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An Investigation of the Effect of Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing and Listening

Mona Ashrafi¹, Neda Fatehi Rad^{2*}, Mohammad Iman Askari³¹ Department of English Language, CT.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran;² Department of English Language, Ke.C., Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran;³ Department of English Language, CT.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

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Abstract

Although previous studies have reported the effectiveness of Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) in different language skills, further empirical evidence is still needed on its application to writing and listening in the Iranian EFL context. This study aimed at investigating the effect of LOA on Iranian EFL learners' writing and listening, using a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test control group design. Two intermediate classes of EFL learners, each consisting of 30 female learners, participated in this study through convenience sampling from a private language school in Tehran. To collect the data, the Quick Placement Test (QPT), a sample IELTS Task 2 Writing, and an IELTS Listening section were used. The data analysis was based on descriptive statistics and independent-samples t-tests. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group on both writing and listening after the intervention, with large effect sizes in both skills. Specifically, the effect sizes were Cohen's $d = 1.38$ for writing and Cohen's $d = 1.26$ for listening. The findings suggest that LOA can help EFL teachers integrate assessment with instruction through goal clarification, continuous feedback, self-assessment, peer assessment, and learner involvement in assessment procedures. They also indicate that curriculum planners may consider LOA-based activities in writing and listening courses for more formative and learner-centered assessment practices.

Keywords: Learning-oriented Assessment (LOA), Listening, Writing, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

I | INTRODUCTION

The cognitive revolution in language learning has led to a movement towards cognitive, metacognitive, and learner-centered learning. As a result of this movement, new teaching and learning methods have emerged with a focus on need analysis, planning, monitoring, evaluation, critical thinking, and so on (Carless, 2015). The emergence of various inquiry-based methods such as Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) is also the product of this movement. The diversity of these methods in terms of teachers' roles, cognitive load of the learning tasks, and the priority given to learning, teaching or assessment is their main characteristic (Beikmohammadi et al., 2020).

LOA is a concrete example of inquiry-based methods. Closely related to this, Rich (2011) argues that assessment procedures should not just address what learners have learned; they should also boost student motivation and engagement throughout the assessment process. LOA motivates learners in



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Corresponding Author: nedafatehi@iau.ac.ir

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goal-setting and recognizing the exercises that help them meet those goals (Turner & Purpura, 2015). In this regard, LOA makes learners more engaged in the learning and assessment processes.

Purpura and Turner (2014) assert that, while in LOA learners show what they have learned and devote additional time to provide more innovative answers, this is not true for traditional assessment. According to Purpura (2016), LOA emphasizes collecting and analyzing performance-oriented information to make decisions about learners' future language progress. Carless (2015) believes that LOA does not aim to reject other kinds of assessment; instead, it seeks to generate a learning-based assessment program that emphasizes learning factors rather than measurement ones. Consequently, LOA is in line with formative assessment since it emphasizes the learning process rather than learning product (Seyed & Tavassoli, 2023).

Reviewing the literature reveals that LOA significantly impacts EFL learning (Estaji & Safari, 2023; Rayani & Fatehi Rad, 2023; Yan & Carless, 2022) by improving learning efficiency and enhancing pedagogical activities. Therefore, LOA can be employed as a strategy for learners' enhancement of their English proficiency. To support this, Esfandiari and Allaf-Akbary (2024) indicated that learners' English interaction was significantly improved under the influence of LOA. Similarly, Navaie (2018) proved that LOA significantly affects EFL pronunciation.

More particularly, previous studies (e.g., Er & Farhady, 2023; Estaji & Safari, 2023; Saygili, 2021; Tavassoli et al., 2023) have shown the effect of LOA on writing in EFL contexts, and other research has also indicated its positive impact on listening comprehension (Ghorbanpour et al., 2021; Turner & Purpura, 2016). Hyland and Hyland (2006) define writing as the organization of phrases and sentences according to regular points. Writing is the process of conveying information and communicating thoughts through written language. Essentially, it functions as a means of interaction in written form (Hidayati, 2018). Likewise, listening plays an essential role in learners' comprehension and interaction as one of the core receptive skills, and LOA can promote it through formative feedback, self-regulation, and peer assessment practices (Ghorbanpour et al., 2021; Turner & Purpura, 2016). However, most of these studies have examined writing and listening separately rather than investigating both skills within a single instructional intervention. In addition, while several studies have reported positive effects of LOA in different EFL contexts, relatively few experimental studies have explored its impact on learners' actual performance in both writing and listening in the Iranian context.

However, both writing and listening remain under-investigated research areas in the context of Iran. More specifically, Iranian researchers (e.g., Beikmohammadi et al., 2020; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Jalilzadeh & Yeganehpour, 2021) have mostly addressed teachers' perceptions of the use of LOA in EFL classes. Additionally, previous studies have mostly described the principles and process of LOA (Er & Farhady, 2023). Therefore, more empirical studies are needed to document the effect of LOA on English skills in general and writing and listening. In particular, there is a need for quasi-experimental research that simultaneously examines the effects of LOA on productive and receptive skills among Iranian EFL learners.

Furthermore, being accustomed to traditional assessment methods has made Iranian EFL teachers resistant to new assessment methods (Gholami et al., 2022). Accordingly, they tend to stick to mainstream static assessments. This is while using traditional assessments is a main problem of the current English language teaching system in Iran.

The present study seeks to address the above gap and problem by examining whether LOA influences EFL learners' writing and listening. Accordingly, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1. Does Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) significantly affect Iranian EFL learners' writing?

RQ2. Does Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) significantly affect Iranian EFL learners' listening?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the relevant literature on the topic of this study. To this end, the theoretical framework of the study is presented followed by LOA. Then, a number of empirical studies are presented.

2.1. Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation of LOA is mainly based on Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Social Constructivism, learning

takes place through social interaction and dialogue with others. From this point of view, assessment should not be limited to measuring what learners have already learned. Rather, it should be used as a means to support learning by involving students in meaningful interaction with their teachers and classmates. The concept of ZPD further supports this view. [Vygotsky \(1978\)](#) defined ZPD as the distance between what learners can do on their own and what they can achieve with the guidance of a more knowledgeable person. In language classrooms, such guidance can be provided through teacher feedback, peer assessment, scaffolding, and collaborative activities. These practices can help learners reflect on their performance, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and gradually take greater responsibility for their own learning ([Navaie, 2018](#)). Therefore, the main principles of LOA are closely related to the sociocultural view that learning develops through interaction and guided support.

In addition to these sociocultural foundations, the present study also draws on the framework proposed by [Turner and Purpura \(2016\)](#). They describe LOA as an assessment approach in which assessment is designed to promote learning rather than merely measure achievement. Their framework includes seven related dimensions: affectiveness, contextuality, elicitation, instruction, interaction, learning, and proficiency. These dimensions indicate that assessment should be integrated with classroom instruction, consider learners' emotional and contextual needs, and provide information that can be used to improve future learning.

Therefore, these theoretical perspectives provide the basis for the present study. Social Constructivism and the ZPD explain how learning can be enhanced through collaboration, feedback, and scaffolded support. [Turner and Purpura's \(2016\)](#) framework further clarifies how assessment can be systematically connected to instruction in order to promote learning. Based on these perspectives, LOA is viewed in this study as a learner-centered approach that involves students in self-assessment, peer assessment, feedback, and reflection, thus supporting the development of writing and listening skills among EFL learners.

2.2. LOA

When considering language assessment, many immediately think of standardized, large-scale and high-stakes exams, which are well-known for offering reliable and valid measurements of learners' knowledge. Yet, they have faced criticism for failing to give teachers detailed insights into the knowledge and competencies essential for students in the 21st century. To provide a more authentic way of assessment which meets these demands, researchers have been trying to re-conceptualize test designs and study the development procedures to come up with a novel assessment way in the 21st century ([Carroll, 2017](#)).

LOA is defined as an approach which emphasizes the ongoing, reciprocal relationship among learning, assessment, and instructional practices in the classroom. Moreover, this approach recognizes the role of educational technology and standards in curriculum development and classroom materials. LOA's goal is to promote effective learning while guiding the progress of assessment practices focused on learning. The influence of feedback, whether positive or negative, is critical in shaping learning outcomes in LOA, as it emphasizes the necessity of comprehending the interplay between learning processes, learners, and key learning indicators ([Carroll, 2017](#)).

The current practices of assessment usually fail to consider learning and its bidirectional interactions with assessment as central, but LOA situates learning at the center. Many remarks have been made about the significance of interrelationship between teaching, learning, and assessment. A framework has been provided by [Purpura and Turner \(2014\)](#) to guide classroom-based assessment and emphasize the role of assessment as a fundamental element in the learning process. Language assessment should be implemented with the goal of promoting learning while taking various effective factors into consideration. [Purpura and Turner \(2014\)](#) believed that the stages and results of learning along with the contributors involved (including teachers and learners themselves) should be placed at the center of the curriculum and they should be the fundamental for instructional decision making. At the same time, assessment tasks should be designed to generate information that can be used to support future learning, close existing learning gaps, and inform classroom instruction. In this regard, [Dean \(2014\)](#) argued that the interaction occurring in classrooms where LOA is implemented can promote deeper understanding and more effective learning.

[Rawlusyk \(2018\)](#) suggested that LOA is built on three key criteria, including feedback, learning activities, and self and peer-assessment, all of which aim to actively engage learners in the assessment process. Through involving students in this way, LOA helps promote skills such as metacognitive abilities, problem-solving, and analytical thinking. These criteria can be described as the following subtitles.

2.2.1. Tasks as learning tasks

One reason for using tasks in classes is to promote learning, and these tasks need to be authentic. Real tasks are more complex and they can integrate abilities and skills and lead to more learning. Authentic assessment can motivate learners to use their understandings in real-world circumstances and cause deeper learning. These authentic tasks can be used as assessment tools in learning contexts. According to Rawlussyk (2018), some of the activities which can be regarded as authentic are interviews, observations, journals, oral presentations, performances, portfolios, role plays, case studies, problem solving, and simulations.

2.2.2. Self and peer-assessment

The primary role of self and peer-assessment is to learn how to judge others and oneself. If learners practice this activity in a learning context, they learn how to make judgments in real life. Furthermore, students' critical thinking, independence, and sense of responsibility are enhanced. Peer assessment is also effective in providing a situation for students to practice how to criticize others and be responsible for their judgments. The development of metacognition, which refers to learners' ability to understand and reflect on their own learning process, is a key benefit of self-assessment. Self-assessment also empowers students to self-monitor and focus on self-reflective abilities (Rawlussyk, 2018).

2.2.3. Feedback

Feedback is regarded as a method of transmitting information from teachers to students. The assumption behind this method is that students know what they need to improve. Giving feedback is considered a powerful way to increase learning. Rawlussyk (2018) described feedback as "feedforward", explaining that "students use the assessors' comments to feedforward to work they will do in the future (p. 5)". Giving feedback should not be considered a one-way process of transmitting information to students; instead, it should be considered as an active engagement of students in various sources of gaining feedback. Feedback becomes effective when there is mutual commitment from both learners and teachers to the learning process (Barker & Pinard, 2014; Fatehi Rad & Atashdast, 2023).

Carless (2014) emphasized that feedback is one of the core mechanisms through which LOA promotes learning. In his framework, engagement with feedback is closely connected to students' evaluative expertise, that is, their ability to make informed judgments about the quality of their own work and that of their peers. As learners gradually develop this capacity, they become better able to interpret feedback and use assessment information to guide subsequent performance. From this perspective, feedback is not a one-way transmission of comments from teacher to student. It is an interactive process that encourages reflection and revision. Similarly, Carless (2007) argued that effective feedback should be timely, meaningful, and explicitly directed toward future learning. When students actively engage with feedback and use it to refine their performance, assessment becomes an integral part of the learning process rather than a procedure used solely to measure achievement.

2.3. Empirical studies

A growing number of studies have examined LOA in EFL contexts, and the overall findings suggest that this approach can support both language development and learner engagement. Despite differences in research design, participants' features, instructional setting, and target outcomes, most studies report that when assessment is integrated with instruction through goal clarification, continuous feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment, learners tend to make greater progress and participate more actively in the learning process.

Recent studies indicate that the influence of LOA is not limited to a single language skill. Al-Abri et al. (2024), for example, found that LOA contributed to significant gains in learners' speaking proficiency. Zhang and Crawford (2024) similarly reported that learning-oriented formative assessment increased learners' motivation and classroom engagement. In another study, Afshar and Shirzadi (2024) showed that LOA improved both students' perceptions of technology use and their second language achievement. Therefore, these studies suggest that LOA can affect both linguistic performance and important psychological and attitudinal factors associated with successful learning.

In the Iranian context, however, much of the research has focused on teachers' beliefs and classroom practices rather than on learners' actual performance. Gholami et al. (2022) investigated Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions and practices and found generally favorable attitudes toward LOA. Similarly, Jalilzadeh and Yeganehpour (2021) reported that teachers viewed LOA as an appropriate and effective

approach to classroom assessment. Although these studies offer useful insights into teachers' perspectives, they do not provide direct evidence regarding the extent to which LOA improves students' language skills. Among the four language skills, writing has received the greatest attention. A number of experimental studies have reported that LOA leads to meaningful improvements in writing performance. [Er and Farhady \(2023\)](#), [Estaji and Safari \(2023\)](#), [Hamzelou et al. \(2022\)](#), [Saygili \(2021\)](#), and [Tavassoli et al. \(2023\)](#) all found that the learners who experienced LOA-based instruction outperformed those who received more conventional forms of assessment. Although these studies were conducted in different contexts, they point to a similar explanation which is when learners are given clear assessment criteria, regular feedback, and opportunities to evaluate their own and their peers' work; they become more aware of the characteristics of effective writing and are better able to revise and refine their texts.

Compared with writing, listening has attracted considerably less attention in the LOA literature. [Ghorbanpour et al. \(2021\)](#) found that assessment approaches incorporating continuous feedback and self- and peer-assessment significantly improved Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension. [Ghazizadeh and Motallebzadeh \(2017\)](#) also reported that diagnostic formative assessment enhanced the learners' listening ability. These findings suggest that listening can benefit from assessment practices that help learners identify comprehension problems and gradually develop more effective listening strategies. Nevertheless, the relatively small number of studies indicates that this area remains underexplored.

Research on reading has also produced encouraging results. [Viengsang and Wasanasomsithi \(2022\)](#) demonstrated that a learning-oriented reading assessment model improved Thai undergraduate students' reading ability. Likewise, [Beikmohammadi et al. \(2020\)](#) showed that Iranian university instructors used feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment to support reading development. These studies show that the value of LOA extends across both productive and receptive language skills.

Although these studies provide substantial support for the educational value of LOA, several limitations can be identified. First, a considerable proportion of the studies conducted in Iran have concentrated on teachers' perceptions rather than on learners' performance outcomes. Second, most experimental investigations have examined only one language skill at a time, particularly writing. As a result, little is known about whether LOA can improve productive and receptive skills simultaneously within the same instructional program. Third, relatively few quasi-experimental studies have explored this issue in Iranian EFL contexts.

The present study was designed to address these gaps by examining the effects of LOA on both writing and listening among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Investigating these two skills in a single quasi-experimental effort, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how LOA can contribute to language development in classroom settings.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Design

A quasi-experimental pretest–posttest control group design was adopted because the study was conducted in an intact classroom setting in which the existing classes were used and the individual learners could not be randomly assigned to conditions. In educational contexts such as private language schools, reorganizing students into new groups is often impractical and may disrupt normal instructional procedures. Therefore, two pre-existing intermediate classes were selected. One class was randomly assigned to the experimental condition and the other to the control condition. This design made it possible to compare the effects of LOA and traditional assessment under authentic classroom conditions while maintaining a reasonable degree of control over potential confounding variables through pretesting and group homogeneity checks ([Ary et al., 2019](#)).

3.2. Participants

The participants were 60 female Iranian EFL learners enrolled in intermediate-level courses at a private language institute in Tehran. Rather than being taught in unusually large classes, these learners were recruited from several intact intermediate classes through convenience sampling based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. After completing the Quick Placement Test (QPT) to confirm that they were at a comparable level of English proficiency, 60 learners whose scores fell within the intermediate range were selected for the study. They were native speakers of Persian and ranged in age from 17 to 28 years.

Following the participant selection, the learners were assigned to two groups of 30 students each, an experimental group and a control group. The assignment was carried out randomly to reduce possible pre-existing differences between the groups. The experimental group received instruction and assessment based on LOA, whereas the control group was assessed through the conventional procedures normally used at the institute.

Several ethical measures were taken throughout the study. The participants were informed of the purpose and procedures of the research, and the participation was entirely voluntary. They were also assured that all the personal information and test results would remain confidential and that the data would be used solely for research purposes.

3.3. Instruments

This study employed the following instruments:

3.3.1. Quick Placement Test (QPT)

The standardized QPT was employed to assess the learners' English proficiency and ensure their initial homogeneity. The test was developed and validated jointly by the Cambridge ESOL Examination Syndicate and Oxford University Press. It comprises 60 items assessing cloze-test skills, vocabulary, and grammar.

3.3.2. Sample IELTS task 2 writing

An example of an IELTS Task 2 essay was used to measure the participants' writing. The participants were required to write an essay of at least 250 words on the following topic: 'Children are often shaped by the views of their friends. In what ways do friends impact children, and how can parents ensure this effect leads to positive outcomes?'.
To be more specific, they were required to write on the given topic by offering their opinion and supporting it with justifications, discussing the issue, summarizing the key points, outlining the problems, suggesting solutions, and backing up their ideas with the relevant examples, arguments, and reasons drawn from their own experience and knowledge. The validity of the test was confirmed through expert judgment by asking five ELT experts to evaluate the appropriateness of the test for this study. The writing scripts were scored independently by two experienced EFL teachers holding M.A. degrees in TEFL and with more than five years of experience teaching IELTS writing. Additionally, the inter-rater reliability of the test was found to be .80.

This test was scored using the IELTS Task 2 writing band descriptors, with the scores ranging from 0 to 36. In this rubric, four components are considered, including grammatical range and accuracy, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and task response. Each component is scored in a range from 0 to 9. In sum, the total score falls in a range from 0 to 36.

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3.3.3. Sample IELTS listening test

A sample IELTS Listening Test was used to assess the participants' listening comprehension skills. The test included 40 questions consisting of multiple-choice, matching, and completion tasks. The participants listened to four recorded sections and answered the corresponding questions. As it is a standardized test, its validity and reliability have already been established.

3.4. Procedure

Following the participant selection and group assignment, QPT was administered to ensure that all the participants were at the intermediate level of English proficiency and that the two groups were comparable prior to the intervention. After the homogeneity check, both groups completed an IELTS Task 2 writing test and a sample IELTS Listening test as the pre-tests. The treatment was conducted over 12 sessions, each lasting 90 minutes and held twice a week at the language institute. Both groups were taught the same instructional materials by the same teacher; the only difference concerned the assessment procedures used during the course.

In the experimental group, the assessment was implemented according to LOA principles. At the beginning of each writing and listening activity, the learners were informed of the instructional objectives and the criteria by which their performance would be evaluated. For writing tasks, the students produced short essays and drafts, received teacher and peer feedback, revised their texts, and completed self-assessment checklists based on the IELTS writing criteria. For listening tasks, the students completed comprehension activities, reviewed their responses, discussed the areas of difficulty with peers, received focused feedback from the teacher, and reflected on the strategies they had used to understand the audio

texts. Throughout the treatment, the learners were encouraged to view errors as a natural part of learning, monitor their progress, and take an active role in evaluating both their own work and that of their classmates. Various forms of scaffolding, including contextual, cognitive, metacognitive, procedural, and motivational support, were also provided to help the learners perform the tasks more effectively.

In the control group, the same writing and listening activities were used, but the assessment followed the conventional procedures normally practiced at the institute. The students completed the tasks and received scores and occasional teacher corrections, but they were not systematically involved in self-assessment, peer assessment, explicit goal clarification, or structured feedback cycles.

One week after the completion of the treatment, both groups took parallel forms of the writing and listening tests as post-tests. The resulting data were analyzed using independent-samples t-tests to compare the performance of the two groups on the pre-tests and post-tests after the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances had been examined.

IV. RESULTS

4.1. Results of the first research question

To answer the first research question, whether LOA has a significant impact on the writing skills of Iranian EFL learners, an independent-samples t-test was conducted. Before presenting the results of the t-test, the results of the normality test are reported.

To assess the normality of the data, skewness and kurtosis indices were examined (Table 1). As seen in the table, the skewness and kurtosis statistics were within the acceptable range of ± 2 , suggesting no substantial departure from normality.

Table 1. Results of the normality test

Group	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Std. error		Std. error
Prewriting	30	-0.622	0.427	0.093	0.833
	30	-0.881	0.427	0.046	0.833
Control	30	-0.673	0.427	0.226	0.833
	30	-0.622	0.427	0.093	0.833

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the writing pretest scores of both groups (Table 2). The experimental group obtained a mean score of 19.67 (SD = 4.32), while the control group obtained a mean score of 19.57 (SD = 4.22). These scores were derived from the IELTS Task 2 analytic scoring rubric, in which the four components of Task Response, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy were each rated on a scale from 0 to 9, resulting in a total possible score of 36. The nearly identical mean scores indicate that the two groups had comparable writing performance prior to the treatment.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the pretest of writing by groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Prewriting	Experimental	30	19.67	4.326	0.790
	Control	30	19.57	4.224	0.771

Table 3 outlines the results of the independent-samples t-test. Before interpreting the table, it is worth noting that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met for the writing pre-test. As shown in the table, the non-significant results of Levene's Test ($F = .010$, $p > .05$) confirmed that both groups had similar variances in their writing scores. Consequently, the first row of Table 3, namely "Equal variances assumed", was reported.

The independent-samples t-test results ($t(58) = .091$, $p > .05$, Cohen's $d = .023$, indicating a weak effect size) demonstrated that no significant differences existed between the two groups' mean scores on the writing pre-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the experimental and control groups were homogeneous in terms of their writing before the treatment.

Table 3. Independent samples test for the writing pretest by groups

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
								Lower	Upper
Writing	Equal variances assumed	0.010	0.921	0.09158	0.928	0.100	1.104	-2.110	2.310
	Equal variances not assumed		0.09157	967	0.928	0.100	1.104	-2.110	2.310

Afterwards, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the means of the experimental and control groups on the writing post-test. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for both groups on the writing post-test. The findings revealed that the experimental group ($M = 30.53$, $SD = 4.11$) had a higher mean than the control group ($M = 24.67$, $SD = 4.32$) on the posttest of writing.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the posttest of writing by groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Postwriting	Experimental	30	30.53	4.117	0.752
	Control	30	24.67	4.326	0.790

Table 5 outlines the results of the independent-samples t-test. Before presenting these findings, it is worth considering that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met for the posttest of writing. As shown in the table, the non-significant results of Levene's Test ($F = .019$, $p > .05$) confirmed that both groups had similar variances in their posttest of writing scores. Consequently, the first row of the table, namely "Equal variances assumed", was reported.

The independent-samples t-test results [$t(58) = 5.381$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $d = 1.38$, indicating a large effect size] demonstrated that significant differences existed between the two groups' mean scores on the writing post-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the experimental group had a significantly higher mean than the control group on the posttest of writing, with LOA significantly affecting Iranian EFL learners' writing.

Table 5. Independent samples test for the posttest of writing by groups

Levene's test for equality of variances		T-test for equality of means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
								Lower	Upper
Postwriting	Equal variances assumed	0.019	0.892	5.381	58	0.000	5.867	1.090	3.684 8.049
	Equal variances not assumed			5.381	57.858	0.000	5.867	1.090	3.684 8.049

4.2. Results of the second research question

To address the second research question, namely whether LOA significantly affects Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension, an independent-samples t-test was used. Prior to presenting the findings, the results of the normality test are reported.



The normality of the data was evaluated using skewness and kurtosis indices, as shown in Table 6. Skewness reflects the symmetry of the distribution, while kurtosis indicates the peakedness of the distribution curve. In an ideal normal distribution, both values would be zero. The observed skewness and kurtosis values fell within the acceptable ± 2 range, indicating no substantial departure from normality.

Table 6. Results of the normality test

Group		N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Std. error		Std. error	
	Prelistening	30	-0.038	0.427	-1.039	0.833
	Postlistening	30	-0.879	0.427	0.081	0.833
Control	Prelistening	30	-0.043	0.427	-1.142	0.833
	Postlistening	30	-0.765	0.427	0.145	0.833

The descriptive statistics for the listening pretest are shown in Table 7. The experimental ($M = 9.73$, $SD = 4.18$) and the control ($M = 9.47$, $SD = 4.13$) groups had almost the same mean scores, indicating similar listening ability before the treatment.

Table 7. Descriptive analysis of the pretest results

	Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Listening comprehension	Experimental	30	9.73	4.185	0.764
	Control	30	9.47	4.133	0.755

An independent-samples t-test was run to compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the listening comprehension pretest. Prior to interpreting the findings, it should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was upheld. As indicated in Table 8, Levene's Test ($F = 0.004$, $p > 0.05$) confirmed that both groups had similar variances in their pretest listening scores. The findings of the t-test [$t(58) = 0.248$, $p > 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.067$, indicating a weak effect size] revealed no statistically significant difference between the groups' mean scores on the listening pretest. Thus, it can be concluded that the experimental and control groups were homogeneous in terms of listening ability before the treatment.

Table 8. T-test analysis for listening pretest performance

		Levene's test for equality of variances			t-test for equality of means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference Lower Upper
Listening comprehension	Equal variances assumed	0.004	0.949	0.248	58	0.805	0.267	1.074	-1.883 2.416
	Equal variances not assumed			.248	57.991	.805	0.267	1.074	-1.883 2.416

Prior to conducting the independent-samples t-test for the listening posttest, descriptive statistics were run. As indicated in Table 9, the results revealed that the experimental group ($M = 14.57$, $SD = 3.33$) outperformed the control group ($M = 10.60$, $SD = 3.40$) on the listening comprehension posttest.

Table 9. Descriptive data for the listening posttest results

	Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Postlistening	Experimental	30	14.57	3.339	0.610
	Control	30	10.60	3.400	0.621

Then, an independent-samples t-test was run (Table 10). Before interpreting these findings, it is important to note that the assumption of equal variances was met. As presented in Table 10, the results of Levene's Test ($F = .002$, $p > .05$) indicated that the two groups had comparable variances in their listening posttest scores.

The independent-samples t-test results [$t(58) = 4.56$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.26$, which exceeds the 0.80 threshold suggested by Cohen (2013) for a large effect] revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups' listening posttest scores. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the experimental group had a significantly higher mean than the control group on the listening posttest. Thus, LOA significantly affects Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension.

Table 10. T-test results comparing the listening posttest scores

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Postlistening	Equal variances assumed	0.002	0.966	4.559	58	0.000	3.967	0.870	2.225	5.708
	Equal variances not assumed			4.559	57.981	0.000	3.967	0.870	2.225	5.708

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study examined the effects of LOA on Iranian EFL learners' writing and listening performance. The results showed that the learners who participated in LOA-based assessment significantly outperformed those in the control group on both posttests. These findings suggest that, when assessment is used as an integral part of instruction rather than as a procedure limited to grading, it can make a meaningful contribution to the development of both productive and receptive language skills.

The improvement observed in writing is consistent with previous studies reporting positive effects of LOA on written performance (Er & Farhady, 2023; Estaji & Safari, 2023; Hamzelou et al., 2022; Saygili, 2021; Tavassoli et al., 2023). Writing is a recursive process that involves planning, drafting, evaluating, and revising. The principles of LOA appear to support each of these stages. In the present study, the learners were informed of the assessment criteria before writing, received feedback from both the teacher and their peers, and were given opportunities to revise their drafts and evaluate their own work. These practices probably helped learners develop a clearer understanding of what constitutes effective writing and encouraged them to reflect more critically on the quality of their texts. From a sociocultural perspective, such improvement can be understood as the result of scaffolded interaction within the learners' ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978), where feedback and collaboration gradually enabled the learners to perform beyond their initial level of competence.

The findings also showed that LOA had a significant and substantial effect on listening comprehension. Although listening is often viewed as a receptive skill, successful listening requires active cognitive engagement. Learners must identify breakdowns in comprehension and adjust their strategies while processing spoken input. In the experimental group, the listening tasks were followed by a structured

review of the answers, discussion of difficult items, teacher feedback, and reflection on the strategies used to understand the texts. These procedures may have improved listening by directing the learners' attention to the sources of their errors and helping them become more aware of how effective listeners approach unfamiliar input. In this sense, LOA did not improve listening simply by providing more practice, but by transforming listening activities into opportunities for diagnosis and strategic adjustment.

This interpretation is consistent with [Ghorbanpour et al. \(2021\)](#), who found that assessment approaches incorporating feedback and self-regulation enhanced Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension, and with [Ghazizadeh and Motallebzadeh \(2017\)](#), who reported that diagnostic formative assessment significantly improved listening ability. [Turner and Purpura \(2016\)](#) similarly argued that assessment can promote learning when learners are actively involved in interpreting performance information and using it to guide future action. The present findings extend this line of research by showing that these principles can be applied effectively to listening as well as writing within the same instructional program.

At a broader level, the results suggest that the effectiveness of LOA lies in the way it redistributes responsibility for learning. In traditional assessment, learners often receive scores after completing tasks, with limited opportunity to analyze their performance or act on feedback. In contrast, LOA encourages learners to participate in setting goals, interpreting criteria, evaluating performance, and planning subsequent improvement. This shift may strengthen metacognitive awareness and promote more sustained engagement with classroom tasks. The large effect sizes observed in both writing and listening indicate that the benefits of LOA were educationally meaningful.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted with some caution. The intervention combined several interrelated components, including goal clarification, self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher feedback, and scaffolding. As a result, it is not possible to determine which component contributed most strongly to the observed improvements. In addition, the study involved only female intermediate learners from one private language institute in Tehran, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to learners with different proficiency levels, genders, or educational settings. The treatment period was relatively short, and the study focused exclusively on immediate posttest outcomes. Therefore, the extent to which the benefits of LOA are maintained over time remains uncertain.

Despite these limitations, the findings have several implications for language teaching and assessment. The results suggest that assessment is more beneficial when students are informed of the criteria used to judge their performance, receive comments that can be applied to subsequent tasks, and are encouraged to examine both their own work and the work of their classmates. Under such conditions, learners are more likely to notice recurring weaknesses and develop a clearer understanding of what constitutes successful performance. Over time, this process can strengthen learners' confidence and increase their willingness to take greater responsibility for their progress. The findings also suggest that teacher education programs and curriculum materials may benefit from greater attention to LOA such that classroom assessment is used to assign scores as well as guiding improvement and support ongoing learning.

Further research is needed to determine whether similar results can be obtained in other language domains, including reading and speaking, and with learners who differ in age, proficiency level, and educational background. Studies conducted over a longer period and including delayed posttests would provide a clearer picture of the extent to which the observed improvements are retained after the intervention. It would also be worthwhile to examine particular features of LOA, such as peer feedback, self-assessment, goal clarification, and scaffolded reflection, in order to identify which aspects make the strongest contribution to language development. In addition, future studies may explore the role of learner-related factors such as motivation, anxiety, self-regulation, and beliefs about assessment in enhancing the effectiveness of this approach.

AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Mona Ashrafi is a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Linguistics (TEFL) at the Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. She has been teaching at the university for over two years and has published several research articles in peer-reviewed journals. Her academic interests include language assessment, psycholinguistics, teacher education, instructional methodologies, and general English teaching.

Neda Fatehi Rad is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics (TEFL) in the Department of English Language, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran. She mainly teaches language testing, research methodology, and teaching language at graduate level. Her main areas of interest include teacher education, cooperative learning, language testing, and research. She has published 107 papers in international and national academic journals and has published 12 books in the of translation, language learning, research, and teaching.

Mohammad Iman Askari is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of English Language, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. His main research interests are Foreign Language Skills, E/Online Learning, Digital Learning Development, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as well as Translation Studies and the possible contribution of translation in language teaching methodologies. He has published numerous articles in local and international journals.

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