



Enacting Language Assessment Syllabi: Teacher Educators' Perspectives on Bridging Policies, Standards, and Practice in EFL Teachers' Classrooms at Farhangian University

ABSTRACT

This study extends previous research on curriculum alignment in assessment education. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with ten teacher educators at Farhangian University, it explores how language assessment syllabi are enacted in practice in EFL teacher courses. Following the approach suggested by DeLuca and Bellara (2013), who emphasized the need for qualitative inquiry into the enactment of assessment curricula, the study investigates how teacher educators interpret and apply language assessment course syllabi expectations in real classroom contexts, with a focus on the extent to which courses descriptions and learning objectives align with education policy documents and formal curriculum standards. Using reflexive thematic analysis, five themes were identified: structural and practical constraints; the strengths and weaknesses of the current syllabi; partial alignment with curriculum standards but limited familiarity with policy directives; aspects of assessment most frequently emphasized in teaching ; and principles left abstract or neglected, including fairness, washback, and assessment for learning. These findings indicate that while the syllabus offers a solid theoretical foundation, the translation of this foundation into classroom practice is constrained by time pressures, rigidity of the syllabus, and varying levels of student preparedness. In addition, the use of outdated resources further reduced opportunities for hands-on learning. The findings point to the need for stronger assessment literacy that goes beyond procedures and includes fairness, AfL, and practices suited to local contexts. Pedagogical implications are discussed with respect to syllabus design, the professional development of teacher educators, and how policy goals can be applied in classroom settings.

Keywords: Language assessment education; Enactment of language assessment syllabi; Curriculum alignment; Policy enactment; Assessment literacy



© 2026 the authors. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

1. Masoumeh. Ahmadizadeh^{ID}: Department of Teaching Foreign Languages, ToH.C., Islamic Azad University, Torbat Heydarieh, Iran
2. Hossein. Khodabakhshzadeh^{ID}: Department of Teaching Foreign Languages, ToH.C., Islamic Azad University, Torbat Heydarieh, Iran (Email: hkhodabakhshzadeh@iau.ac.ir)
3. Morteza. Rostamian^{ID}: English Department, Faculty of Medicine, Gonabad University of Medical Sciences, Gonabad, Iran
4. Hamid. Ashraf^{ID}: Department of Teaching Foreign Languages, ToH.C., Islamic Azad University, Torbat Heydarieh, Iran

Article type:
Original Research

Article history:
Received 26 October 2025
Revised 13 February 2026
Accepted 14 February 2026
Initial Publish 25 March 2026
Published online 01 May 2026

How to cite this article:

Ahmadizadeh, M., Khodabakhshzadeh, H., Rostamian, M. & Ashraf, H. (2026). Enacting Language Assessment Syllabi: Teacher Educators' Perspectives on Bridging Policies, Standards, and Practice in EFL Teachers' Classrooms at Farhangian University. *Assessment and Practice in Educational Sciences*, 4(3), 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.61838/japes.223>

Introduction

Language assessment has become a central dimension of contemporary language teacher education, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts where assessment practices strongly influence instructional priorities, learner motivation, and educational equity. Over the past two decades, scholars have increasingly emphasized that teachers are not merely implementers of externally designed tests but are active agents in designing, interpreting, and enacting assessment practices within their classrooms. This shift has led to the emergence of the construct of Language Assessment Literacy (LAL), which encompasses teachers' knowledge, skills, beliefs, and contextual judgments regarding assessment (1, 2). LAL extends beyond technical competence in test construction and includes ethical awareness, fairness, validity considerations, and the pedagogical implications of assessment decisions (3, 4).

International scholarship consistently indicates that assessment literacy remains unevenly developed across teacher education programs. DeLuca and Klinger identified significant gaps in teacher candidates' understanding of how to interpret assessment data and use it formatively (5). Later, DeLuca, LaPointe-McEwan, and Luhanga demonstrated that international standards for teacher assessment literacy emphasize both procedural and principled dimensions, yet implementation often remains limited to technical content (6). Similarly, Stiggins argued that assessment literacy must be embedded within professional identity formation rather than treated as an isolated technical skill (7). Across European contexts, empirical findings show that foreign language teachers frequently acknowledge the importance of fairness and formative assessment but report insufficient training in operationalizing these principles (8, 9).

The concept of teacher assessment identity further complicates the discussion. Teachers' enactment of assessment is shaped not only by knowledge but also by professional beliefs, institutional constraints, and policy environments (10). Assessment practices are therefore socially situated and mediated by contextual realities rather than being simple applications of policy directives. This aligns with the reconceptualization of teacher assessment literacy as a situated practice embedded in classroom contexts (4). As assessment becomes increasingly linked to accountability frameworks, performance measurement, and curricular reforms, the role of teacher educators in preparing future teachers for these complexities has gained heightened significance.

Curriculum alignment has emerged as a key framework for analyzing how policy, standards, and classroom practice interact. DeLuca and Bellara emphasized that meaningful alignment requires examining not only written syllabi but also their enactment in practice (11). Alignment is not a static condition but a dynamic process in which educators interpret policy texts, negotiate standards, and adapt course content to local constraints. This dynamic interpretation is particularly relevant in contexts undergoing curricular reform. Tran, Ha, and Tran found that teachers often reinterpret reform documents in light of practical classroom realities, resulting in partial or uneven implementation (12). Similarly, van der Steen and colleagues showed that even experienced teachers struggle to design coherent formative assessment systems that fully align with policy intentions (13).

In many educational systems, assessment reform policies advocate formative, inclusive, and learner-centered approaches. However, translating these principles into classroom practice requires more than policy articulation. Remesal's qualitative work demonstrated that teachers' conceptions of assessment significantly shape how policies are interpreted (14). When teachers view assessment primarily as summative measurement, reform efforts emphasizing formative assessment may remain superficial. Razavipour documented managerial and institutional barriers that hinder the implementation of reform-oriented assessment practices in the Iranian context (15). These findings suggest that structural and institutional conditions mediate the enactment of assessment curricula.

Within EFL contexts, additional complexities emerge. Teachers must balance linguistic accuracy, communicative competence, and sociocultural considerations when designing assessments. Liu and Ren reported that teachers' beliefs about communicative language teaching influence how task-based assessment is implemented in local contexts (16). Similarly, Ulum highlighted how sociocultural and justice-oriented dimensions can shape classroom assessment in EFL settings (17). These perspectives underscore that language assessment is not value-neutral; it carries implications for equity, inclusion, and student identity.

Teacher education institutions therefore occupy a pivotal position. Darling-Hammond and colleagues argue that effective teacher professional development must integrate theory, practice, and reflection within coherent program structures (18). If assessment courses remain primarily theoretical, teacher candidates may lack the experiential knowledge required for classroom enactment. Moradzadeh Fard and colleagues emphasized that effective EFL teachers are characterized not only by subject knowledge but also by the ability to adapt instruction and assessment to learner needs (19). Putri similarly demonstrated that teachers' attitudes significantly influence student motivation, implying that assessment approaches can indirectly shape learning engagement (20).

Emerging technologies add further dimensions to assessment education. Harakchiyska identified pre-service teachers' predisposition toward AI adoption as a predictor of innovation in language teaching practices (21). As AI-based assessment tools become increasingly available, teacher educators must reconsider how syllabi prepare future teachers for digital and data-driven assessment environments. Minh's review of teacher well-being through the PERMA model also suggests that assessment pressures may affect teacher psychological health, thereby influencing how assessment is enacted in practice (22). The interplay between technological, psychological, and pedagogical dimensions further complicates curriculum enactment.

At the same time, assessment literacy is shaped by disciplinary interpretation. Scarino emphasized the interpretive dimension of language assessment, arguing that teachers must develop self-awareness regarding how their judgments are constructed (3). Taylor similarly stressed the importance of communicating assessment theory and principles clearly to stakeholders, including teachers and learners (2). When assessment literacy remains abstract or overly technical, teachers may struggle to translate conceptual understanding into classroom decisions.

European research confirms that teacher assessment literacy development is uneven and context-dependent. Vogt and Tzagari found variability in foreign language teachers' familiarity with formative assessment principles across countries (8). Tzagari and Vogt later highlighted research challenges in measuring assessment literacy and underscored the need for context-sensitive inquiry (9). Shapovalov and Evans further argued that professional learning screeners reveal substantial disparities in educators' assessment competencies (23). These findings reinforce the necessity of qualitative exploration into how assessment syllabi are enacted in specific institutional contexts.

In the Iranian context, discrepancies between theory and classroom practice have been documented. Aliakbar and colleagues reported a gap between theoretical principles of classroom assessment and actual practices among Iranian EFL teachers (24). Such discrepancies suggest that reform-oriented curriculum standards may not automatically translate into pedagogical change. Nader Sharhan's investigation into Iraqi EFL teachers' perceptions of textbook content similarly illustrates how curricular intentions may diverge from classroom enactment (25). Comparative regional evidence therefore indicates that Middle Eastern EFL contexts face similar alignment challenges.

From a research design perspective, qualitative inquiry provides rich insights into enactment processes. Merriam and Tisdell emphasize that qualitative approaches enable exploration of participants' lived experiences and interpretations (26). DeLuca and Bellara explicitly called for qualitative investigations to understand how assessment curricula are enacted beyond formal documentation (11). Without examining educators' perspectives, alignment analyses remain incomplete.

Taken together, the literature suggests that language assessment syllabi operate at the intersection of policy, standards, institutional structures, teacher beliefs, and classroom realities. Technical components such as validity and reliability remain foundational (1), yet they are insufficient on their own to ensure ethical, inclusive, and formative assessment practices (3, 7). Alignment requires coherence across policy texts, curriculum standards, teacher educator interpretation, and classroom enactment (11). However, empirical evidence indicates that enactment is often partial, mediated by contextual constraints, and shaped by educator agency (4, 10).

Despite extensive international scholarship, limited research has examined how language assessment syllabi are enacted within Iranian teacher education institutions, particularly in relation to formal policy documents and curriculum standards. Given Farhangian University's central role in preparing future EFL teachers, understanding how assessment courses are interpreted and implemented is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of curriculum alignment efforts. Exploring teacher educators' perspectives can illuminate how theoretical principles, policy expectations, and classroom realities intersect, overlap, or diverge.

Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the extent to which language assessment course syllabi descriptions and learning objectives are enacted in congruence with education policy documents and curriculum standards in EFL teacher education classrooms at Farhangian University.

Methods and Materials

The study explored how language assessment course syllabi are enacted in EFL teacher education at Farhangian University. A qualitative exploratory design was used because the focus was on understanding experiences rather than measuring outcomes. This approach made it possible to look closely at how teacher educators talk about their practices and how they connect policy to classroom realities.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main data collection method. This choice follows the methodological approach described by DeLuca and Bellara (2013). Ten teacher educators took part in these interviews, which allowed for a closer look at how assessment courses are implemented in real settings. As Creswell and Poht (2018) explain, this method supports both structure and flexibility in the interview process. It offers consistency in the questions while still leaving space to explore unexpected ideas. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also note that this flexibility is important when the goal is to understand complex classroom practices.

This study took place at Farhangian University, which is responsible for preparing pre-service teachers across Iran. To include perspectives from different areas, three branches of the university were chosen. These branches represent distinct geographical regions, making it possible to capture a more balanced view of classroom practices.

Within these branches, teacher educators were invited to take part if they were currently teaching or had previously taught language assessment courses. These courses included *Principles of Language Testing*, *Assessment of Learning*, and *Academic Achievement Tests*. All invited educators had direct experience with the core assessment curriculum in the undergraduate English teacher education program.

Ten teacher educators agreed to take part in the study. Their teaching experience ranged from five to more than ten years. To protect confidentiality, participants are identified by pseudonyms (Teacher Educator 1–10). All were specialists in language assessment and testing, and were responsible for delivering the main courses in this area.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in English and took place either online or in person, depending on the participants' availability. Each session lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. All conversations were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent.

The interview guide was structured but flexible. It included one introductory question, four core questions, and three optional follow-up questions. The introductory question focused on participants' experience in teaching assessment courses. The core questions explored the main areas of the study and were worded as follows:

Introductory question:

Participants' experience in teaching assessment courses.

Core questions:

Challenges in implementing syllabi.

Effectiveness of syllabi in preparing pre-service teachers.

Alignment or misalignment with national standards and policies.

Aspects of assessment most emphasized in teaching.

The follow-up questions gave participants space to reflect in more depth on key themes. They focused on how fairness, washback, and assessment for learning were addressed; reflections on balancing theory and practice; and challenges encountered in implementing policy requirements.

The decision to use interviews was based on the approach suggested by DeLuca and Bellara (2013). In their study, they used document analysis to examine alignment and misalignment across policy, standards, and syllabi. They also recommended that interviews with instructors can offer a clearer picture of how these courses are actually enacted in practice. Following their suggestion, interview questions were designed and the interviews were carried out to explore how language assessment courses are implemented in teacher education classrooms.

All interviews were transcribed word for word and then analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Coding was carried out in several rounds to allow patterns and meanings to gradually emerge from the data. Initially, deductive codes were derived from the interview protocol (e.g., "challenges," "alignment," "aspects emphasized"). Inductive coding was then used to capture emerging ideas in participants' responses (e.g., "lack of updated materials," "student diversity," "rigidity of syllabi"). Codes from both approaches were reviewed, compared, and refined until meaningful themes were identified. Through continuous comparison and reflection, five core themes were developed:

- (1) structural and practical challenges,
- (2) strengths and weaknesses of syllabi,
- (3) policy–practice (mis)alignment,
- (4) aspects of assessment emphasized, and
- (5) principles left abstract or neglected.

These themes were supported with illustrative excerpts from the interviews and summarized in Table A.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), several strategies were used. Engagement with the data continued throughout the coding and theme development process. Collegial feedback and regular consultation with academic supervisors helped refine coding decisions. Member checking was carried out by sharing theme summaries with two participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretation. The analytic process was carried out in a transparent and systematic way, and ethical standards were observed during all stages of the study. All participants gave informed consent.

Findings and Results

The interview analysis revealed five main themes that reflected recurring patterns in participants' responses. Each theme was built around common ideas and supported with direct quotes from teacher educators. These themes offer a clear picture of

how language assessment syllabi are implemented at Farhangian University. They also highlight both the constraints and the spaces for action that shape this process.

Theme 1: Structural and Practical Challenges

Many teacher educators described facing structural barriers that made it difficult for them to carry out the syllabi as planned. Limited contact hours, frequent class cancellations, and rigid syllabi created a persistent gap between theoretical coverage and practice-based learning. Teacher Educator 1 described a clear theory–practice gap as one of the most persistent barriers to implementing language assessment syllabi as intended. They explained:

One of the main challenges is the theory–practice gap. The syllabi are quite comprehensive and theory-oriented, but when you actually go into the classroom, the time is too short to cover both the theoretical concepts and give enough space for hands-on practice. These time limitations mean that some practical activities, like designing full-length tests or giving structured peer feedback on assessment tasks, are often rushed or omitted. (TE1)

Interruptions due to institutional or national issues were also highlighted as practical barriers that limited teachers' ability to implement the syllabus effectively. These interruptions often broke the flow of the course and reduced the chances to hold longer assessment activities or workshops. As Teacher Educator 2 explained, "Unplanned closures because of air pollution or fuel shortages limit our ability to run extended workshops or practice sessions." (TE2)

Another common issue raised by participants was the wide range of English proficiency among pre-service teachers. Teacher Educator 3 noted that these differences made it hard to keep the class moving at the same pace. As TE3 noted, "One challenge is diversity among students. Within the class, some pre-service teachers are strong in English, while others aren't proficient enough. Thus, the instructor can't maintain an appropriate pace in covering the materials." (TE3)

In addition to time and diversity constraints, several participants pointed out that a shortage of updated instructional resources and inflexible syllabi further hindered effective implementation. Teacher Educator 1 noted that "in many cases, we rely on older textbooks like *Testing Language Skills from Theory to Practice* by Farhady, Jafarpour, and Birjandi or photocopied materials, while more updated relevant resources would help students better connect theory to practice." (TE1) Likewise, Teacher Educator 4 emphasized that "the prescribed syllabi often leave little room for adapting materials to meet learners' assessment needs." (TE4)

Overall, these constraints—including limited instructional time, outdated materials, institutional interruptions, student diversity, and rigid syllabi—forced teacher educators to prioritize basic theoretical topics (e.g., validity, reliability, item writing) while reducing attention to more demanding or context-sensitive aspects of classroom assessment practice

Theme 2: Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Syllabi

Participants generally acknowledged that the syllabi provided a strong theoretical foundation. Technical areas such as test construction, validity, and reliability were perceived as well covered. As Teacher Educator 1 explained, "The syllabi hopefully provide a strong theoretical foundation—students get to know terms like validity, reliability, functions of tests, and types of assessment." (TE1)

However, they stressed that the application of such knowledge remained weak. Opportunities for authentic practice—such as item analysis, feedback strategies, and school-based projects—were minimal. As Teacher Educator 4 explained,

Pre-service teachers have a good understanding of introductory assessment and are familiar with the key concepts in the field of assessment and testing, [...] but in real classroom contexts, they are unable to design tests that are both reliable and valid. [...] As a result, our pre-service teachers are not able to design assessments that are well-suited to their specific conditions and teaching contexts. (TE4)

Another recurring concern was the limited number of courses devoted to assessment, which participants believed restricted pre-service teachers' ability to develop adequate assessment literacy throughout their program. As Teacher Educator 5 explained, "During their entire four years of study, they take only three courses related to testing and assessment—an amount that seems not sufficient enough." (TE5)

Thus, while syllabi were valued for their clarity in technical domains, they were criticized for not sufficiently preparing students for real classroom challenges.

Theme 3: Policy–Practice (Mis)Alignment

Participants described their teaching as aligning more with the formal curriculum standards than with national policy documents. Several admitted they had never studied policy texts directly. As Teacher Educator 1 explained, "Personally, I have never studied these higher-level educational policy documents. However, when designing my own course syllabi, I try to align with the standards, objectives, and learning expectations outlined in the formal curriculum for Farhangian University." (TE1)

Those familiar with education policy viewed the directives as overly idealistic and disconnected from classroom realities. As Teacher Educator 8 explained, "The visions articulated in these documents regarding educational systems, teachers, and assessment are often far beyond the classroom realities, which makes achieving such expectations almost impossible... Perhaps the main reason why these directives are often neglected is that they are too broad." (TE8)

Even so, many educators said they tried to keep their syllabi in line with the official curriculum standards of Farhangian University. Several explained that, although they were not directly familiar with national policy documents, they still worked to make their teaching match the formal curriculum guidelines. As Teacher Educator 1 stated, "I have never studied these higher-level educational policy documents. However, when designing my own course syllabi, I try to align with the standards, objectives, and learning expectations outlined in the formal curriculum for Farhangian University." (TE1)

Similarly, Teacher Educator 4 noted that the alignment was only partial and was shaped by factors like limited time and varying student proficiency: "My class syllabus partly aligns with the content of the formal curriculum for Farhangian University. I try to prioritize the most important topics in my teaching, considering the challenges of limited time and the diverse proficiency levels of pre-service teachers." (TE4)

Taken together, these accounts show that although teacher educators tried to bring the formal curriculum into their syllabi, how much they could align it mostly depended on real classroom conditions rather than on strict policy or official standards.

Theme 4: Aspects of Assessment Emphasized

Throughout the interviews, participants talked about the assessment areas they focused on most in their teaching. They mentioned validity and reliability, test construction, and giving students exposure to different types of assessment. As Teacher Educator 1 elaborated:

I spend enough time on validity and reliability and help pre-service teachers know how to apply these concepts when they create their classroom tests. I also emphasize skills of constructing a good test from writing clear items to piloting and refining them. Another area of focus in my class syllabus is interpreting test scores. Pre-service teachers should know how to calculate facility, difficulty, and discriminative indices and how to analyze test results to understand their students' strengths and weaknesses. And lastly, I work on understanding different types of assessment like formative, diagnostic, and summative assessment and their specific purposes. (TE1)

Along with traditional testing skills, some teacher educators said they also used alternative forms of assessment, including portfolios, performance tasks, and checklists in their courses. As Teacher Educator 5 explained, "Using alternative assessments such as portfolios, observational checklists, and performance tests receives good attention as well." (TE5)

Overall, the data indicate that teacher educators tended to prioritize technical and procedural dimensions of assessment (such as test design and psychometric accuracy) over formative and reflective practices.

Theme 5: Principles Left Abstract or Neglected

Finally, several principles highlighted in policy and curriculum standards, such as fairness, washback, and creating a calm assessment environment, were recognized by participants but were seldom put into practice. Although these principles are clearly stated in national policy documents, teacher educators explained that they often stay at a theoretical level and do not shape what happens in the classroom. Teacher Educator 9 elaborated:

We only deal with the issue of assessment fairness in a rather theoretical and limited way, although we know it is of great importance. To teach this aspect more practically, we would ideally send pre-service teachers to both rural and urban schools during the semester and ask them to conduct assessments while considering student diversity, exceptional learners, and issues of propriety. However, due to time shortages, we are often forced either to skip these principles altogether or to cover them only superficially. (TE9)

Similarly, Teacher Educator 6 explained that washback was included in the standards but remained largely theoretical:

Since it's not clearly embedded in the curriculum standards, I usually rely on my own experience and ask pre-service teachers to design a mini-project where they compare two different assessment methods and predict how each might affect student motivation and classroom instruction. This exercise is useful because it emphasizes that assessment should not be viewed as a measurement tool but rather a catalyst for learning. (TE6)

Similarly, Teacher Educator 10 discussed how the idea of a respectful and supportive classroom environment for assessment is addressed only conceptually:

This issue about promoting a respectful classroom environment for assessment is broad and abstract. In my syllabus, I address this by creating practical activities. For example, I give student-teachers classroom scenarios, such as a learner with test anxiety or one from a minority background, and ask them to design assessment strategies that are both fair and respectful. Through group work, discussion, and short reflections, they begin to see how respect and fairness can be operationalized in real classrooms. (TE10)

Educators explained that this limited enactment was mostly the result of vague policy language, lack of clear guidance, and not enough time. As a result, pre-service teachers left the courses knowing about these principles but not knowing how to use them in real classroom situations.

Looking across these findings, the five themes show that how assessment syllabi are enacted at Farhangian University is strongly influenced by structural limits, weaknesses in curriculum design, and the gap between policy and classroom practice. Although the syllabi offer a strong theoretical base and focus on technical skills such as test construction, validity, and reliability, their use in actual classrooms remains narrow. Teacher educators often find it difficult to bring policy principles like fairness, assessment for learning, and washback into their daily teaching because of limited time, outdated resources, and vague national policy documents. As a result, assessment training continues to emphasize technical and procedural skills more than formative, reflective, and contextual practices. This situation shows that the development of assessment literacy in teacher education is only partly achieved in classroom reality.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal a complex and partial enactment of language assessment syllabi within EFL teacher education at Farhangian University. While teacher educators acknowledged the strong theoretical foundation of the syllabi, the translation of policy principles and curriculum standards into classroom practice appeared uneven and constrained. This

discussion interprets these findings in light of the existing literature on language assessment literacy, curriculum alignment, and policy enactment.

One of the most salient findings concerns the dominance of technical assessment components—particularly validity, reliability, item writing, and test construction—within classroom enactment. Participants consistently reported prioritizing these domains due to time constraints and syllabus rigidity. This emphasis reflects the traditional psychometric orientation of language assessment literacy described by Fulcher, who argues that understanding validity and reliability remains foundational to professional assessment competence (1). Similarly, Taylor underscores the necessity of communicating core testing principles clearly to teacher candidates (2). The focus on technical precision observed in this study therefore aligns with established conceptions of foundational assessment literacy.

However, the data also demonstrate that technical mastery alone does not ensure comprehensive assessment literacy. Participants described limited opportunities for pre-service teachers to apply concepts through authentic practice, such as classroom-based formative assessment tasks, contextual adaptation, or reflective feedback activities. This gap between conceptual understanding and practical enactment echoes DeLuca and Klinger's findings that teacher candidates often complete assessment coursework without developing robust applied competencies (5). Xu and Brown further reconceptualize assessment literacy as situated practice, emphasizing that knowledge must be enacted within real classroom contexts to become meaningful (4). The present findings therefore reinforce the argument that assessment literacy development requires experiential integration rather than purely theoretical coverage.

Another important finding concerns the partial alignment between course syllabi and national policy documents. While educators generally reported aligning with formal curriculum standards, many admitted limited familiarity with higher-level policy texts. This selective alignment supports DeLuca and Bellara's argument that curriculum alignment must be examined not only at the level of documentation but also through enactment processes (11). When policy directives remain abstract or inaccessible, educators tend to rely on proximal curriculum standards rather than broader reform frameworks. Tsagari and Vogt similarly report that teachers across Europe acknowledge policy principles but often lack detailed understanding of how to operationalize them (9).

The relative neglect of principles such as fairness, washback, and assessment for learning (AfL) represents another significant theme. Although participants recognized the importance of these constructs, they described addressing them primarily at a theoretical level. Scarino emphasizes that assessment literacy requires interpretive self-awareness and sensitivity to context, particularly in issues of fairness and ethical judgment (3). When fairness remains abstract, its classroom enactment becomes limited. Likewise, Stiggins argues that assessment for learning must be embedded in instructional routines rather than discussed as an isolated concept (7). The superficial treatment of AfL observed in this study therefore mirrors broader international patterns of partial reform implementation.

Structural and institutional constraints also shaped enactment patterns. Time shortages, syllabus rigidity, outdated materials, and student diversity were repeatedly identified as barriers. Looney and colleagues argue that teacher assessment identity is negotiated within institutional realities, meaning that contextual pressures significantly influence assessment practice (10). Similarly, Razavipour highlights managerial and institutional obstacles that limit reform-oriented assessment implementation in Iranian contexts (15). The current findings confirm that even when teacher educators value formative and ethical assessment principles, structural constraints may prevent full enactment.

The observed diversity in student proficiency levels further complicates implementation. Educators reported difficulty maintaining an appropriate pace that accommodates varying linguistic and statistical competence. Moradzadeh Fard and colleagues emphasize that effective EFL teaching requires responsiveness to learner characteristics (19). When pre-service

teachers themselves exhibit uneven proficiency, instructors may prioritize foundational content over advanced application. Putri's findings regarding the influence of teacher attitudes on student motivation suggest that assessment approaches also shape engagement and confidence (20). Limited time for differentiated instruction may therefore indirectly affect the development of reflective assessment practices.

The findings also intersect with broader discussions about reform enactment in EFL contexts. Tran and colleagues demonstrate that teachers often reinterpret reform curricula based on local feasibility (12). Similarly, Liu and Ren show that teacher beliefs mediate the adoption of communicative and task-based approaches (16). In the present study, educators exercised professional judgment in selecting which components of the syllabus to emphasize. This selective prioritization suggests that enactment is not a simple implementation process but an interpretive negotiation shaped by agency and context.

International research further supports the idea that assessment literacy development remains uneven. Vogt and Tsagari report variability in foreign language teachers' familiarity with formative assessment principles (8). Shapovalov and Evans similarly identify disparities in educators' professional learning related to assessment (23). The present study's findings resonate with these patterns, suggesting that even in structured teacher education programs, full alignment between theory, standards, and classroom practice is difficult to achieve.

Technological change introduces additional considerations. Harakchiyska identifies AI adoption predisposition as an emerging factor influencing language teaching innovation (21). Yet participants in this study reported reliance on outdated materials, indicating a potential disconnect between evolving assessment technologies and course content. Minh's review of teacher well-being highlights how professional demands can influence pedagogical enactment (22). When educators face time pressure and institutional rigidity, innovation may be deprioritized in favor of covering essential theoretical material.

From a sociocultural perspective, Ulum's interdisciplinary approach to language, culture, and justice suggests that assessment practices carry broader implications for equity (17). The limited operationalization of fairness observed in this study indicates that justice-oriented assessment remains underdeveloped in practice. Nader Sharhan's findings on textbook perceptions further illustrate how curricular intentions can diverge from classroom realities (25). Together, these perspectives reinforce the argument that policy language alone cannot ensure transformative practice.

Overall, the findings reveal a pattern of "technical alignment but principled attenuation." While core psychometric topics are consistently enacted, ethical, formative, and contextual dimensions remain less visible. This pattern reflects the international tension between technical coverage and transformative assessment literacy described by DeLuca and colleagues (6). Effective teacher professional development must integrate theory with practice through coherent program design (18). Without such integration, alignment remains partial and reform goals remain aspirational.

This study has several limitations. First, it relies solely on self-reported data from teacher educators through interviews. Classroom observations and document analysis of course materials would have provided additional triangulation and strengthened the validity of the findings. Second, the study was conducted within three branches of one university, which may limit generalizability to other institutions or national contexts. Third, the perspectives of pre-service teachers were not included, meaning that conclusions about classroom readiness are based on educator perceptions rather than direct student data. Finally, the study did not quantitatively measure assessment literacy levels, which could complement qualitative insights in future work.

Future research could expand the scope by incorporating classroom observations and artifact analysis to examine how assessment tasks are actually designed and implemented. Longitudinal studies following pre-service teachers into their professional practice would provide insight into how assessment literacy develops over time. Comparative studies across teacher education institutions could identify structural differences influencing enactment. Additionally, research examining the integration of digital and AI-based assessment tools within teacher education programs would help clarify how emerging

technologies shape assessment literacy. Investigating the relationship between teacher educator professional development and syllabus innovation would also offer valuable insights.

To enhance alignment between policy, standards, and classroom enactment, teacher education programs should incorporate more structured opportunities for experiential assessment practice, including school-based projects and reflective case analyses. Syllabi could be revised to explicitly operationalize principles such as fairness, washback, and assessment for learning through applied assignments. Institutions should provide updated resources and flexible scheduling to allow deeper engagement with formative practices. Professional development workshops for teacher educators can strengthen familiarity with policy documents and emerging assessment technologies. Finally, creating collaborative communities of practice among teacher educators may support sustained dialogue and innovation in assessment instruction.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who helped us carrying out this study.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

References

1. Fulcher G. Assessment literacy for the language classroom. *Language Assessment Quarterly*. 2012;9(2):113-32. doi: 10.1080/15434303.2011.642041.
2. Taylor L. Communicating the theory, practice, and principles of language testing to test stakeholders: Some reflections. *Language Testing*. 2013;30(3):403-12. doi: 10.1177/0265532213480338.
3. Scarino A. Language assessment literacy as self-awareness: Understanding the role of interpretation in assessment and in teacher learning. *Language Testing*. 2013;30(3):309-27. doi: 10.1177/0265532213480128.
4. Xu Y, Brown GTL. Teacher assessment literacy in practice: A reconceptualization. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 2016;58:149-62. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2016.05.010.

5. DeLuca C, Klinger DA. Assessment literacy development: Identifying gaps in teacher candidates' learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. 2010;17(4):419-38. doi: 10.1080/0969594X.2010.516643.
6. DeLuca C, LaPointe-McEwan D, Luhanga U. Teacher assessment literacy: A review of international standards and measures. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*. 2016;28(3):251-72. doi: 10.1007/s11092-015-9233-6.
7. Stiggins R. Improve assessment literacy outside of schools too. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 2014;96(2):67-72. doi: 10.1177/0031721714553413.
8. Vogt K, Tsagari D. Assessment literacy of foreign language teachers: Findings of a European study. *Language Assessment Quarterly*. 2014;11(4):374-402. doi: 10.1080/15434303.2014.960046.
9. Tsagari D, Vogt K. Assessment literacy of foreign language teachers around Europe: Research challenges and future prospects. *Papers in Language Testing and Assessment*. 2017;6(1):45-65. doi: 10.58379/UHIX9883.
10. Looney A, Cumming J, van der Kleij F, Harris K. Reconceptualising the role of teachers as assessors: Teacher assessment identity. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. 2017. doi: 10.1080/0969594X.2016.1268090.
11. DeLuca C, Bellara A. The current state of assessment education: Aligning policy, standards, and teacher education curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*. 2013;64(4):356-72. doi: 10.1177/0022487113488144.
12. Tran NG, Ha XV, Tran NH. EFL reformed curriculum in Vietnam: An understanding of teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. *RELC Journal*. 2023;54(1):166-82. doi: 10.1177/00336882211043670.
13. van der Steen J, van der Veen JT, van der Veen P, van der Veen I. Designing formative assessment that improves teaching and learning: What can be learned from the design stories of experienced teachers? *Journal of Formative Design in Learning*. 2023;7(4):Article e00080. doi: 10.1007/s41686-023-00080-w.
14. Remesal A. Primary and secondary teachers' conceptions of assessment: A qualitative study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 2011;27(2):472-82. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2010.09.017.
15. Razavipour K, Rezagah K. Language assessment in the new English curriculum in Iran: Managerial, institutional, and professional barriers. *Language Testing in Asia*. 2018;8(1):Article 9. doi: 10.1186/s40468-018-0061-8.
16. Liu Y, Ren W. Task-based language teaching in a local EFL context: Chinese university teachers' beliefs and practices. *Language Teaching Research*. 2024;28(6):2234-50. doi: 10.1177/13621688211044247.
17. Ulum ÖG. Syrian lives matter in an EFL speaking class: An interdisciplinary approach to language, culture, and social justice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 2025;160:105040. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2025.105040.
18. Darling-Hammond L, Hyler ME, Gardner M. *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute, 2017.
19. Moradzadeh Fard S, Askari MI, Fatehi Rad N. What makes an effective EFL teacher? Insights from Iranian elementary-level learners. *Assessment and Practice in Educational Sciences*. 2025;3(2):1-10. doi: 10.61838/japes.3.2.7.
20. Putri TA, Martriwati M. The Influence of Teachers' Attitude Towards the Students' Motivation in EFL Class. *Jurnal Studi Guru dan Pembelajaran*. 2025;8(1):15-27.
21. Harakchiyska T. Predictors of Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Predisposition Towards AI Adoption in Language Teaching. *Education Sciences*. 2025;15(9):1112. doi: 10.3390/educsci15091112.
22. Minh NNT. PERMA Model and EFL Teachers' Well-Being: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Knowledge Learning and Science Technology Issn 2959-6386 (Online)*. 2024;3(2):186-93. doi: 10.60087/jklst.vol3.n2.p193.
23. Shapovalov YA, Evans CM. Research synthesis: Developing the educator assessment literacy professional learning screener. The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc., 2022.
24. Aliakbar M, Yasini A, Sadeghi S. Iranian EFL teachers' classroom assessment practices: Discrepancy between theory and practice. *International Journal of Language Testing*. 2023;13(2):149-59.
25. Nader Sharhan A, Janfeshan K. The perceptions of Iraqi EFL preparatory school teachers about literature Spots in Iraqi English textbooks. *Cogent Education*. 2024;11(1):2298610. doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2023.2298610.
26. Merriam SB, Tisdell EJ. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*: Jossey-Bass; 2016.