Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL), Vol. 17, No. 1, March 2014, 25-48

The Effect of Self-assessment on EFL Learners' Goal Orientation

Sasan Baleghizadeh [a]
Associate Professor of TEFL, Shahid Beheshti University, Iran

Atieh Masoun
MA Graduate of TEFL, Shahid Beheshti University, Iran

Received 12 January 2013; revised 1 December 2013; accepted 3 January 2014

Abstract

This paper reports on a study that investigated the effect of self-assessment on a group of English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students' goal orientation. To this end, 57 EFL students participated in a seven-week course. The participants were divided into an experimental and a control group. At the beginning and at end of the semester, both groups completed a goal-orientation questionnaire. However, the participants in the experimental group completed a bi-weekly self-assessment questionnaire throughout the semester as well. The data were analyzed using a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA). The findings revealed that the students' learning goal orientation improved significantly in the experimental group. This suggests that practicing self-assessment on a formative basis boosts EFL students' leaning goal orientation.

Key words: Self-assessment; Goal orientation; EFL

[a] *Email address*: sasanbaleghizadeh@yahoo.com

Corresponding address: 1983969411, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Introduction

Regarding the significant role of assessment, Anderson (1998) states that it affects what is taught and learned in the classroom. He further argues that there have been demands to abandon traditional assessment and use alternative assessment, instead. Traditional assessment is defined by Short and Burke (1991) as the outside force imposed on the curriculum and learners. There are also limitations in applying traditional assessment as they are likely to result in inappropriate evaluations (Mastuno, 2009). Thus, in order to compensate for the shortcomings of traditional assessment, alternative assessment has attracted the attention of scholars (Chen, 2008). Alternative assessment includes performance assessment, portfolio assessment, students' self-assessment, peer-assessment and so forth (Huerta-Macias, 1995).

Alternative assessment techniques such as self-assessment and peer-assessment have attracted more attention in the field of education (Hargreaves, Earl, & Schmidt, 2001). Esfandiari and Myford (2013) view alternative assessment as the gateway of new opportunities and horizons for language education, language classroom, and language assessment in the early 1990s. Regarding the growing attention toward learner-centered curricula, the topic of self-assessment and peer assessment has received particular attention in testing and evaluation in the last decade (Birjandi & Hadidi, 2012). Moreover, Oscarson (1978) states that shifting the focus toward directing learners to judge their abilities has led to the development of self-assessment techniques. In a similar vein, Blanche and Merino (1989) suggest that learners need to know what their abilities are, how much progress they are making, and what they can do with the skills they have acquired. Moreover, they contend that learners will not learn efficiently if they lack such knowledge. Likewise, Oscarson and Apelgren (2011) maintain that in modern language education, students need to have the right of monitoring their own work.

Birjandi and Hadidi (2012) consider self- or peer-assessment as a logical outcome of increased interest in learner-centered language teaching and self-directed language learning. Likewise, Birjandi and Sayyari (2010) regard self- and peer-assessment as two means of realizing the goal of educational assessment and learner-centered education. Despite the importance of self-assessment, learners are rarely placed in charge of rating their own performance (Luoma & Tarnanen, 2003). For this reason, de Saint Léger (2009) posits that despite the significance of self-assessment, its impact on language learning has rarely been investigated.

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

There have been some claims for the effect of self-assessment on learners' goal orientation in the literature; however, it needs to be fully explored. Oscarson (1989) considers self-assessment as an integral element of learners' formulating goals. This idea is elaborated on more by Butler and Lee (2010), who confirm that through self-assessment learners raise their awareness of goals and expectations, monitor their learning progress, and evaluate their level of comprehension against the goals and criteria decided by the curriculum. Oscarson (1989) also mentions improved goal orientation as one of the benefits of using self-assessment in the language classroom.

Additionally, the role of goal-orientation in language learning is also significant in that it affects the way students approach the task and engage in it. Ames (1992) notes that goal is the integrated pattern of beliefs, attributions, and affect, which produces intentions of behavior. Goals can also give learners directions and momentum toward completing tasks (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Despite the fact that goal orientation has been hypothesized to result from self-assessment, little work has been done in this field. Increased goal-orientation is reported to be related to the effort and persistence toward performing a task until it is accomplished. Hence, a clearer understanding of the role of self-assessment in improving EFL learners' goal orientation would help language teachers in raising students' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. Inasmuch as these theoretical issues have not been fully explored empirically, further research on the effect of self-assessment on goal orientation beliefs can enrich the available literature.

Review of Literature

Self-assessment, in Paris and Paris's (2001) words, is "the ability to assess one's work" (p.96). Self-assessment can also be defined as information about the learners provided by the learners themselves, about their abilities, the progress they think they are making and what they think they can do or cannot do yet with what they have learned in a course (Blanche & Merino, 1989). Blanche and Merino observe that after students learn language skills, they need to be aware of their abilities and their progress.

Self-assessment has often been reported as an effective tool because it provides an opportunity for learners to engage in the learning process by evaluating their own strengths and weaknesses, reflection on their progress, and setting goals for themselves as learners (Paris & Ayres, 1994). Through self-assessment, students

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

can become aware of goals and expectations, monitor their learning process, and evaluate their own state of understanding against goals and standards defined by the curriculum (Butler & Lee, 2010). Butler and Lee further argue that self-assessment helps learners understand the amount of effort needed to accomplish their goals, develop a variety of strategies, and employ them effectively. Birjandi and Hadidi (2012) conclude that language learning is boosted if the learner is involved in the process of language learning as well as assessment and the management of language learning, while assessment is shared between the language teacher and the learner.

However, there are some limitations regarding applying self-assessment. For example, Leach (2012) investigated the accuracy of self-assessment and found out that high achievers tended to underestimate and low achievers had a tendency to overestimate their performance. Leach also considered students' feelings, attitudes, and reluctance toward self-assessment as important factors affecting it. In the same vein, Esfandiari and Myford (2013) state that students' feelings and attitudes toward self-assessment along with their cultural background may influence the way they assess themselves. In addition, self-assessment may not be widely practiced in education simply because that many teachers do not trust the pedagogical values and the reliability of learners' self- and peer-assessment (Birjandi & Siyyari, 2010)

Enhanced awareness of the learning process and improved goal orientation on the part of learners are the benefits of self-assessment over teacher-centered assessment in language learning contexts (Blanche & Merino, 1989). In this regard, Oscarson (1989) points out that self-assessment promotes learning, raises learners' awareness of their own learning, improves learners' goal orientation, reduces teacher's burdens of assessment, and entails a long-term effect on learner autonomy.

Goal-orientation refers to learners' situation-specific beliefs, reasons, and the purposes that lead them to approach and engage in the learning tasks with goal-directed and cognition-based behaviors (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986). Pintrich (2000) defines achievement goal orientations as "….constructs that address the issue of the purpose or reason why students are pursuing an achievement task" (p.93). The goal orientation theory is considered to be highly relevant to justifying different academic behaviors and performances (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Most models of achievement goal orientation have investigated two general goal orientations: learning and ability (performance) goal orientations (Ross,

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Shannon, Salisbury-Glennon, & Guarino, 2002). Recent research, however, has made a distinction between two different types of ability goals and has applied a trichotomous goal framework (Ross et al., 2002). Elliot and Church (1997) have proposed that there are two different types of ability goals: an ability-approach goal and ability-avoid goal. According to Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002), these two types of goal orientation are linked to different behavioral, cognitive, and affective outcomes. Individuals with learning goals are oriented toward developing new skills, trying to understand their work, improving the level of competence, or achieving a sense of mastery based on self-referenced standard (Ames, 1992). When students use learning goals such as mastery goals, these goals help them focus on how they think, self-monitor, and immerse themselves in the process; as a result, students will then continue to persist in their progress of the specific academic area, which in turn results in enhanced motivation (Mc Millan & Hearn, 2009).

Ability-approach and ability-avoid goals are characterized by two functionally separate goals leading to different outcomes. Ability-avoid goals are associated with maladaptive outcomes (Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Church, 1997; Ellliot & Harackiewicz, 1996), while ability-approach goals are associated with some adaptive outcomes (Elliot, 1999; Harackiewicz, Barron, & Elliot, 1998). Students who have an ability-approach goal orientation are motivated to outperform others and look competent. Students who have an ability-avoidance goal orientation, on the other hand, prefer to look dumb by avoiding learning tasks (Ross et al., 2002).

Numerous studies have examined the effects of goals on learning activities and outcomes. These studies found learning goals, performance goals, and avoidance goals to be associated with various motivational variables that influence learning behaviors (Barker, McInerney, & Dowson, 2002; Elliot & Church, 1997). Another group of researchers also investigated college students' achievement goal adoption and the consequences on their intrinsic motivation and graded performance (Harackiewicz et al. 1997). In general, most of these studies report that learning goals are positive predictors of learning achievement (e.g., Elliot & Church; 1997; Elliot, McGregor & Gable, 1999; Harackiewicz et al., 2002).

Since 1976 when the first reports on self-assessment were published as maintained by Blanche and Merino (1989), self-assessment has continued to develop as a distinct field of study in second language (L2) learning and education. Studies on self-assessment investigated the rationale and method of using self-assessment as an instrument for assessing second or foreign language proficiency.

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Most of the studies on self-assessment have researched the correlations between teacher assessment and self-assessment intended to discover the accuracy of self-assessment (Boud & Falchikov, 1989). Additionally, Carr (1977) investigated the effect of specific guidelines on the accuracy of student self-evaluation. Falchikov and Boud (1989) identified the salient variables regarding the students' accuracy of self-assessment. These factors included the quality of the design of the study (better designed studies show a closer correspondence between students' and teachers' evaluation than poorly designed ones), the level of the course of which the assessment was a part of (students in advanced courses appear to be more accurate assessors than those in introductory courses, and the broad area of the study (studies within the area of science generally appear to produce more accurate self-assessment outcomes than those from other areas of inquiry).

Self-assessment has long been used in the fields of second and foreign languages as part of the decision making procedure for placement purposes by requiring learners to evaluate their own language proficiency (Ross, 1998; Strong-Krause, 2000). Ferguson (1978) further explored using self-assessment for placement test and inferred positive conclusion. Le Blanc and Painchaud (1985) also applied self-assessment as a placement instrument and came up with the result that there are positive correlations between self-assessment and standardized proficiency tests for listening and reading.

To date, the focus of most research on self-assessment has centered on investigating it as a reliable tool for assessing the variables affecting the reliability of scores (de Saint-Léger, 2009). As measurement is not the only aim of self-assessment, Butler and Lee (2010) postulate that self-assessment is found to be useful in measurement and learning. Oscarson (1997) offers a thorough review of investigations concerning self-assessment in second and foreign language contexts and highlights the dearth of research in this area. In line with this, Oscarson and Apelgren (2011) consider dual purposes for self-assessment including evaluation of results as well as promotion of learning. Thus, they conclude that a reorientation of assessment is required.

Despite the fact that the role of self-assessment in increasing goal orientation has been hypothesized (Butler & Lee, 2010; Oscarson, 1989), there is a paucity of studies in supporting this claim. The value of self-assessment as a factor in improving EFL learners' goal orientation is an issue that merits further inquiry and provides more evidence for applying self-assessment resisted by teachers. This is attested by the findings of Rezaei and Afrouz Javadi (2010) in their study, which

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

showed Iranian EFL teachers hold a negative attitude toward utilizing self-assessment. The present research contributes to the available literature on self-assessment by trying to show that applying self-assessment is likely to contribute to learners' enhanced level of goal orientation.

In this study, formative rather than summative self-assessment was applied. According to Esfandiari and Myford (2013), formative self-assessment is considered as the "student self-evaluation" and summative self-assessment as the "student grading" or "student marking". Chen (2008) argues that the focus shifts from summative to formative assessment and he also recommends self-assessment as an assessment procedure in order to involve students in monitoring the self-learning process. There is, therefore, resistance against summative self-assessment on the grounds that students cannot validly and reliably assess their work (Leach, 2012). Thus, formative self-assessment was used for the sake of the present study. The following question, hence, guides the present study:

Does EFL learners' goal orientation level increase significantly at the end of the treatment period through applying self-assessment skills?

Method

The overarching purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of self-assessment practice on EFL learners' goal orientation. In order to achieve this goal, a quasi-experimental study was conducted. As random selection was not possible because the experimental study was done in a classroom setting, a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group design was adopted. The independent variable manipulated in this study was a classroom self-assessment component and the dependent variable was learners' level of goal orientation. In this study, the learners' goal orientation was assessed before and after the experimental treatment. In order to avoid the threat of an interaction of the experimental treatment and testing, the self-assessment component did not carry a grade, so the students did not take it as part of the ongoing graded evaluation of the course.

Instruments

In this study, three different instruments were employed: (a) a self-assessment questionnaire adapted from Blanche and Merino (1989) (see Appendix A), (b) a goal-orientation questionnaire developed and revised by Midgley et al. (1998) (see Appendices B and C), and (c) a mock PET. The questionnaires were translated, and then the translated versions were checked for their accuracy through eliciting the

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

judgment of a number of experts. They were then piloted to determine their reliability. The other instrument used in this study was a mock PET in order to assess the participants' general English proficiency level.

Self-assessment Questionnaire

The self-assessment questionnaire adapted from Blanche and Merino (1989) was used in this study. In this questionnaire, students are asked to identify classroom topics (whether grammatical, functional or vocabulary-related) they consider important, the main difficulties they think they had while learning the topics, as well as strategies they believe may overcome these difficulties. This instrument allows students to focus on their assets as well as their shortcomings and hopefully makes students reflect upon all the various aspects of the course (Blanche & Merino, 1989).

Goal Orientation Questionnaire

In order to measure the participants' achievement goal orientation, the Goal Orientation Scale developed and revised by Midgley et al. (1998) was utilized. The English version of the questionnaire consisted of 18 items, each six items measuring a different goal orientation, namely learning goal orientation, ability-approach goal orientation and ability-avoid goal orientation. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 5 (completely true of me), was used to rate each item. By providing the sum of the scores for each construct by the number of items related to that part, the total score for each construct was figured out. The reliability of the Persian version of the Goal Orientation Scale was tested using Cronbach alpha, which was found to be 0.79. Thus, the Persian version of the Goal Orientation Scale enjoyed a satisfactory reliability index.

Participants and Data Collection Procedure

The participants for this study were 57 adult intermediate students who were learning English as a foreign language at an institute in Yazd, Iran. The participants were selected through administration of a Preliminary test of English (PET). All the participants were female with an average age of 26. They were members of four intact classes randomly assigned to an experimental (n=27) and a control group (n=30).

The procedures in the present study embraced the following steps. First, the participants took the PET through which their proficiency level was determined. Then the participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups.

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

In the next stage, both questionnaires (the self-assessment and the goal orientation questionnaires) were completed by the participants in the experimental group, but only one of them (the goal orientation questionnaire) was completed by the participants in the control group. As the last step, the goal-orientation questionnaire was completed by the participants in both groups in the last week of the course.

The goal orientation questionnaire was completed by the participants in both groups in the second week of classes. The self-assessment questionnaire, however, was completed by the participants in the experimental group on a bi-weekly basis throughout the semester (i.e., three times since the course lasted for seven weeks). When the participants in the experimental group received the self-assessment questionnaire for the first time, their teacher (the second researcher of the present study) gave them the necessary instructions as to how it should be approached. The participants were also allowed to ask questions whenever they faced any problem while filling in the self-assessment questionnaire. In this study, self-assessment was practiced as a tool to monitor students' own performance.

Results

The descriptive statistics for all participants including mean, standard deviation, range, minimum and maximum scores, as well as pretest and posttest scores are reported in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Experimental Group's Goal Orientation

Group		N	Mean	SD	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Learning	Pretest	27	21.67	3.793	13	15	28
	Posttest	27	26.93	2.235	7	24	31
Ability-approach	Pretest	27	21.07	5.114	20	10	30
	Posttest	27	20.70	5.48	18	12	30
Ability-avoid	Pretest	27	15.40	3.75	12	10	22
	Posttest	27	15	4.08	14	8	22

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Control Group's Goal Orientation

Group		N	Mean	SD	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Learning	Pretest	30	21.37	4	16	14	30
	Posttest	30	24.30	2.88	13	17	30
Ability-approach	Pretest	30	18.03	4.81	18	12	30
	Posttest	30	18	15.01	17	12	29
	Pretest	30	14.60	3.97	14	8	22
	Posttest	30	13.77	3.36	12	8	20

As Tables 1 and 2 show, the mean scores for the participants' learning goal orientation have increased; however, their ability-approach goal orientation and ability-avoid goal-orientation did not experience any increase.

The main statistical analysis used in the study was Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) to capture the difference between the experimental and control groups' goal-orientation scores. Analysis of Covariance was used to standardize the pretest goal orientation scores on both groups (i.e., pretest goal orientation scores served as the covariate). The use of ANCOVA provides researchers with a technique that allows one to analyze the data more accurately. In other words, a quasi-experimental design leaves a study more vulnerable to threats to validity than a full experimental design and this vulnerability can be reduced by applying ANCOVA (Dörnyei, 2007). Dörnyei also believes that a special case of the use of ANCOVA occurs in quasi-experimental designs when the posttest scores of the control and the experimental groups are compared while the pretest scores are controlled as the covariate. However, the reason why MANCOVA was used in this study is that goal orientation is divided into three types, namely learning goal orientation, ability-approach and ability-avoid goal orientation.

Due to the fact that statistical procedures used in this study required screening the assumptions before proceeding with the main MANCOVA analysis, the

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

assumptions were initially checked. First, Kolomogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was applied in order to check the univariate normality of scores. As Table 3 shows, the results are not significant (p >. 05), which indicates that the assumption of univariate normality is not violated.

Table 3
Tests of Normality

Treatment	Groups	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistics	df	Sig
Learning (pretest)	Experimental	.16	27	.06
	Control	.11	3	20
Ability-Approach (pretest)	Experimental	.12	27	20
	Control	.14	30	.10
Ability-Avoid	Experimental	.10	27	.20
	Control	.14	30	.11

The next table is Levene's Test of Error Variances. The sig. values larger than .05 indicate that the assumption of equality of variance for that variable is not violated. The sig values in this table include 0.19, 0.31 and 0.65.

Table 4
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

	F	df1	df2	Sig
Learning (Post)	1.69	1	55	.19
Performance (Post)	1.03	1	55	.31
Avoidance (Post)	7.44	1	55	.06

A set of multivariate tests of significance indicate whether there are statistically significant differences between the groups on a linear combination of the dependent variables. As shown in Table5, The Wilkis' Lambda value obtained is .21 (p= .001). Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups.

Table 5
Multivariate Test of Significant difference between experimental and control group

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Wilks' Lambda	.21	60.17	3.00	50.00	.001	.78

Obtaining a significant result on this multivariate test of significance allows for further investigation in relation to each of the dependent variables. In Table 6, there is only one dependent variable (learning orientation) with a significant value, namely .001. In this study, the only significant difference between the two groups was their learning orientation scores. In other words, the learners' learning goal orientation improved significantly, yet their ability-approach and ability-avoidance goal orientation did not increase in the same way.

Table 6
Test of between Subject Effects

Source	Dependent variable	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Treatment	Learning(post)	296.25	1	296.25	184.20	.001	.78
	Ability (post)	11.99	1	11.99	1.10	.29	.02
	Avoid (post)	21.5	1	21.5	3.14	.08	.05

Moreover, Eta Squared value in this case is 0.78. This represents 78 percent of the variance in learning orientation scores explained by the treatment.

Discussion

The present study investigated the effect of using self-assessment on improving EFL learners' goal orientation level. The results reported in Table 6 revealed that the treatment group differed significantly from the control group. In other words, the formative rather than summative practice of self-assessment elements enhanced EFL learners' goal orientation level. The findings merit the discussion of previous studies. For example, the obtained results are in line with Blanche and Merino (1989), who considered enhanced awareness of the learning process and improved goal orientation as the advantage of self-assessment over teacher-centered assessment. The findings also support Oscarson's (1989) claim that self-assessment promotes learning, raises learners' awareness of their own learning, and improves the goal orientation of individual learners. However, the present study goes beyond the findings of previous research by exploring the effect of self-assessment on students' boosted goal orientation in an EFL context.

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Table 6 indicates that of the three types of goal orientation only learning goal orientation has significantly increased as a result of introducing the self-assessment component compared to ability-approach and ability-avoid orientations. This finding suggests that through regular employment of self-assessment students focus more on the learning process, become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and subsequently try more to achieve learning goals. This finding can be justified by Butler and Lee's (2010) assertion that students become aware of goals, monitor their learning process, and evaluate their own state of understanding against goals defined by the curriculum through self-assessment. Birjandi and Siyyari (2010) add that teachers' feedback on the task performed helps learners to find out both their strengths and weaknesses.

Moreover, inasmuch as individuals with learning goal orientation try to heighten their competence, understand new things, master new skills, understand their work, or achieve a sense of mastery based on self-referenced standards according to Ames (1992), self-assessment fosters learning goal orientation by providing information for learners about themselves, their abilities, the progress they think they are making and what they think they can do or cannot do despite what they have learned in a course (Blanche & Merino, 1989). Birjandi and Hadidi (2012) also argue that providing learners with opportunities to self-assess will enhance their involvement in learning through discussing learning strategies, analyzing the mistakes, and judging their progress.

The findings are also justified based on the fact that goal orientation can be adaptive as Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002) imply that students may decide to approach or avoid a goal based on a variety of both personal and contextual factors. Ames (1992) also declares that achievement goal-theory proposes that differences in students' personal goal orientations are derived at least in part from differences in the classroom context. Both instructional practices of teachers and the general school climate are related to students' adoption of learning and performance goals (Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996; Urdan, Midgley, & Anderman, 1998). This emphasizes the role of classroom context in terms of promoting ability-approach versus ability-avoid goals. Thus, practicing self-assessment can foster learning goal orientation.

As shown in Table 6, there is lack of any significant difference in learners' ability-approach goal orientation. This implies that self-assessment practice may not necessarily result in increased approach goal orientation. This is reasonable because ability-approach goal-oriented learners seek to gain favorable judgment of

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

their competence and compare their achievement in relation to others. Since the focus of self-assessment is on the learner's progress in relation to his or her last achievement rather than in comparison to the others, the use of self-assessment does not lead to increased ability-approach goal orientation.

Additionally, the present study demonstrates that there is not any significance in learners' ability-avoid goal orientation. Again this finding is arguably justified based on the fact that ability-avoid goal-oriented learners avoid looking incompetent or avoid negative judgment of their competence respectively. As self-assessment helps learners become aware of their strengths and weaknesses rather than hiding their weaknesses through avoiding difficult tasks, applying self-assessment does not seem to have improved ability-avoid goal orientation.

Conclusion

This study was an attempt to examine the effect of self-assessment on EFL learners' goal orientation. The findings showed that students benefit from involvement in the assessment process. Among the three goal orientation scales, learning goal orientation significantly increased as a result of inclusion of the self-assessment element in EFL classes. The learners got more learning-oriented through applying self-assessment during the course. Nevertheless, both ability-approach and ability-avoid goal orientations of the learners did not improve significantly. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the pedagogical advantages of self-assessment in educational settings including language teaching. From the results of the present study, it can be specifically concluded that self-assessment is indeed a pedagogically beneficial assessment tool that can improve students' learning goal orientation provided that enough training and practice are regularly offered to them.

Given the importance of goal orientation in language learning, it is significant for language teachers to improve it. Dweck (1986) asserts that the role of contextual factors in adopting goal orientation cannot be ignored. Although individuals are to some extent predisposed to possess one type of goal, contextual factors can influence their choice of goals. This implies that language teachers can create classroom environments that encourage learners to adopt one type of goal orientation. Since the result of the study showed that only learning goal orientation increased as the result of introducing self-assessment, EFL teachers need to focus

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

on appropriate contexts so that students would benefit from the effect of self-assessment on the development of learning goal orientation.

The findings of the present study should be interpreted with caution. It should not be forgotten that the samples were not randomly selected and they were members of intact groups with no male participants. Despite these potential limitations, the present study can spark a number of other studies. Self-assessment is likely to be affected by a person's cultural background, so it will be worthwhile to gather self-assessment data belonging to learners from different cultural backgrounds in Iran and compare them. Similar studies can be conducted with learners from different social and socio-economic backgrounds.

Notes on Contributors:

Sasan Baleghizadeh is an associate professor of TEFL at Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, Iran, where he teaches courses in applied linguistics, syllabus design, and materials development. He is interested in investigating the role of interaction in English language teaching and issues related to materials development.

Atieh Masoun holds an MA degree in TEFL from Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, Iran. She has many years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language. Her research interest is exploring the effect of self-assessment on EFL learners' classroom achievement.

References

Ames, C. (1992). Classrooms: Goals, structures, and student motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *84*, 261–271.

Anderson, R. S. (1998). Why talk about different ways to grade? The shift from traditional assessment to alternative assessment. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 74*, 5-16.

Barker, K. L., McInerney, D. M., & Dowson, M. (2002). Performance approach, performance avoidance and depth of information processing: A fresh look at relations between students' academic motivation and cognition. *Educational Psychology*, *22*, 572-588.

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Birjandi, P., & Hadidi Tamjid, N. (2012). The role of self-, peer and teacher assessment in promoting Iranian EFL learners' writing performance. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 37*, 513-533.

Birjandi, P., & Siyyari, M. (2010). Self-assessment and Peer-assessment: A Comparative Study of Their Effect on Writing Performance and Rating Accuracy. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 13*, 23-45.

Blanche, P., & Merino, B. J. (1989). Self-assessment of foreign-language skills: Implications for teachers and researchers. *Language Learning, 39*, 313-349.

Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (1989). Quantitative studies of student self-assessment in higher education: A critical analysis of findings. *Higher Education, 18,* 529-549.

Butler, G. Y., & Lee, J. (2010). The effects of self-assessment among young learners of English. *Language Testing*, *27*, 5-31.

Carr, R. A. (1977). The Effects of Specific Guidelines on the Accuracy of Student Self-Evaluation. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *2,* 65-77.

Chen, Y. M. (2008). Learning to self-assess oral performance in English: A longitudinal case study. *Language Teaching Research, 12*, 235-262.

de Saint-Léger, D. (2009). Self-assessment of speaking skills and participation in a foreign language class. *Foreign Language Annals, 42*, 158-178.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dweck, C. S. (1986). Motivational processes affecting learning. *American Psychologist, 41,* 1040-1048.

Elliot, A. J. (1999). Approach and avoidance motivation and achievement goals. *Educational Psychologist, 34*, 169-189.

Elliot, A. J., & Church, M. A. (1997). A hierarchical model of approach and avoidance achievement motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *72*, 218-232.

Elliot, A. J., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (1996). Approach and avoidance achievement goals and intrinsic motivation: A mediational analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70*, 461-475.

Elliot, A. J., McGregor, H., & Gable, S. (1999). Achievement goals, study strategies, and exam performance: A mediational analysis. *Journal of Educational psychology*, *91*, 549-563.

Esfandiari, R., & Myford, C. (2013). Severity differences among self-assessors, peer-assessors, and teacher assessors rating EFL essays. *Assessing Writing, 18*, 111-131.

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Falchikov, N., & Boud, D. (1989). Student self-assessment in higher education: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, *59*, 330-395.

Ferguson, N. (1978). Self-assessment of listening comprehension. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *16*, 149-156.

Harackiewicz, J. M., Barron, K. E., Carter, S., Lehto, A., & Elliot, A. (1997). Determinants and consequences of achievement goals in the college classroom: Maintaining interest and making the grade. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *73*, 1284-1295.

Harackiewicz, J. M., Barron, K. E., & Elliot, A. J. (1998). Rethinking achievement goals: When are they adaptive for college students and why? *Educational Psychologist, 33*, 1-21.

Harackiewicz, J. M., Barron, K. E., Tauer, J. M., & Elliot, A. J. (2002). Predicting success in college: A longitudinal study of achievement goals and ability measures as predictors of interest and performance from freshman year through graduation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *94,* 562-575.

Hargreaves, A., Earl, L., & Schmidt, M. (2001). Perspectives on alternative assessment reform. *American Educational Research Journal, 39*, 69-95.

Huerta-Macias, A. (1995). Alternative assessment: Response to commonly asked questions. *TESOL Journal*, *5,* 8-11.

Le Blanc, R., & Painchaud, G. (1985). Self-assessment as a second language placement instrument. *TESOL Quarterly, 19*, 673-687.

Leach, L. (2012). Optional self-assessment: Some tensions and dilemmas. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *37*,137-147.

Linnenbrink, E. A., & Pintrich, P. R. (2002). Motivation as an enabler for academic success. *School Psychology Review, 31*, 313-327.

Luoma, S., & Tarnanen, M. (2003). Creating a self-rating instrument for second language writing: From idea to implementation. *Language Testing*, *20*, 440-465.

Matsuno, S. (2009). Self-, peer-, and teacher-assessments in Japanese university EFL writing classrooms. *Language Testing, 26,* 75-100.

McMillan, J. H., & Hearn, J. (2009). Student Self-assessment: The key to stronger motivation and higher achievement. *Educational Horizons, 87*, 40-49.

Midgley, C., Kaplan, A., Middleton, M., Maehr, M., Urdan, T., Anderman, L. H., & Roeser, R. (1998). The development and validation of scales assessing students' achievement goal orientations. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *23,* 113-131.

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Oscarson, M. (1978). *Approaches to self-assessment in foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Oscarson, M. (1989). Self-assessment of language proficiency: Rationale and applications. *Language Testing*, *6*, 1-13.

Oscarson, M. (1997). Self-assessment of foreign and second language proficiency. In C. Clapham & D. Corson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education Volume 7*: *Language Testing and Assessment* (pp. 175-187). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Oscarson, M., & Apelgren, B. M. (2011). Mapping language teachers' conceptions of student assessment procedures in relation to grading: A two-stage empirical inquiry. *System, 39*, 2-16.

Paris, S., & Ayres, L. (1994). *Becoming reflective students and teachers*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Paris, S. G., & Paris, A. H. (2001). Classroom applications of research on self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist, 36*, 89-101.

Pintrich, P. R. (2000). Multiple goals, multiple pathways: the role of goal orientation in learning and achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 92*, 544-555.

Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. (2002). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications* .Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Rezaei, A. A., & Afrouz Javadi, G. (2010). Attitudes towards self-assessment. *Pazhuhesh-e Zabanha-ye Khareji, 57,* 55-72.

Roeser, R., Midgley, C., & Urdan, T. (1996). Perceptions of the school psychological environment and early adolescents' psychological and behavioral functioning in school: The mediating role of goal and belonging. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 88,* 408-422.

Ross, S. (1998). Self-assessment in second language testing: A meta-analysis and analysis of experiential factors. *Language Testing, 15*, 1-20.

Ross, M. E., Shannon, D. M., Salisbury-Glennon, J. D., & Guarino, A. (2002). The patterns of adaptive learning survey: A comparison across grade levels. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *62*, 483-497.

Short, K. G., & Burke, C. (1991). *Creating curriculum: Instructors and students as a community of learners.* Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

Strong-Krause, D. (2000). Exploring the effectiveness of self-assessment strategies in ESL placement. In G. Ekbatani & H. Pierson (Eds.), *Learner-directed assessment in ESL* (pp. 49-61). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

Urdan, T. C., Midgley, C. & Anderman, E. M. (1998). The role of classroom goal structure in students' use of self-handicapping. *American Educational Research Journal, 35*, 101-122.

Appendix A

Self-assessment Questionnaire

1. In the past few lessons (days, weeks), we/I have studied/practiced/worked on:

   a) _____

   b) _____

   c) _____

   d) _____

   e) _____

   f) _____

Tip: Fill in the empty spaces with topics and areas of study that are relevant to your case, for example:

a) Pronunciation of words containing the sound /ð/

b) How to greet people

c) Questions with do/does

(The "new words" you have used will be covered under items 3 and 4, so please don't include vocabulary in this section.)

2. In your estimation, how well can you deal with the topics you listed in Section 1?

	Not at all	To some extent	Fairly well	Very well	Thoroughly
a)	----------	----------	----------	----------	---------
b)	----------	----------	----------	----------	---------
c)	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------
d)	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------
e)	----------	----------	----------	----------	---------

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

f) ---------- ---------- ---------- ---------- ----------

3. On reflection, to what extent do you find the topics you listed in Section 1 important in relation to your own needs?

	Not at all important	Not very important	Fairly important	Very important	Extremely important
a)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------
b)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------
c)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------
d)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------
e)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------
f)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

4. we/I have also come across new words of the following type, or within the following type, or within the following subject areas(s): (write down your native language equivalents if it's easier for you.)

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

5. In your estimation, how well do you know the vocabulary/areas you mentioned in Section 4?

	Not at all	To some extent	Fairly well	Very well	Thoroughly
a)	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------
b)	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------
c)	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------
d)	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

6. On reflection, to what extent do you find the vocabulary/areas in Section 4 important in relation to your own needs?

	Not at all important	Not very important	Fairly important	Very important	Extremely important
a)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------
b)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------
c)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------
d)	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

7. Summarizing the past few lessons (days, weeks) we/I feel that we/I have leaned:

Nothing at all	very little	A little	Enough	A lot
…….	…….	…….	…….	…….

8. Looking back, I realize that I should change my study habits/learning approach /priorities in the following way:

_____
_____
_____
_____

9. Overall, I think my weaknesses are:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

10. I would want to see instruction in the next few lessons (days, weeks) focused on the following points/skills/areas:

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B

The Goal Orientation Scale

Please choose the answer that best describes your opinion.

1 = Not at all true 2=Mostly not true of me 3 = Somewhat true

4= Mostly true of me 5 = Very true

1-I like English class work that I'll learn from, even if I make a lot of mistakes.

2-An important reason why I do my English class work in this English class is because I like to learn new things.

3-I like class work in this English class best when it really makes me think.

4-An important reason why I do my work in this English class is because I want to get better at it.

5-I do my English class work because I'm interested in it.

6-An important reason I do my class work in this English class is because I enjoy it.

7-I would feel really good if I were the only one who could answer the teachers' questions in class.

8- It's important to me that the other students in my English class think that I am good at my work.

9-I want to do better than other students in this English class.

10-I would feel successful in this English class if I did better than most of the other students.

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

11-I'd like to show my teachers that I'm smarter than the other students in this English class.

12-Doing better than other students in this English class is important to me.

13-It's very important to me that I don't look stupid in this English class.

14-An important reason I do my English class work is so that I don't embarrass myself.

15-The reason I do my English class work is so my teachers don't think I know less than others.

16-The reason I do English my work is so that others won't think I'm dumb.

17-One reason I would not participate in English class is to avoid looking stupid.

18-One of my main goals is to avoid looking like I can't do my work.

Appendix C
The Translated Version of the Goal-Oriented Scale

لطفا به سوالات زیر پاسخ دهید. لطفا عددی را انتخاب کنید که نظرشما را به بهترین صورت بیان می کند.

1. در مورد من کاملا نادرست است.
2. در بیشتر موارد در مورد من نادرست است.
3. تاحدی در مورد من درست است.
4. در بیشتر موارد در مورد من درست است.
5. در مورد من کاملا درست است.

1. من به تکالیف کلاسی که از طریق آن چیزی می آموزم علاقه مندم حتی اگر در حین انجام آن مرتکب اشتباهات زیادی شوم. _____
2. دلیل مهمی که من تکالیف کلاسی را در این کلاس زبان انگلیسی انجام میدهم این است که دوست دارم چیزهای جدیدی یاد بگیرم. _____
3. من در این کلاس زبان انگلیسی به تکالیف درسی که مرا به فکر کردن وادارد بیش از دیگر تکالیف علاقه مندم. _____

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]

4. دلیل مهمی که من تکالیف این کلاس زبان را انجام میدهم این است که می خواهم پیشرفت کنم. _____
5. من تکالیف کلاس زبان انگلیسی را انجام میدهم زیرا به آن علاقه دارم. _____
6. یک دلیل مهمی که من تکالیف درسی را انجام میدهم این است که از آن لذت می برم. _____
7. در صورتیکه تنها فردی باشم که بتواند به سؤالات معلم پاسخ دهد احساس خوبی به من دست می دهد. ____
8 . برای من بسیارمهم است که دیگر دانش آموزان کلاس فکر کنند که من کارم را در کلاس به خوبی انجام میدهم. _____
9. من میخواهم بهتر از دیگر دانش اموزان این کلاس عمل کنم. _____
10. من احساس میکنم که در این کلاس موفق هستم اگر بهتر از دیگر دانش اموزان کلاس عمل کنم. _____
11. من می خواهم به معلم خود نشان بدهم که باهوش تر از دیگر دانش آموزان این کلاس هستم. _____
12. برای من اهمیت زیادی دارد که بهتر از دیگر دانش آموزان این کلاس زبان انگلیسی عمل کنم. _____
13. برای من بسیار مهم است که در این کلاس زبان انگلیسی کودن به نظر نرسم. _____
14. دلیل مهمی که تکالیف کلاس را انجام میدهم این است که خودم را خجالت زده نکنم. _____
15. دلیل مهمی که تکالیف کلاس زبان را انجام میدهم این است که معلم هایم تصورنکنند که من کمتر از دیگران میدانم . _____
16. دلیل اینکه من تکالیف خود را انجام میدهم این است که دیگران فکر نکنند من کودن هستم. _____
17. دلیل اینکه من در کلاس شرکت نمی کنم این است که از اینکه کودن به نظر برسم اجتناب کنم. _____
18. یکی از اهداف اصلی من این است که از اینکه به نظر برسم نمی توانم تکالیفم را انجام دهم اجتناب کنم . ____

[Downloaded from ijal2.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-23]