



The Effectiveness of Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Speaking

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Although Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) can be effective in EFL learning by improving learning effectiveness, and promoting pedagogical practices, few studies have investigated this in the context of Iran. This research was conducted to examine the impact of LOA on the reading comprehension and speaking of EFL learners through a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test control group design. Two intact intermediate classes of female EFL learners (each composed of 30 learners) participated in this study through convenience sampling from a private language school in Tehran. To collect the data, Quick Placement Test (QPT), a sample IELTS speaking test, and the Michigan Test of Reading were used. To analyze the data, an Independent-Samples t-test was applied to compare the two groups, based on the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances. According to the results, Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension and speaking were significantly affected by LOA, with very large effect sizes for reading ($d = 1.26$) and speaking ($d = 1.49$) indicating substantial improvements in both skills. The results have some implications for EFL teachers, learners, and curriculum planners.

Keywords: learning-oriented assessment (LOA), reading comprehension, speaking, zone of proximal development (ZPD)

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the cognitive revolution in the realm of language learning, a movement has emerged towards cognitive, metacognitive, and learner-centered learning. Consequently, some teaching and learning methods have been introduced with emphasis on need analysis, planning, monitoring, evaluation, critical thinking, etc.

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(Carless, 2015). A by-product of this movement is the emergence of a number of inquiry-based learning and teaching methods such as anchor-based instruction, project-based learning, problem-based learning and learning-oriented learning. While these approaches are based on a common learning philosophy (i.e., social constructivism), they are diverse regarding teachers' roles, cognitive load of the learning tasks, and the priority given to learning, teaching, and assessment (Beikmohammadi et al., 2020).

One of these new approaches is Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA). According to Rich (2011), assessment procedures should not just assess what learners have learned, rather they should foster student motivation and engagement throughout the assessment process. LOA engages students in setting their own goals for learning and determining the exercises that help them meet those goals (Turner & Purpura, 2015). In this regard, LOA helps learners become more engaged in the learning and assessment procedures. Purpura and Turner (2014) assert that the main difference between traditional assessment and LOA is that, in LOA, learners are asked to show what they have learned. As a result, they tend to devote more time and provide more innovative responses. This element is absent in traditional assessment. According to Purpura (2016), LOA focuses on gathering and analyzing performance-related data to make informed decisions about a learner's future language progress. Carless (2015) asserted that LOA does not seek to rule out other types of assessment, rather, it aims at generating a learning-based assessment program that attaches greater significance to the learning factors than measurement ones. Consequently, LOA is associated with formative assessment since it focuses on the learning process by merging learning and assessment (Seyed & Tavassoli, 2023).

A review of the literature shows that LOA can be effective in EFL learning (Estaji & Safari, 2023; Yan & Carless, 2022) through enhancing the efficacy of learning and promoting pedagogical practices. It implies that LOA can be utilized as a strategy to help learners enhance their proficiency in the English language. Closely related to this, in a recent study in Iran by Esfandiari and Allaf-Akbary (2024), it was shown that English interaction among learners was significantly enhanced under the effect of LOA. In another study by Navaie (2018), the effectiveness of LOA on EFL pronunciation was proved.

The above findings can be a promising sign of LOA effectiveness on learning English skills. However, few studies have investigated this in the context of Iran. More particularly, Iranian studies (e.g., Beikmohammadi et al., 2020; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Jalilzadeh & Yeganehpour, 2021) have mostly dealt with teachers' perceptions of using LOA in English classes. Hence, more studies are required to prove that we can take advantage of LOA to support EFL learners in achieving greater success in English skills. Furthermore, since there are diverse understandings and interpretations of LOA, many teachers may not know how to implement LOA and have problems in this regard. Thus, more experimental studies on this approach should be conducted to justify teachers on how to implement LOA in their classes. Besides, given that Iranian teachers are accustomed to traditional assessment methods, they seemingly are not open to new assessment methods (Gholami et al., 2022). Accordingly, they tend to continue mainstream static assessment procedures. This is while a main problem of current

English language teaching system of Iran is following old assessment approaches. To address this gap, the current research examines the influence of LOA on EFL learners' reading comprehension and speaking abilities. Accordingly, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1. Does Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) significantly influence the reading comprehension abilities of Iranian EFL learners?

RQ2. What is the effect of Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) on the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners?

LITERATURE REVIEW

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

Theoretical Framework

The main theory in constructing LOA approach and designing its principles goes back to Social Constructivism given by Vygotsky (1978). It can be claimed that LOA is based on the idea that reality is not a static concept; it continuously adjusts itself to align with the needs of students. Vygotsky (1978) argued that reality is formed within the mind of each individual, and should be understood as it is perceived by people within a society. According to the ideas of LOA, to assess students' needs, teachers interact with them, and learners should assess the performance of their peers. Therefore, it can be said that Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a theoretical foundation behind the idea of LOA. Accordingly, students can enter the learning zone of other students and help them. So learning is full of collaboration, discussion, and interaction (Navaie, 2018).

Another theoretical framework which paved the way for introducing the present idea and provided a way forward to explore the ideas relates to Turner and Purpura (2015). They described the LOA approach as emphasizing assessment designed to support learning. They identified seven key dimensions of LOA: affective, contextual, elicitation, instructional, interactional, learning, and proficiency (Turner & Purpura, 2015).

One of the main theoretical frameworks in this study is "social constructivism" as suggested by Vygotsky (1978). LOA is a reform to address the evolving needs of society as observed and perceived by the people in the society. It is hoped that, by doing so, educators can produce autonomous learners with practical knowledge. Reality in the mind of LOA educators is not accepted based on standards of education rather it is accepted as it is formed in the mind of the learners. Such philosophy in education accords with the concept of social-constructivism and stands against a positivist understanding of reality.

Another important theory utilized in this investigation is ZPD, introduced by Vygotsky (1978). It emphasizes that learning occurs by entering others' zone of proximal

development. In turn, the theory urges the need for collaboration, formative assessment, peer feedback, etc. all of which are present in LOA.

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 reconceptualize 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).

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 need to collect information for promoting future learning and try to close the learning gaps meanwhile try to inform instruction in the classroom context. Ciriani Dean (2014) believed that interaction which takes place in classes when the focus is on LOA can lead to successful understanding and 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 follows:

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 Rawlusk (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.

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 (Rawlusk, 2018).

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. Rawlusk (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 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).

Carless (2014) proposed three interconnected principles to highlight the core aspects of LOA: tasks, experience in assessment, and involvement in feedback. The first principle focuses on the tasks learners complete in the classroom. The other two principles are closely related: evaluative expertise refers to students' ability to advance self-assessment skills and form judgments about their own and others' performance, while engagement with feedback is central to improvement, though often challenging to implement. The design of tasks has a significant role in shaping both evaluative expertise and the effectiveness of feedback engagement.

Carless (2007) proposed a framework for LOA based on several key principles. The first one emphasizes that assessment tasks need to be prepared and designed to engage and motivate students. The second one advocates for active student participation in the assessment process, including involvement in setting criteria and evaluating their own and peers' performance. The third one highlights the importance of timely feedback aimed at supporting students' future learning and growth.

While a considerable amount of research has been conducted into LOA in general EFL environments, far fewer studies have investigated the extent to which contextual factors

in the Iranian EFL system influence its implementation. The Iranian context, imbued as it is with exam-oriented instruction, limited class time, crowded classes, and a heavy reliance on summative evaluation, would appear to present rather inhibiting conditions for an approach such as LOA, which relies so strongly on learner-centeredness and process orientation (Derakhshan & Ghiasvand, 2022). Furthermore, Iranian teachers often operate within rigid curricular expectations and high-stakes testing pressures that may bear directly on their consistent use of formative assessment practices. These contextual complications constitute reason enough to encourage further LOA research in Iran into how such factors influence the feasibility and effectiveness of LOA.

Despite this growing support, a number of limitations and challenges to LOA have also been identified. For example, LOA is most successfully adopted when there is considerable teacher development in assessment literacy; however, many teachers have difficulty designing authentic tasks and providing quality feedback. Moreover, some teachers are not trained to integrate self- and peer-assessment into their regular teaching practice (Zeng et al., 2018). In certain contexts, teachers resistant to LOA may see it as creating unsustainable additional workload or as undermining traditional notions of assessment authority. LOA is clearly more difficult to be employed in large classes or exam-driven systems where instructional time is tightly constrained (Khan et al., 2025). These challenges indicate that, although LOA demonstrates significant pedagogical value, its success is highly dependent on contextual readiness as well as sustained professional support.

Traditional Assessment Practices

Traditional assessment methods which often serve as the comparison conditions for LOA studies, tend to be based primarily on teacher-centered and product-oriented measures of performance (Nazim et al., 2023). These practices usually involve quizzes, discrete-point tests, midterm and final examinations, and teacher-directed scoring procedures that tend to stress the final products of learning rather than the very generative processes leading to student improvement (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019; Shamshiri et al., 2023). In these approaches, the teacher is seen as the only judge, whereas learners are given limited opportunities for self-monitoring or peer interaction. The feedback provided is usually summative and delivered at the end of a task. Moreover they tend to function mainly as certification purposes rather than improving learning (Morris et al., 2021). Although traditional assessment methods are valued for their reliability and ease of administration, they have been criticized for some limitations such as neglecting learners' metacognitive engagement, offering minimal support for formative feedback, and failing to capture learners' developing competencies. These limitations are overcome by LOA.

Empirical Studies

Several studies have investigated LOA in different contexts from different perspectives. An investigation by Al-Abri et al. (2024) assessed the impact of LOA on speaking proficiency of EFL students confirmed the positive impact of LOA in improving EFL learners' speaking proficiency. Zhang and Crawford (2024) investigated how LOA impacts motivation among EFL learners. Findings showed that LOA significantly improved learners' motivation and engagement.

Afshar and Shirzadi (2024) employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to examine how LOA influences students' perceptions of technology use and their L2 achievement. Results showed that using LOA significantly improved students' perceptions about technology use and boosted their L2 achievement. These findings highlight the potential of LOA to encourage teachers, students, and educational authorities to integrate innovative technologies into the classroom.

Estaji and Safari (2023) attempted to evaluate whether LOA influences reflective and impulsive EFL learners' argumentative writing skills. The research utilized a survey questionnaire to discover learners' views about LOA. The analysis showed that LOA significantly enhanced learners' writing performance. Additionally, the findings indicated that students generally held positive perceptions about the LOA approach.

Viengsang and Wasanasomsithi (2022) investigated the impact of a model of LOA on Thai students' reading ability. The findings revealed that LOA could help students develop their reading ability significantly. Gholami et al. (2022) addressed Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of LOA using a mixed-methods design. The findings showed that females had more positive perceptions than males towards the use of LOA in Iranian language classes. No positive relationship was found between teachers' age and their perceptions of LOA.

Saygili (2021) conducted an experiment to assess the influence of LOA on the writing of Turkish learners. This experimental study also investigated participants' views resulting from the use of LOA in the learning environment. The results indicated an improvement in the participants' writing proficiency as a result of using LOA.

In 2021, Jalilzadeh and Yeganehpour investigated the beliefs of Iranian EFL teachers about LOA. Their study revealed that participants favored LOA as a method for assessing their students. Most teachers agreed that LOA was highly effective and suitable for evaluating learners' writing skills. Navaie (2018) sought to investigate how LOA could impact the pronunciation learning of EFL learners. According to the results, LOA affects pronunciation abilities. Also, it was discovered that LOA significantly affects the learners' retention of pronunciation knowledge.

Beikmohammadi et al. (2020) examined Iranian EFL university instructors' experiences regarding the application of LOA to reading comprehension and found that instructors employ a combination of traditional and alternative forms of assessment. Nearly half of them reported encouraging learners to engage in peer and self-assessment. Additionally, the teachers acknowledged that providing effective feedback motivates students to further develop their learning.

METHOD

Design

Given that the purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of LOA on EFL learners' reading comprehension and speaking skills, a quasi-experimental design was deemed suitable (Ary et al., 2019).

Participants

Two intact intermediate classes of EFL learners participated in this study through convenience sampling. Each class consisted of 30 female learners who were and selected from a private language school in Tehran. The experimental group was formed through random assignment of one class, while the remaining class functioned as the control group. To check their homogeneity at the beginning of the study, Quick Placement Test (QPT) was used. Persian was their first language, and they were in the 17-28 age range. To follow the research ethics, the learners were informed about the aims of the investigation. Also, their participation was completely voluntary. Participants were informed that their personal information would remain confidential and anonymous.

Instruments

This study employed the following instruments:

Quick Placement Test (QPT)

In order to evaluate learners' English proficiency and ensure their initial homogeneity, the standardized Quick Placement Test (QPT) was employed. Developed and validated by Cambridge ESOL Examination Syndicate and Oxford University Press in collaboration, the test comprises 60 items that assess vocabulary, grammar, and cloze test.

Speaking Test

To evaluate the learners' speaking ability, a sample task from the IELTS speaking test was utilized. Specifically, Part 2 of the IELTS Speaking Module (the Long Turn task) was selected, in which learners receive a topic card, have one minute to prepare, and then speak for up to two minutes on the assigned topic. While the speaking module contains three sections, a detailed explanation is beyond the scope of this paper. The speaking test was administered individually in a quiet classroom, and all performances were audio-recorded under identical conditions to ensure consistency and replicability across participants. Since speaking tests are threatened by inconsistency of test scores and subjectivity of the raters, an assessment of inter-rater agreement was conducted by increasing the number of raters to two; one of them was the researcher and the other one was an experienced colleague who had been teaching speaking for more than ten years. This test was evaluated using the Speaking Rating Scale, as defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for evaluating spoken language skills. This scale assesses speaking proficiency based on accuracy, interaction, coherence, and fluency with a rating range from 0 to 40.

The Michigan Test of Reading

The Michigan Test of Reading, consisting of twenty multiple-choice questions, was employed to assess the learners' reading skill. This section of the test comprises four reading passages, with each accompanied by five multiple-choice questions that participants were required to complete. It is a standard test whose reliability and validity have already been established.

Procedure

To launch data collection, in accordance with ethical research principles, two intact classes were selected through convenience sampling and assigned to control and experimental groups. Then, the QPT was run to confirm the two groups' homogeneity before the treatment. Afterwards, the two groups took the speaking and reading tests described above as the pre-test.

Next, the intervention phase started which included twelve 90-minute English classes twice a week at a private language institute. Both groups participated in these classes. The main difference between them was that learners in the experimental group were assessed through LOA. LOA was operationalized through learner self-assessment, teacher and peer feedback, active learner involvement in assessment, and fostering informal and supportive teacher-learner relationships. Moreover, context scaffolding, cognitive scaffolding, metacognitive scaffolding, procedural scaffolding, motivational scaffolding, and problem-based assessment were used. Additionally, learners were asked to select the type and form of assessment, make use of available resources, and apply self-regulatory strategies throughout the assessment process.

Although the intervention lasted for six weeks in total, with 12 sessions of 90 minutes, in each single session, a similar instructional schedule for reading and speaking activities was used. Each 90-minute class consisted of integrated reading–speaking tasks, with reading instruction generally occupying the first half of the lesson, taking approximately 40–45 minutes, to be followed by the speaking activity in the second half. In this way, this integrated format not only reflects the institute's emphasis on communicative curriculum but also allows for both skills to receive balanced instructional time across LOA and non-LOA conditions. For future research, an even finer level of detail in terms of minutes of instruction per skill or separating the skills into different sessions would be beneficial so as to clearly capture the intervention's specific impact on discrete language components.

However, the control group was assessed through traditional formative assessment procedures which were regularly used in the institute. In the control group, reading and speaking were taught and assessed through the institute's standard traditional formative assessment procedures. These included teacher-led explanation of reading passages, vocabulary checks, and comprehension questions followed by short written or oral responses. Speaking practice consisted of controlled drills, guided dialogues, and brief individual answers rather than extended production tasks. Assessment was carried out primarily through teacher-generated quizzes, participation checks, and end-of-lesson oral questioning. Any feedback given was summative and brief, usually given at the end of the task without any opportunities to revise the work, peer-assess, or self-reflect. No collaborative, peer-based, or self-assessment activities were used that would blur the methodological distinction from the LOA-based instruction put in place in the experimental group.

One week after the intervention, the two groups took speaking and reading tests described above as post-tests. An Independent-Samples t-test was conducted to compare

the performance of the two groups for data analysis purposes. The test assumes normality of data, and homogeneity of variances.

FINDINGS

Response to the First Research Inquiry

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

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

Table 1
Results of Normality Test

Group		N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Experimental	PreReading	30	-.038	.427	-1.039	.833
	PostReading	30	-.879	.427	.081	.833
	PreSpeaking	30	-.664	.427	.169	.833
	PostSpeaking	30	-1.112	.427	.259	.833
Control	PreReading	30	-.043	.427	-1.142	.833
	PostReading	30	-.765	.427	.145	.833
	PreSpeaking	30	-.758	.427	.186	.833
	PostSpeaking	30	-.759	.427	.103	.833

Next, descriptive statistics were run for both groups on the reading pretests. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the pretest reading scores for both groups. The findings reveal that the experimental group ($M = 9.73$, $SD = 4.18$) and the control group ($M = 9.47$, $SD = 4.13$) had almost the same mean scores, suggesting comparable reading ability.

Table 2
Descriptive Analysis of Pretest Results

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reading comprehension	Experimental	30	9.73	4.185	.764
	Control	30	9.47	4.133	.755

Subsequently, an independent-samples t-test was employed to compare the pretest reading comprehension scores between the control and experimental groups. The outcomes of this analysis are reported in Table 3. Prior to interpreting the results, it is essential to highlight that the assumption of equal variances was met. As indicated by Levene's Test ($F = .004$, $p > .05$), both groups demonstrated comparable variance in their pretest performance on the reading measure.

The results of the independent-samples t-test ($t(58) = .248, p > .05$, Cohen's $d = .067$, suggesting a small effect size) indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean pretest scores of the experimental and control groups. This suggests that both groups had comparable reading comprehension levels prior to the intervention.

Table 3
t-Test Analysis for Reading 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	
Reading comprehension	Equal variances assumed	.004	.949	.248	58	.805	.267	1.074	-1.883	2.416
	Equal variances not assumed			.248	57.991	.805	.267	1.074	-1.883	2.416

Before running the independent-samples t-test for the reading posttest, descriptive statistics were computed. As shown in Table 4, the experimental group obtained a higher average score ($M = 14.57, SD = 3.33$) than the control group ($M = 10.60, SD = 3.40$) on the posttest measuring reading comprehension.

Table 4
Descriptive Data for the Reading Posttest Results

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PostReading	Experimental	30	14.57	3.339	.610
	Control	30	10.60	3.400	.621

Table 5 presents the independent-samples t-test results. Before discussing the results, it should be noted that the assumption of equal variances was satisfied for the posttest. As presented in Table 5, Levene's Test results ($F = .002, p > .05$) indicate that the two groups had comparable variances in their reading posttest scores.

The independent-samples t-test results ($t(58) = 4.55, p < .05$, Cohen's $d = 1.26$) demonstrate that a statistically significant difference was found between the mean posttest scores of the two groups in reading comprehension. Consequently, it is suggested that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the reading posttest, with a significantly higher mean score. It can therefore be concluded that LOA significantly affects Iranian EFL students' reading ability.

Table 5
t-Test Results Comparing Reading Posttest Scores

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
PostReading	Equal variances assumed	.002	.966	4.55958		.000	3.967	.870	2.225	5.708
	Equal variances not assumed			4.55957	981.000	.000	3.967	.870	2.225	5.708

Findings Related to the Second Research Question

To address the second research question—What impact does LOA have on the speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners?—descriptive statistics for the speaking pretest were first calculated before conducting the independent-samples t-test. The descriptive results for the speaking pretest are shown in Table 6. The findings reveal that the experimental ($M = 20.90$, $SD = 5.16$) and control ($M = 20.93$, $SD = 5.333$) classes exhibited nearly identical mean scores, suggesting comparable speaking ability.

Table 6
Descriptive Analysis of Speaking Pretest Scores

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PreSpeaking	Experimental	30	20.90	5.169	.944
	Control	30	20.93	5.336	.974

An independent-samples t-test was then carried out to compare the speaking pretest scores between the experimental and control groups. The outcomes of this analysis are presented in Table 7. Before discussing the results, it is essential to note that the assumption of equal variances was satisfied. As indicated by Levene's Test ($F = .037$, $p > .05$), both groups showed comparable variances in their speaking pretest scores.

The results of the independent-samples t-test ($t(58) = .025$, $p > .05$, Cohen's $d = .006$, reflecting a negligible effect size) indicate that there was no significant difference between the speaking pretest scores of the two groups. This suggests that both groups had a similar level of speaking proficiency prior to the intervention.

Table 7
Independent Samples Test for Speaking Pretest

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Speaking	Equal variances assumed	.037	.848	.02558	.980	.033	1.356	1.356	-2.682	2.748
	Equal variances not assumed			.02557	941.980	.033	1.356	1.356	-2.682	2.748

Before running the independent-samples t-test to compare posttest speaking scores between the experimental and control groups, descriptive statistics were calculated. As presented in Table 8, the experimental group had a higher average score ($M = 34.57$, $SD = 4.71$) than the control group ($M = 26.93$, $SD = 5.38$) on the speaking posttest.

Table 8
Descriptive Data for Speaking Posttest Scores

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PostSpeaking	Experimental	30	34.57	4.710	.860
	Control	30	26.93	5.382	.983

Table 9 outlines the results of independent-samples t-test. It is worth mentioning that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was upheld for the speaking posttest. As shown in Table 9, Levene's Test ($F = .352$, $p > .05$) confirms that both groups had similar variances in speaking posttest.

The independent-samples t-test results ($t(58) = 5.84$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $d = 1.49$) indicate a statistically significant difference in the speaking posttest scores between the groups. Therefore, this reveals that the experimental group achieved a significantly higher mean score than the control group on the speaking posttest. These findings lead to the conclusion that LOA significantly affects speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners.

Apart from the statistical results, there are a number of contextual and learner-related factors that might explain why LOA improved speaking performance more effectively than traditional approaches. The experimental group learners were frequently involved with peer and self-assessment which could lead to more active engagement with speaking tasks and reduce the fear of making mistakes. For many students, speaking became less intimidating to practice when situated within an ongoing and supportive feedback environment. Coming from highly exam-oriented classrooms, such a shift toward collaborative assessment created a less anxiety-provoking atmosphere and helped learners to take more risks and speak more freely. The consistent practice opportunities in LOA, including reflective speaking tasks and repeated feedback cycles, helped learners develop greater confidence and improved self-regulation. Students were equipped with stronger awareness of speaking strengths and weaknesses. These combined factors most likely led to the significant improvement observed in the speaking performance of the experimental group.

Table 9
t-Test Analysis for Speaking Posttest Scores

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
PostSpeaking	Equal variances assumed	.352	.555	5.84658	.000	7.633	1.306	5.020	10.247
	Equal variances not assumed			5.84657	.000	7.633	1.306	5.019	10.248

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present research explored how LOA influenced speaking abilities and reading comprehension of Iranian EFL students. The findings indicated that LOA had a statistically significant impact on both reading and speaking performance. The findings resonate with Beikmohammadi et al.'s (2020) and Viengsang and Wasanasomsithi's (2022) results, who emphasized the significance of LOA in enhancing students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, the findings are in line with the outcomes of the study by Al-Abri et al. (2024), which demonstrated that LOA significantly enhanced EFL learners' speaking skills. The present findings are also consistent with those of Chongsomboon and Chinwonno (2024), who found that learning-oriented reading assessment enhanced students' critical thinking, peer feedback practices, and English-language proficiency in speaking and writing. In a similar vein, Navaie (2018) reported a significant effect of LOA on learners' pronunciation.

The experimental group showed clear gains under LOA. However, the limited improvement of the control group can be contextualized within the nature of the traditional formative assessment that was used in their instruction. The control group was exposed to teacher-centered practices, including controlled speaking drills and summative feedback delivered after tasks. These practices had fewer opportunities for learners to monitor their progress or engage in collaborative meaning-making. Therefore, learners had less practice applying strategies or reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses. This structure may partially explain why the control group, despite receiving an equal amount of instructional time, demonstrated comparatively smaller improvements.

To interpret the results, LOA enhances learner engagement in peer and self-assessment which may ultimately result in improved reading comprehension and speaking skills. The results may also be attributed to effective feedback and motivation, both of which are practiced in LOA-driven classes. Further, the communicative processes involved in LOA may help learners in dealing with challenging tasks related to reading comprehension and speaking by raising their awareness of proficiency gaps. Additionally, the positive attitudes of both teachers and learners toward LOA may support students as they develop their reading and speaking abilities.

It should be noted that the control group did not benefit from the enhancing factors observed in the LOA group. Because traditional teaching the control group experienced relied on teacher-centered explanation and summative feedback delivered only after task completion, learners had limited opportunities for meaningful engagement and self-reflection. The absence of interactive assessment practices meant that learners received minimal formative support. This restricted the development of confidence and motivation which are factors that impacted the experimental group's improvement. Without features such as ongoing feedback or opportunities to take ownership of their progress, the control group experienced a more static learning environment. This helps explain why their gains were comparatively smaller despite having the same instructional time.

Besides, LOA can enhance learners' self-confidence, and this makes them more willing to communicate. Eventually, they become significantly more proficient in speaking.

Moreover, it actively engages learners in the learning process. This contributes to higher levels of reading and speaking ability among them. Additionally, LOA helps learners have agency and control over their learning. Besides, as a result of using LOA, learners' interest in learning is enhanced, which is associated with improved reading and speaking performance.

In addition, due to LOA, learners learn with more enjoyment. This contributes to enhanced levels of reading and speaking skills. Last but not least, learners' self-efficacy is increased as a consequence of greater agency, which makes them more interested in learning reading and speaking.

With a view to the results, it is concluded that utilizing LOA leads to significant improvements in the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL students. Moreover, the findings suggest that Iranian EFL learners' speaking is significantly enhanced after exposure to LOA. Therefore, the use of LOA is recommended in reading and speaking classes in Iran. As documented in this study, replacement of traditional assessment with LOA would be significantly beneficial in helping EFL learners learn reading and speaking. Alternatively, even in situations where it is not possible to substitute traditional assessment with LOA, it can be used as a supplement to traditional assessment.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

With regard to the study's implications, first, this investigation adds to the conceptual understanding of LOA, its definitions, and its framework. It also helps in understanding the dimensions of LOA and the dynamic interaction between instruction, assessment, and learning. Furthermore, it supports learners and educators in recognizing the objectives behind LOA in language classes and the use of LOA to enhance reading and speaking.

Moreover, the findings can inform teachers about the characteristics of LOA and how these features can help them in their instructional and educational practices. In practice, the teacher can incorporate LOA in the classroom by using activities such as structured peer-assessment tasks, self-reflection checklists, ongoing formative feedback cycles, learning journals, and student-selected assessment criteria. Such practices help learners take active responsibility for monitoring and improving their performance.

Another important implication of the present investigation is that it can shed light on the post-method approaches, as LOA may be viewed as a post-method framework in language education. In addition, teacher training programs should also be genuinely concerned with LOA principles and assessment literacy through practical workshops that will better prepare teachers for the implementation of LOA in real classroom settings. It can be said that all these post-method features appear in LOA.

EFL learners can also benefit from this study and use LOA techniques provided by teachers to enhance their reading and speaking skills. They can question the validity of traditional assessments and ask their teachers to adopt LOA in assessing their reading and speaking. Curriculum planners are also recommended to operationalize the enlightening insights taken from this study and try to enrich reading and speaking curricula with LOA principles, strategies, guidelines, and techniques.

The following suggestions are offered for researchers interested in this topic. This research aimed to examine how LOA influences EFL learners' abilities in reading comprehension and speaking. Future studies can investigate how LOA influences other aspects of language proficiency. Since the present study involved female intermediate EFL learners in Tehran, replication across different genders, proficiency levels, and regional contexts is warranted to enhance generalizability. Future research can also be carried out on how LOA could be adapted to suit diverse cultural or educational contexts; contextual differences might also shape how LOA is perceived and implemented. Furthermore, this study took advantage of convenient sampling to select its participants. Future studies can select their participants through random sampling to enhance the validity of their findings. Another suggestion for future researchers is to replicate this study using a qualitative or mixed-methods design, since the present research employed a quantitative approach.

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