Therefore, pre-test and post-test design, including self-assessment and teacher assessment, was adopted to collect data. Prior to the main study, the questionnaires were piloted to 30 other freshmen engineering students whose proficiency level was also estimated by OQPT. The obtained outcomes showed that some items are vague or lengthy and sometimes repetitive. Therefore, the required revisions were applied and checked by three experts in the field for final confirmation.

All the participants received a teacher assessment and a questionnaire as a self-assessment before instruction along with related prepared text to decide on their knowledge of intended reading skills. After instructing the skill, the post-test was administered with another text with explanatory questions that were taken from the sourcebook along with another self-assessment questionnaire. In this study, the researcher was the instructor of the General Language course and explained to the students how to answer questionnaires as their self-assessment and teacher's tests.

4. Results

The results of the present study will be considered in two sections. In the quantitative part of data analysis, the required statistical tests were performed to address the first and second research questions to examine whether there are any differences and correlations between teacher testing and self-assessment of participants. Then, we tried to answer the third question by finding common points in the participants' answers to open-ended items about their feedback on self-assessment and their trust in their assessment.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics of Scores

The descriptive results relevant to the obtained scores, including the estimated values of skewedness ratio and kurtosis ratio, appear below in Tables 1 and 2. As Table1 reveals, the distribution of the pretest scores for scanning was normal as both skewedness (-0.021/0.183 = -0.11; 0.222/0.183 = 1.21) and kurtosis (-0.34/0.363 = -0.94; -0.469/0.364 = -1.29) ratios fell within the legitimate range of ±1.96. As

Tabachnick & Fidell (2007) asserts this point supports the normality of distributions. However, both skimming scores lacked normalcy as their skewedness ratios (-0.412/0.183 = -2.25; 0.638/0.194 = 3.29) fell outside the above-mentioned legitimate range.

The distribution for all sets of posttest scores, Table 2, had skewedness ratios (0.312/0.183 = 1.7; 0.069/0.183 = 0.38; -0.293/0.183 = -1.60; 0.107/0.183 = 0.58) falling within the legitimate range of ±1.96, supporting the normality of distributions (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The kurtosis ratios for self-assessment scores kurtosis (-0.112/0.363 = -0.31; 0.141/0.363 = 0.39) as well as scanning teacher assessed one (-0.217/0.363 = -0.60) was also normal while the skimming score in the teacher-assessment was not; -0.753/0.363 = -2.07).

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics for teacher and self-assessments of the pre-test scores

		N Statistic	Min. Statistic	Max. Statistic	Mean Statistic	SD Statistic	Skewedness Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error
Self-Assessment	Scanning	177	17.00	33.00	25.4463	3.27155	-.021	.183	-.340	.363
	Skimming	177	14.00	30.00	22.8192	3.51637	-.412	.183	-.255	.363
Teacher-Assessment	Scanning	176[a]	2.50	65.00	33.3153	14.64967	.222	.183	-.469	.364
	Skimming	156[b]	2.50	55.00	20.0641	13.88370	.638	.194	-.748	.386
Valid N (listwise)		156								

a: 1 missing case; b: 21 missing cases

Table 2.

Descriptive statistics for teacher and self-assessments of the post-test scores

		N Statistic	Min. Statistic	Max. Statistic	Mean Statistic	SD Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error
Self-Assessment	Scanning	177	23.00	39.00	31.3107	3.04130	.312	.183	-.112	.363
	Skimming	177	17.00	29.00	22.0226	2.45865	.069	.183	.141	.363
Teacher-Assessment	Scanning	177	32.50	97.50	66.8136	14.45415	-.293	.183	-.217	.363
	Skimming	177	25.00	95.00	55.5226	16.37078	.107	.183	-.753	.363
Valid N (listwise)		177								

4.2. Answering Research Questions 1 and 2

Due to the violation of the assumption of normality of distribution, non-parametric formulas had to be employed to answer research questions 1 and 2. As stated earlier, the driving force behind the study was to systematically investigate both the difference and correlation between the self-assessment of Iranian EFL engineering students and their teachers. To answer these questions, non-parametric dependent samples tests, as well as non-parametric correlation tests, were run on both pretest and posttest scores of the participants.

In order to answer the first research question and investigate the existence of the difference between mean scores of self-assessment and teacher assessment, a non-parametric Wilcoxon rank-order test was carried out. The participants' ranks in both pretest and posttest are presented in Table 3.

Based on the results presented in Table 3, it is evident that in all of the cases the teacher-assessment scores (positive ranks) had higher ranks than self-assessment ones (negative ranks). To see if these differences were significant, the results of the Wilcoxon test were referred to.

Table 3.
Participants' Ranks in Pretest and Posttest

			N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Pretest	T.Scanning-S.Scanning	Negative Ranks	48	62.67	3008.00
		Positive Ranks	123	95.11	11698.00
		Ties	5		
		Total	176		
	T.Skimming S.Skimming	-Negative Ranks	59	70.71	4172.00
		Positive Ranks	95	81.72	7763.00
		Ties	2		
		Total	156		
	Teacher Assessment Self Assessment	Negative Ranks	143	154.43	22084.00
		Positive Ranks	182	169.73	30891.00
		Ties	7		
		Total	332		
Posttest	T.Scanning-S.Scanning	Negative Ranks	1	1.00	1.00
		Positive Ranks	175	89.00	15575.00
		Ties	1		
		Total	177		
	T.Skimming S.Skimming	-Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00
		Positive Ranks	176	88.50	15576.00
		Ties	1		
		Total	177		
	Teacher Assessment Self Assessment	Negative Ranks	1	1.00	1.00
		Positive Ranks	351	177.00	62127.00
		Ties	2		
		Total	354		

Table 4.
Wilcoxon Rank-Order Test

	Pretest			Posttest		
	T.Scanning - S.Scanning	T.Skimming - S.Skimming	Teacher Assessment - Self Assessment	T.Scanning - S.Scanning	T.Skimming - S.Skimming	Teacher Assessment – Self Assessment
Z	-6.702[a]	-3.240[a]	-2.598[a]	-11.505[a]	-11.506[a]	-16.260[a]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.009	.000	.000	.000

a. Based on negative ranks.

Regarding the results presented in Table 4, the existence of a significant difference between the teacher- and self-assessment ranks for all paired samples is evident.

To seek an answer to the second research question and systematically examine the relationship between self-assessment and teacher-assessment, the data obtained from pretest and posttest were analyzed performing the Spearman rank-order correlation which is a non-parametric formula. The results of these analyses have been shown in Table 5.

Table 5.
Spearman's Correlation between Self-Assessment and Teacher Assessment Scores

		Pretest		Posttest		Total
		Teacher Assessment Scanning	Teacher Assessment Skimming	Teacher Assessment Scanning	Teacher Assessment Skimming	Teacher Assessment
Pretest	Spearman's rho	.431[**]	.146	.276[**]	.221[**]	

Self-Assessment Scanning	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.070	.000	.003	
	N	176	156	177	177	
Self-Assessment Skimming	Spearman's rho	.316**	.397**	.197**	.252**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.008	.001	
	N	176	156	177	177	
Self-Assessment (Total)	Spearman's rho					.472**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000
	N					332
Posttest Self-Assessment Scanning	Spearman's rho	.361**	.130	.447**	.225**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.106	.000	.003	
	N	176	156	177	177	
Self-Assessment Skimming	Spearman's rho	.242**	.332**	.334**	.502**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	
	N	176	156	177	177	
	Spearman's rho					.523**

Self-	Sig. (2-				.000
Assessment	tailed)				
(Total)	N				354

According to the results of the analysis (Table 5), it was deduced that there was a significant and positive correlation between self-assessment and teacher assessment ($\rho_{pretest} = .472$, $n = 332$, $p < .01$, signifying a medium effect size; $\rho_{posttest} = .523$, $n = 354$, $p < .01$, signifying a large effect size), and high self-assessed scores were associated with high teacher-assessed scores. A significant association existed across scanning and skimming scores in both pretest and posttest. It should be noted that the effect sizes in correlational analyses could directly be interpreted by the correlation coefficients. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), the correlation coefficient between .1 to .29 is considered with low effect size, coefficients between .3 to .49 as medium effect size, and coefficients more than .5 as large effect size.

4.3. Answering the Research Questions

To have the participants' feedback on the outcomes of their self-assessment, we used open-ended questions leading to a heuristic inquiry paradigm encouraging researchers to admit the importance of participants' voices. Examining the participants' voices provided researchers with a deeper understanding of their reaction to self-assessment. We used a constant comparison method to find common key points and themes. Different themes emerged from these analyses. One of the themes that emerged in this study was finding the gaps in the knowledge of reading skills. The participants believed that when they assessed themselves prior to instruction, they could find out what their problems were, how to manage their problems, and how to plan to learn:

F: *During the instruction, I knew what I should focus on.*

Also after instruction, they could estimate what they have learned and not learned to try to compensate in subsequent sessions:

G: *It was after filling the second questionnaire and seeing our teacher's assessment that I could get what was the story.*

The other emerged theme was concerning familiarity with the assessment criteria. As stated by one of the participants (H) by this kind of testing:

H: *I always have a problem with my studying. I am confused about what I should study and get ready for the exam. I don't know what the teacher wants and how should I study. After seeing these exams and teacher's, I somehow know what I should do.*

L: *Of course, sometimes I doubted his marks (laughing). Because, I thought I would be 20 (20 0ut of 20) but I get, for example, 18. I thought maybe the teacher had not corrected the papers well... but know I didn't know what the teacher minded.*

The third important common point regarded their acceptance of the responsibility of assessment in the class.

A: *I always thought that I could only trust the teacher. When we were high school students, our teacher gave other students' papers to correct. I thought that this is due to our teacher's busyness. At the end of the class, I wanted him or sometimes my father to correct it again. After this event, I understood that even I myself could correct my answers... if the teacher how should I do it?*

Most of them mentioned that they were satisfied with their assessments during the semester but they were not sure about the final exam. For example, B wrote:

B: *assessing myself is good but I am not sure about correcting my final exam.*

5. Discussion
The results related to the existence of a difference between the participants' assessments and teacher assessments showed a significant difference. Comparing the results, it is found that the participants' evaluation of their own was lower than that of the teacher. As found and discussed by Thawabieh (2017), it can be due to participants'

underestimation or overestimation of themselves. Because the present study was not longitudinal, we couldn't consider this issue in detail but the study by Thawabieh (2017) showed that the existed difference in the first assessment was removed in the second assessment, and the teachers' assessment was close to students' one. This can be due to students' familiarity with the evaluation criteria and learning to assess themselves objectively.

Overall, the present study showed a positive and significant correlation existed between teacher assessment and self-assessment of learning reading comprehension skills. Thus, it lends credence to the findings of Lee (2011), Han and Riazi (2017), Leach (2012), Thawabieh (2017), and Mozaffarzadeh (2019). They also could find a weak to the medium but statistically significant correlation between teacher assessment and learners' self-assessment.

Considering the issue from the participants' perspective, self-assessment helps students to be aware of gaps in their knowledge of reading skills and plan for their future learning. It can be said self-assessment fosters their self-directing learning and leads learners to be meta-cognitively aware of the process of learning through reflecting on their learning; this is what Han and Riazi (2017) consider as "the core values of self-assessment as a formative assessment tool" (p. 10). Thus, it can be argued that in contrast to merely marking up students' mistakes and omissions, the constructive feedback obtained by the students through self-assessment and comparing it with that of the teacher channels students to better understanding and learning throughout the learning process.

Inducing from the participants' answers, self-assessment also aids them to understand the criteria of evaluation and the issues that teachers mind during the assessment procedure, as considered one of the aims of self-assessment (Mousavi, 1999). Regarding accepting the responsibility of the assessment by students and trust in the results, as mentioned in the result sections, the participants could believe in their own assessment but only during the semester not as a defining tool of success at the final exams. It can be discussed that this issue of lack of

trust refers to the culture and presupposition that it is the teacher who is responsible for testing and making a final decision about the number of students learning especially in the higher education levels.

6. Conclusion

In order to increase students' learning, correct and efficient assessing procedures as an integral part of effective instruction are demanded. With the aim of good and strong assessment, it is critical for a teacher to consider her / his students' level of knowledge, skills, talents, and learning styles and strategies when s/he plans for good instruction and assessment. Traditionally, Teacher has been liable for assessment and continues to be, perhaps, because they are considered as expertise and owner of knowledge that is the foundation of assessing student's performance. But, the published studies indicated that self/peer-assessment, negotiated assessment and co-assessment can be integrated into the design and instruction if we desire to entirely involve learners in their learning process, whereby they can acquire the skills required to be life-long learners and evaluators (Lorente & Kirk, 2014; Sadler, 2010; Lo´pez-Pastor, 2008 and Carless, Joughin and Mok, 2006). To put it another way, the importance of self-assessment is not limited to their education period; it is required even more after students' graduation and in their real-life. Therefore, they need to be trained in the educational phase as self-assessors to be able to evaluate their performance and search for ways to improve the quality of their work when they were left on their own.

The aim of the present study was to compare the self-assessment of learners with that of teachers along with the participants' perspectives on self-assessment. The results showed that students are capable of assessing themselves even more accurately if they are trained in the process of assessment and learn about assessment criteria. Additionally, involving in self-assessment and being familiar with the criteria can persuade students to trust in teachers' assessment results and avoid being doubtful of made decisions at least in a classroom context.

Our assumption as with Lee's (2011) is that the unpopularity of self-assessment in higher education can be the result of a) the lack of

students' self-assurance on their own assessment and their belief that assessment and evaluation are teachers' responsibility and it is more trustable. Teachers, administrators, and even students themselves are not ready to trust their assessment as reliable indicators of students' learning and achievement at least in the summative and large-scale tests. b) Usually, in higher education contexts, the number of the students in each is class more than 40 and teachers cannot control and comment on all the feedbacks made by the student whether their feedbacks are acceptable or not.

Increasingly proposed and used in the English classes as foreign language contexts, self-assessment needs to be studied more and in detail. The present study was carried out with a large sample in a short time interval and only for reading skills. Future studies can be done in the long term and for other language skills and sub-skills. Due to the limitations of time and population, we could not study learners introspectively and use the think-loud process. The next studies can do it. To sum up, further studies are required to shed insight into this type of alternatives in assessment to put it in practice in different contexts effectively.

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