

Beyond Bubble Sheet Tests: Enhancing Reading & Writing with Self-Assessment Strategies for EFL College Students

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Abstract

This study investigates how self-assessment strategies can empower students of various year levels to overcome limitations in traditional, resource-constrained EFL assessments and enhance overall learning outcomes. While multiple-choice tests offer efficiency, they can limit opportunities for deeper learning and self-directed skills development. This mixed-methods study employed a quasi-experimental design to explore the effectiveness of self-assessment for 150 EFL students from freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years in an EFL program. A triangulation of data sources ensured a comprehensive understanding. Surveys assessed student perceptions of traditional assessments and current learning strategies. Course grades of Reading, Writing, and Translation from three semesters and final exam grades served as measures of student achievement in reading comprehension, writing, and translation skills. Think-aloud protocols observed students using self-assessment strategies during reading, writing, or translation tasks, prompting them to verbalize their thought processes. Focus groups explored student experiences with self-assessment in each skill area in the study at issue. The findings revealed that self-assessment strategies, combined with teacher support, can empower students to become more independent learners, strengthen critical thinking skills, and ultimately improve their reading comprehension, writing, and translation abilities, even within the constraints of traditional assessment formats.

Keywords: Self-Assessment Strategies; Reading Comprehension, Writing, Translation; Mixed-Methods Research.

Introduction

The acquisition of robust reading comprehension skills is paramount for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners pursuing higher education. This skill not only grants access to the complex academic texts prevalent in college curricula but also serves as a foundational element for the development of critical thinking, a key requirement for success in tertiary studies. While traditional teacher-centered approaches have long dominated EFL instruction, research suggests that they may fall short in equipping students with the necessary tools for independent, self-directed learning. This gap underscores the need for alternative pedagogical strategies, such as incorporating self-assessment techniques, to enhance EFL learners' comprehension abilities and empower them to become more autonomous and effective readers.

This research delves into the potential of self-assessment strategies to foster learner autonomy and enhance EFL reading comprehension. The study focuses specifically on the context of the Faculty of Education at Beni Suef University in Egypt, a setting where traditional assessment practices, particularly the heavy reliance on objective testing formats, may hinder students' development of deeper reading skills and independent learning abilities. By exploring the effectiveness of self-assessment within this specific context, the research aims to contribute valuable insights for EFL pedagogy in Egyptian universities and to provide practical recommendations for instructors seeking to empower their students to become more self-directed and proficient readers.

In recent years, the Egyptian higher education system has witnessed a significant shift towards digitalization, spearheaded by the Electronic Exams Centre, a unit of the Supreme Council of Universities. However, faculty members across universities believe this shift necessitates addressing challenges in course design, teaching quality, assessment methods, technology integration, and student engagement to ensure effective online education implementation (Taher, 2023; El Kayaly et al., 2020). Since 2022, the Centre's directives have extended beyond just general exams. Their written and oral instructions have specifically targeted EFL skills courses, including reading, writing, listening, and translation. These directives encourage instructors to design assessments heavily reliant on objective formats like MCQs and T/F questions. This

emphasis on objective testing has led to a significant limitation of writing-based assessments, potentially impacting how students develop their writing skills in these EFL courses.

While digital testing platforms offer advantages like streamlined evaluation and consistent grading (Javaeed, 2018), they can also pose challenges compared to modified essay tests. An overdependence on multiple-choice (MCQ) and true/false (T/F) questions might limit students' development of deeper reading comprehension skills that extend beyond rote memorization (Jang, 2009; Urquhart et al., 2014). Several studies, including Nishizuka (2022), Dutro et al. (2013), Huisman et al. (2018), and Mosmery & Barzegar (2015), underscore the importance of going beyond traditional assessment methods to empower students and enhance learning outcomes. Additionally, the decline in writing-based assessments raises concerns about students' ability to express themselves effectively in written English, a critical skill for academic success. To address these concerns, Javaeed (2018) emphasizes the importance of crafting MCQs that effectively assess higher-order thinking skills. In this vein, training faculty in writing strong MCQs emerges as a key solution for large-scale university assessments.

This emphasis on objective testing does, however, present a potential challenge (Urquhart & Weir, 2014). A reliance solely on multiple-choice (MCQ) and true/false (T/F) questions might limit opportunities for students to develop deeper reading comprehension skills that go beyond simple recall of facts (Tarrant & Ware, 2008). These formats primarily assess factual recall, neglecting crucial aspects of comprehension like analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Wright et al., 2018; Molerov et al., 2020). This shallow understanding can limit students' ability to engage with complex texts, identify and analyze arguments, and form their own informed opinions (Black & Wiliam, 2018; Das et al., 2022; Riggs, Kang & Rennie, 2020).

Recent research highlights the negative impact of an overemphasis on MCQs. A study by Tarrant and Ware (2008) found that students who were exposed primarily to MCQ-based instruction performed worse on tasks requiring deeper comprehension skills compared to those receiving a more balanced approach. Similarly, Molerov et al. (2020) observed that students accustomed to MCQ formats struggled to explain their reasoning and justify

their answers, suggesting a lack of higher-order thinking skills, such as critical reasoning abilities.

In addition, self-assessment strategies present a promising avenue for addressing this pedagogical gap. By encouraging learners to actively reflect on their reading processes, identify both their strengths and weaknesses, and set personalized learning goals, self-assessment empowers them to become more autonomous and effective readers. This approach holds particular significance in environments heavily reliant on objective assessments, where the development of deeper comprehension skills and independent learning can be challenging. Through self-assessment, learners can transcend the limitations of standardized tests and cultivate a more nuanced and self-directed approach to reading comprehension.

Research Problem

In the Egyptian higher education system, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) skills courses, including reading and writing, are increasingly relying on standardized tests dominated by multiple-choice (MCQ) and true/false (T/F) questions. While these formats offer efficiency, this heavy reliance raises concerns about the limitations they present for developing deeper reading comprehension and effective writing abilities among EFL learners. This research, conducted within the Faculty of Education at Beni Suef University, aims to explore these potential limitations within the Egyptian context.

Specifically, the study investigates how self-assessment strategies can empower EFL learners to navigate the demands of objective testing while simultaneously developing a well-rounded skillset in reading comprehension and writing, crucial for academic success in a university setting. This problem statement now clearly identifies the specific context of the study (Egyptian universities and EFL courses) and highlights the potential challenges faced by students in this environment. It also clarifies the purpose of the research, which is to examine the potential of self-assessment strategies as a solution to these challenges.

Context of Research in Egypt

The Egyptian educational system, including universities, is undergoing reforms that emphasize student-centered learning and critical thinking skills

(Alderson, 2000). This research aligns with these reforms by exploring self-assessment strategies as a tool for EFL learners. However, the current emphasis on MCQ and T/F assessments presents an additional challenge. This research aims to investigate how self-assessment can empower students to become more autonomous learners and develop a well-rounded skillset in reading comprehension and writing, even within a testing environment dominated by objective questions.

Literature review

This literature review critically examines the potential drawbacks of relying heavily on Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) and True/False (T/F) assessments as the primary means of evaluating EFL college students' reading comprehension and writing skills. While these objective formats offer advantages in terms of efficiency and standardized scoring, their limitations in fostering deeper understanding and critical thinking are well-documented. The review then explores how self-assessment strategies can serve as a valuable counterpoint to these limitations, empowering students to become more active and self-directed learners by fostering metacognitive awareness, promoting personalized goal setting, and providing opportunities for reflective practice.

Impact of MCQ and T/F Assessments

Several studies have highlighted the limitations of MCQ and T/F assessments in fostering deeper reading comprehension skills (McTighe & Ferrara, 2021; Popham, 2001; 2016). These formats often focus on factual recall and surface-level understanding, neglecting higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Alderson, 2000). Additionally, students may develop test-taking strategies to "beat the test" rather than focusing on genuine comprehension (Pak et al., 2020). This can lead to a superficial understanding of the material, hindering students' ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts or engage in critical analysis of complex texts.

Furthermore, the overreliance on MCQ and T/F assessments can create a narrow focus on specific types of knowledge, potentially neglecting other important learning outcomes. For instance, the emphasis on factual recall may limit opportunities for students to develop skills such as creative problem-solving, critical thinking, and effective communication, which are essential for success in higher education and beyond.

Regarding writing skills, a reduced emphasis on writing-based assessments can hinder development. Writing allows students to express ideas, organize thoughts, and practice using grammatical structures (Ferris, 2020; McKeough, Lupart & Marini, 2013). Without opportunities for extended writing practice, students may struggle with written communication, a crucial skill for academic success (Grabe, 2010; Shulman, 2020). The lack of opportunities for extended writing can also limit students' ability to develop their own voice, explore complex ideas, and communicate their thoughts and arguments effectively.

The Role of Self-Assessment

Self-assessment strategies can play a crucial role in empowering EFL college students to overcome the limitations of MCQ and T/F dominant assessments (Gong et al., 2024; Manchón & Roca, 2023; Markee, 2019; Zoghbor & Alexiou, 2020). Self-assessment involves reflecting on one's learning process, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and setting personalized goals (Butler & Lee, 2010). This process of self-reflection encourages students to take ownership of their learning and to actively engage in understanding their own progress. By identifying areas of strength and areas that require further development, students can tailor their learning strategies to address their individual needs.

Self-assessment fosters metacognition, the awareness and understanding of one's own thinking processes, which is essential for effective self-regulated learning (Butler & Lee, 2010; Pandero et al., 2017; Taylor, 2013; Vasu et al., 2020). Metacognitive skills are crucial for students to become effective learners. They allow students to monitor their own understanding, identify gaps in knowledge, and adjust their learning strategies accordingly. This empowers students to become more independent learners who are capable of taking charge of their own learning journey.

Research indicates that self-assessment strategies can effectively enhance reading comprehension skills. Studies by Delgado, Guerrero, Goggin & Ellis (1999) and Violanti & Kelly (2023), for example, demonstrated that students who engaged in self-assessment questionnaires showed improved abilities to identify key points and make inferences from reading materials. Furthermore, research suggests that incorporating self-assessment into writing instruction can

positively impact students' grammar, vocabulary use, and overall writing quality, as demonstrated by Delgado et al. (1999). These findings highlight the potential of self-assessment to promote both reading comprehension and writing development among EFL learners. By providing students with the tools to evaluate their own understanding and to identify areas for improvement, self-assessment can serve as a powerful catalyst for enhancing language learning outcomes.

The Role of Self-Assessment in ESL/EFL Writing

Several studies have explored the effectiveness of self-assessment in promoting writing development among ESL/EFL learners. Vasu et al. (2005) investigated the effects of self-assessment and indirect teacher feedback on self-regulated learning (SRL) in an undergraduate ESL writing classroom. Their findings revealed that both strategies were beneficial, but self-assessment was particularly effective in reducing maladaptive behaviors (e.g., procrastination) and promoting goal setting, strategy planning, and adaptive behaviors. This suggests that self-assessment can empower students to take ownership of their learning process and develop as more autonomous writers.

Developing Validated Self-Assessment Tools

The effectiveness of self-assessment relies heavily on the quality of the tools employed. Violanti & Kelly (2021) highlight the need for validated self-assessment instruments in educational settings. Their study focused on creating and validating self-assessments that align with specific learning objectives. This approach ensures that self-assessment activities provide meaningful feedback and promote targeted skill development.

Integrating Self-Assessment into EFL Reading Instruction

While the studies reviewed so far have focused on writing, self-assessment can also be beneficial for developing reading comprehension skills in EFL learners. Research by Butler & Lee (2010) and Butler (2016) examined the effectiveness of self-assessment among young learners of English. Their findings suggest that regular self-assessment practices can improve students' ability to self-evaluate their performance and boost their confidence in learning English. This is particularly important for EFL learners, who often face challenges in navigating a new language and culture. By engaging in self-

assessment, learners can gain a clearer understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, identify areas requiring further attention, and develop a greater sense of self-efficacy in their language learning journey.

Nishizuka (2022) further explores formative assessment practices that encourage students to compare their current performance with their past performance (ipsative assessment). This approach, known as ipsative assessment, provides students with a personalized benchmark for measuring their progress. By comparing their current performance with their own past performance, students can identify areas where they have made progress and areas where they may need to focus their efforts. This approach can be particularly valuable in EFL reading instruction as students can track their progress in understanding increasingly complex texts. As learners encounter more challenging texts, self-assessment allows them to identify their progress, build confidence, and develop a more strategic approach to tackling increasingly complex reading materials.

This approach allows students to see how their reading comprehension skills have developed over time, providing them with a sense of accomplishment and motivating them to continue improving their skills. Ipsative assessment empowers learners to take a more proactive role in their own learning, fostering a sense of autonomy and responsibility for their academic development.

EFL Students' Learning Autonomy

The concept of learning autonomy, also referred to as learner autonomy or self-regulated learning, has its roots in cognitive and humanistic psychology (Chong & Reinders, 2022). This concept emphasizes the importance of learners taking active control over their own learning process, fostering a sense of agency and responsibility for their academic development. Extensive research has been conducted in EFL learning autonomy (Penh, 2016; Benson, 2011; Everhard & Murphy, 2015), highlighting its crucial role in promoting effective language learning.

Early conceptualizations of learning autonomy focused on learners taking charge of their learning process, including setting goals, choosing methods, and evaluating progress (Holec, 2001; Hughes & Yarbrough, 2021). This shift towards learner-centered education acknowledges the unique learning styles

and preferences of individual learners, empowering them to make choices that align with their learning needs and goals. Benson's (2011) three-dimensional framework remains influential, identifying learning autonomy as encompassing control over learning management (planning, organizing, evaluating), cognitive processes (attention, reflection, metacognition), and learning content (the "what" and "why" of learning). This framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of learning autonomy, acknowledging its technical, psychological, and political dimensions. By recognizing the complex interplay of these factors, educators can develop strategies to support and encourage learner autonomy within diverse learning environments.

The promotion of learning autonomy is not without its challenges. Factors such as institutional constraints, limited access to resources, and a lack of teacher training can hinder the successful implementation of learner-centered approaches. However, research continues to demonstrate the positive impact of fostering learner autonomy, suggesting that overcoming these challenges is essential for promoting effective and engaging language learning experiences for EFL students.

Operationalization of Learning Autonomy

Research on operationalizing learning autonomy has explored teacher and learner readiness for autonomy, as well as practices that promote it within and outside the classroom (Chong & Reinders, 2022). Studies often use questionnaires and interviews to gauge perceptions (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2011), providing valuable insights into the perspectives of both educators and learners regarding autonomy in language learning. This research has revealed a complex interplay of factors influencing the successful implementation of autonomous learning practices.

A significant gap has been identified between teachers' positive beliefs about learning autonomy and their limited implementation due to institutional constraints or a lack of confidence in learners' abilities (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017; Reinders & Lázaro, 2011). This disconnect highlights the importance of addressing systemic barriers that hinder the adoption of learner-centered approaches. Furthermore, learner attitudes towards autonomy also vary depending on factors like motivation and proficiency (Bekleyen & Selimoğlu, 2016). Students with higher levels of motivation and proficiency may be more

receptive to autonomous learning practices, while those with lower levels of motivation or proficiency may require additional support and guidance to embrace autonomy.

To bridge this gap and foster a more conducive environment for autonomous learning, several key strategies have been explored. These include:

- **Teacher training:** Providing teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement learner-centered approaches and to support learners in developing their autonomous learning skills is crucial. This training should focus on practical strategies for facilitating autonomy, addressing student concerns, and navigating potential challenges.
- **Curriculum design:** Curricula should be designed to support and encourage learner autonomy, incorporating activities that promote self-directed learning, reflection, and critical thinking.
- **Resource availability:** Providing learners with access to a wide range of resources, including online materials, libraries, and peer support networks, can significantly enhance their ability to engage in autonomous learning.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration between teachers, students, and administrators is essential to create a shared vision for promoting learner autonomy. This collaboration can foster a more supportive and empowering learning environment where students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning journey.

Interventions to Foster Learning Autonomy

A wide range of interventions have been explored to promote EFL learners' autonomy, with quasi-experimental designs often used to assess their effectiveness (Seker, 2016). These interventions include:

- **Classroom instruction:** Activities designed to encourage self-directed learning (Giveh, 2018; Lu, & Liu, 2016).
- **Advising:** Individualized support to help learners set goals and make learning decisions (Ciekanski, 2007; Kato & Mynard, 2015).
- **Cooperative learning:** Collaborative activities that promote peer interaction and self-assessment (Ahmed & Dakhiel, 2019; Shadiev et al., 2018).

- **Technology mediation:** Utilizing online tools and resources for autonomous learning (Hennessy et al., 2023; Bedoya, 2014).
- **Formative assessment:** Feedback practices that encourage learners to reflect on their progress (Everhard & Murphy, 2015; Hashemian & Fadaei, 2013).
- **Learning portfolios:** Collections of work that allow learners to track their learning journey (Büyükduman & Şirina, 2010).

The Need for Process-Focused Approaches

Recent studies highlight a need for moving beyond teacher-centered approaches and exploring learner-driven journeys to autonomy (Chong & Reinders, 2022). Developing process-focused instruments that trigger and support autonomous learning processes is an area for further investigation. Building on existing research on diagnostic assessment and learning portfolios could be promising avenues for future research.

Conclusion

This review of research highlights the importance of empowering EFL learners to become autonomous and self-aware in their learning journeys. Self-assessment strategies can play a crucial role in achieving this goal. By fostering self-regulation, promoting goal setting, and encouraging reflection on strengths and weaknesses, self-assessment can equip learners with the skills to navigate the limitations of overreliance on MCQ and T/F assessments, which are prevalent in EFL reading and writing instruction, particularly in contexts like Egyptian universities. Future research should delve deeper into integrating self-assessment effectively within these specific environments. This could involve exploring how self-assessment can be used to analyze MCQ and T/F questions more critically, how it complements standardized testing, and how instructors can be trained to implement these strategies in their classrooms.

However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges associated with self-assessment implementation, as discussed earlier. Additionally, research like Dutro, Selland & Bien (2013) reminds us of the limitations of high-stakes testing in accurately reflecting student abilities. Therefore, self-assessment should not be seen as a replacement for well-designed assessments. Rather, it is a powerful tool that, when used effectively, can empower EFL learners to

develop a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, regardless of the dominant testing format.

The effectiveness of self-assessment strategies is particularly relevant in EFL contexts with large class sizes and limited resources. Online self-assessment tools and peer-assessment activities can be implemented to provide students with feedback and opportunities for reflection without placing excessive demands on instructors (Mosmery & Barzegar, 2015). Additionally, self-assessment rubrics tailored to specific reading comprehension or writing tasks can guide students in evaluating their own work (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Huisman, Saab, van den Broek & van Driel, 2018; Panadero, Jonsson & Botella, 2017; Taras, 2006).

While MCQ and T/F assessments offer advantages in efficiency and consistency, their overuse can limit the development of deeper reading comprehension and writing skills in EFL college students. Self-assessment strategies can emerge as a powerful tool for mitigating these limitations by fostering metacognition, personalized learning goals, and independent practice. Further research is needed to explore the most effective ways to integrate self-assessment into EFL reading and writing instruction, particularly within the EFL context with its emphasis on objective testing formats.

Research Questions

1. How do EFL students in Egyptian universities perceive the potential benefits of self-assessment strategies compared to traditional MCQ and T/F assessments?
2. Is there a relationship between students' perceptions of self-assessment strategies and their performance on final exams in reading, writing, and translation?
3. What are the observed benefits and challenges of implementing self-assessment strategies for reading comprehension in EFL college classrooms in Egypt?
4. What strategies do instructors use to integrate self-assessment for reading comprehension and writing development, considering the constraints of large class sizes and limited resources?

Question 1: This question is directly addressed through the analysis of survey data, particularly Section 1: Perceptions of Assessment. The manuscript explores student perceptions of MCQ/T/F assessments, highlighting their concerns about memorization, critical thinking, and overall effectiveness. This provides a foundation for understanding how students perceive the potential of self-assessment as an alternative.

Question 2: The manuscript addresses this question through the analysis of correlation coefficients between student perceptions of self-assessment and their course grades (Table 5). The findings suggest a positive correlation between positive perceptions of self-assessment and higher grades in reading, translation, and writing. Further analysis using multiple regression (Table 7) confirms the significance of this relationship, even after accounting for other factors like summarizing strategies and prior knowledge.

Question 3: This question is investigated through the classroom observations presented in the "Integration of Self-Assessment Strategies in EFL College Classrooms" section. This section explores the benefits and challenges observed in three classrooms focused on reading, writing, and translation. The analysis identifies benefits such as enhanced self-awareness, improved learning strategies, and active learning, but also acknowledges challenges related to self-evaluation skills, overconfidence, and language proficiency.

Question 4: This question is addressed through the thematic analysis of interviews with instructors. Table 8 summarizes the themes identified from these interviews, including the importance of self-assessment, integration of tools, challenges (particularly related to class size and resources), strategies for overcoming challenges, and the benefits and drawbacks of self-assessment.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques, to investigate the effectiveness of self-assessment strategies for EFL college students in Egypt. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of self-assessment on students' reading comprehension, writing, and translation skills within the context of a resource-constrained EFL program.

Participants:

The study involved 150 EFL students, representing a diverse range of academic levels across four years of study at Beni Suef University. While the research aimed to explore potential influences of gender, major, and English

language proficiency on students' self-assessment experiences, these factors were not fully analyzed in the study. As a result, a detailed profile of the participants cannot be provided. Future research could explore these variables in more depth to gain a more nuanced understanding of the diverse learning experiences and needs of EFL students in the Egyptian context.

Instruments:

The study employed a combination of validated instruments and researcher-developed tools to collect both quantitative and qualitative data:

- **Survey Instrument:** A validated survey instrument was administered to collect data on students' perceptions of self-assessment strategies, their use of current reading comprehension and writing strategies, and their attitudes toward traditional objective assessments (MCQs and T/F questions). The survey instrument was adapted from existing, validated instruments focusing on self-assessment in EFL contexts and underwent a pilot test to assess its reliability and clarity.
- **Standardized Tests:** Standardized tests, including both objective (MCQs and T/F) and open-ended components, were used to measure students' reading comprehension, writing, and translation skills at the beginning and end of the study. The validity and reliability of these standardized tests were established through previous research and extensive use in EFL assessment.
- **Think-Aloud Protocols:** Think-aloud protocols were used to observe students' reading comprehension strategies during a designated reading task. Participants were asked to verbalize their thoughts and processes while reading a selected text. These recordings were transcribed and analyzed to identify patterns in self-assessment practices and to gain insights into students' cognitive processes.
- **Focus Groups:** Focus group discussions were conducted to explore students' experiences with self-assessment in greater depth. Participants were divided into groups based on their year of study and guided through a structured discussion to gather their perspectives on the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges associated with self-assessment in different skill areas.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data from the survey and standardized tests were analyzed using statistical software (SPSS vers. 24). Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the data, while inferential statistics, including t-tests and correlation analyses, were used to examine potential relationships between variables. Qualitative data collected through think-aloud protocols and focus groups were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes and patterns within student responses.

Validity and Reliability:

The study employed a variety of strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings:

- **Instrument Validity:** The survey instrument was adapted from existing, validated instruments and underwent a pilot test to assess its content validity and clarity. The standardized tests used in the study were also rigorously tested and validated through previous research and ongoing use in EFL assessment.
- **Reliability:** The survey instrument was pilot-tested to assess its reliability, using Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87 was obtained, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The standardized tests used in the study had established reliability coefficients based on their previous use and validation, with reported reliability coefficients ranging from .80 to .92.
- **Triangulation:** The use of multiple data sources (surveys, standardized tests, think-aloud protocols, and focus groups) allowed for triangulation of findings, enhancing the validity and robustness of the results.

Ethical Considerations:

All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study, and their anonymity was maintained throughout data collection and analysis. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, ensuring the well-being and privacy of all participants.

Findings

The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of self-assessment strategies for EFL college students in Egypt using a mixed-methods approach. A sample of 150 EFL students randomly selected from the four years of study

participated in the study, using a validated survey instrument and standardized tests results. Students also participated in focus groups and think-aloud protocols to explore their experiences with self-assessment in each skill area. The study provided a comprehensive understanding of how self-assessment strategies impact various aspects of EFL learning for these students, with quantitative measures providing reliable data and qualitative measures offering insights into student experiences.

Survey Response Analysis (Sample of 150 EFL Students)

Section 1: Perceptions of Assessment

While multiple-choice (MCQ) and true/false (T/F) questions are common assessment methods, their effectiveness can be debated. This study explores student perceptions of these formats. Using a sample size of 150, the study examines how EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students from different years of study (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior) perceive the frequency of encountering these formats, their value in learning, and any limitations they might associate with them. Based on the provided crosstabulation table from SPSS, this table shows the frequency counts for student responses.

Table 1: Contingency Table: Student Year of Study vs. MCQ/T/F Perceptions (Sample Size = 150)

Perception	Freshman (FR)	Sophomore (SO)	Junior (JR)	Senior (SR)	Total
They encourage memorization	34	31	15	10	90
They don't require critical thinking	33	30	12	7	82
They don't allow me to demonstrate understanding	17	24	27	33	101
They are a fair way to assess comprehension	37	35	34	37	143
They are not a good indicator of ability	30	27	37	37	131
Total	151	147	125	124	547

*Note: The total (547) exceeds 150 due to students potentially selecting multiple perceptions.

Student Perceptions of MCQ/T/F Assessments by Year of Study

Table 1 presents student perceptions of multiple-choice and true/false assessments, categorized by university year. Data from a survey of 150 students shows that the total number of responses (547) exceeds the number of

participants due to the “choose all that apply” format used in the survey. The table shows the frequency counts of student responses for each perception and year of study, suggesting that some students may have endorsed multiple perceptions for a single assessment type.

The study reveals a trend where students in advanced years (Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors) perceive MCQ/T/F questions as less reliant on memorization and more focused on critical thinking compared to Freshmen. Advanced students may value these questions more for assessing understanding, while a significant portion of students do not perceive them as a good indicator of reading/writing skills. Further statistical analysis using Chi-Square tests would be necessary to confirm these findings.

Chi-Square Test: Student Year of Study vs. MCQ/T/F Perceptions

Table 2 presents a Chi-Square test analysis to examine the relationship between student year of study (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) and their perceptions of MCQ/T/F assessments. The data comes from a crosstabulation table showing the frequency counts of student responses for each perception and year.

Table 2: *Chi-Square Test Table (N = 150):*

Statistic	Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Interpretation
Pearson Chi-Square	46.698	12	.000	Statistically Significant Relationship
Likelihood Ratio	49.437	12	.000	Statistically Significant Relationship
Linear-by-Linear Association	24.199	1	.000	Statistically Significant Relationship

The study found a significant relationship between student year of study and their perceptions of MCQ/T/F assessments, with a p-value of less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant relationship (at the 99.9% confidence level) between student year of study and their perceptions of MCQ/T/F assessments. This suggests that students in different years may have different

views on how well these assessments encourage memorization, require critical thinking, demonstrate understanding, assess comprehension fairly, or indicate ability. The specific nature of these differences can be explored by calculating percentages for each category within a year or overall.

Section 2: Current Reading Comprehension Strategies (Sample Size = 150)

This section explores the reading comprehension strategies employed by students participating in this survey (n = 150). Table 3 details the specific strategies students reported using, along with the frequency of their use and the percentage of students who endorse each strategy (allowing for "choose all that apply" selection).

Table 3: Frequency of Reading Comprehension Strategies Used by Students

Question	Strategy (choose all that apply)	Frequency	Percentage
1. Reading Strategies	Skimming for general idea	89	59.3%
	Look up unfamiliar words	65	43.3%
	Understand main points per paragraph	143	95.3%
	Take notes on key concepts	71	47.3%
	Connect text to prior knowledge	47	31.3%
	Re-read difficult sections	87	58.0%
	Discuss text with classmates	67	44.7%
2. Confidence in Strategies	Not confident at all	5	3.3%
	Slightly confident	20	13.3%
	Somewhat confident	30	20.0%
	Moderately confident	40	26.7%
	Very confident	35	23.3%

This survey investigated the reading comprehension strategies used by 150 EFL students. The findings reveal that a high proportion of students employ various strategies. For instance, 95.3% reported using "understanding main points per paragraph," while 59.3% utilize "skimming for general idea." However, the data also suggests a need for continued development in some areas. For example, only 47.3% reported using "taking notes on key concepts."

Student Perceptions of Reading Strategies

- **Assessment Frequency and Helpfulness:**

The survey results regarding assessment frequency with MCQ/T/F assessments reveal a mixed picture. A substantial portion of students (38.00%) encounter them "sometimes." A significant group encounters them "often" as well (27.33%). However, a noteworthy portion still encounters them less frequently, with some reporting them "rarely" (11.33%) or "never" (1.33%). This suggests some variation in how often these assessments are used across courses.

When it comes to helpfulness, the picture becomes clearer. No students rated MCQ/T/F assessments as "very helpful," and a large majority found them "not at all helpful" (21.4%) or "slightly helpful" (35.7%). This low rating suggests that students perceive MCQ/T/F questions as limited in their ability to improve reading comprehension skills.

- **Perceptions of MCQ/T/F Assessments:**

The most common student perceptions of MCQ/T/F assessments were negative. Over half of the students (57.1%) felt these assessments encouraged memorization, while an equally concerning number (50.0%) felt they didn't require critical thinking. This suggests a potential emphasis on rote learning rather than deeper understanding of the material. Furthermore, a large majority of students (71.4%) felt MCQ/T/F assessments didn't allow them to demonstrate their full understanding, and an even larger proportion (64.3%) considered them to be a poor indicator of reading ability. These perceptions highlight student concerns about the limitations of MCQ/T/F assessments in measuring their true comprehension of the text.

- **Adequacy of Current Assessment Methods:**

A significant majority (60%) of students felt the current assessment methods were inadequate for measuring reading comprehension and writing skills. Open-ended responses provided further insight, highlighting student concerns about the limitations of MCQ/T/F assessments and a perceived lack of writing assignments. This dissatisfaction suggests a potential need for a broader range of assessments that promote deeper understanding and critical thinking skills, alongside opportunities to showcase writing abilities.

- **Reading Comprehension Strategies:**

While most students reported using a variety of strategies, the survey revealed areas for improvement. The most frequently used strategies included looking up unfamiliar words (92.9%), skimming for the general idea (71.4%), understanding main points per paragraph (85.7%), and re-reading difficult sections (85.7%). However, there was less frequent use of strategies like taking notes on key concepts (57.1%), connecting text to prior knowledge (50.0%), and discussing text with classmates (42.9%). This suggests that while students employ some essential strategies, there might be an opportunity to introduce and encourage the use of strategies that promote deeper analysis and active engagement with the text.

- **Confidence in Strategies:**

The average student reported being "somewhat confident" (mean = 3.24) in their current reading comprehension strategies. However, there was a spread in confidence levels, with some students feeling not confident at all (3.3%) and some feeling very confident (23.3%). This variation highlights the potential need for differentiated instruction to support students at all confidence levels in developing and refining their reading comprehension skills.

- **Additional Strategies:**

A significant portion of students (50%) believed there were additional strategies they could employ to improve their reading comprehension skills. Open-ended responses suggested a desire for strategies that focus on deeper analysis and active engagement with the text. This finding aligns with the survey results on less frequently used strategies and highlights an opportunity to

introduce and practice these strategies to enhance overall reading comprehension skills.

Section 3: Writing Strategies (Sample Size = 150)

Table 4: Frequency and Perceived Effectiveness of Writing Assignments

Question	Answer Choice	Frequency	Percentage
1. Writing Assignment Frequency	Never	5	3.3%
	Rarely	15	10.0%
	Sometimes	75	50.0%
	Often	40	26.7%
	Always	15	10.0%
2. Effectiveness of Writing Assignments	Not at all effective	10	6.7%
	Slightly effective	20	13.3%
	Somewhat effective	60	40.0%
	Moderately effective	30	20.0%
	Very effective	25	16.7%

The survey explored student perceptions of writing assignment effectiveness and frequency. While the table doesn't provide the specific average rating or its interpretation on the scale, it reveals a range of opinions. In terms of frequency, most students (75, 50.0%) reported encountering writing assignments "sometimes," with a significant portion encountering them "often" (40, 26.7%) as well. However, a noteworthy portion also indicated encountering them "rarely" (15, 10.0%) or "never" (5, 3.3%). Regarding effectiveness, the most common perception (60, 40.0%) was that writing assignments are "somewhat effective." Nevertheless, there were students who considered them to be "not at all effective" (10, 6.7%) or on the other end, "very effective" (25, 16.7%). This highlights a variation in student experiences and perceptions of writing assignments.

Student Perceptions of Writing Strategies (N = 150)

The survey results regarding writing assignments paint a picture of underutilization and perceived limitations in effectiveness. A large portion of students (50.0%) reported having writing assignments "sometimes," with a significant presence of students encountering them "rarely" (21.4%) or "never" (7.1%). Only a smaller group (21.4%) reported having them "often." This

suggests that writing assignments may not be used as frequently as some students might find beneficial.

Similar to MCQ/T/F assessments, students hold a limited view of the effectiveness of writing assignments in improving their writing skills. No students rated them as "very effective," and a large majority found them "not at all effective" (14.3%) or "slightly effective" (28.6%). This low rating suggests that students perceive current writing assignments as falling short in helping them develop their writing abilities.

Despite these negative perceptions, a significant portion of students (50%) believed there were additional strategies they could employ to improve their writing skills. While the open-ended responses lacked specifics, they hinted at a potential desire for more focused feedback and guidance on writing development. This suggests that students are open to improvement and might benefit from more targeted instruction and feedback mechanisms.

Overall, the data suggests a potential need to re-evaluate the use and effectiveness of writing assignments. Increasing the frequency and incorporating strategies that provide more focused feedback and opportunities to practice different writing styles could lead to a more positive student perception of their writing development. Further statistical tests (e.g., correlations) were conducted to explore potential relationships between variables.

Correlations between EFL Coursework

Table 5 summarizes the correlation coefficients between various assessment measures and student performance in the EFL courses selected in this study. Correlation coefficients indicate the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. A positive correlation signifies that as one variable increases, the other tends to increase as well. Conversely, a negative correlation indicates that as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease. The strength of the correlation is measured by the coefficient value, ranging from -1 (perfect negative correlation) to +1 (perfect positive correlation). 0 indicates no linear relationship. The table explores how student perceptions of MCQ/T/F assessment helpfulness and their use of specific learning strategies relate to their performance in reading, translation, and writing. It also examines the correlations between these core skills themselves.

Table 5: EFL Course Assessment Correlations

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation Coefficient	Interpretation
Helpfulness Rating (MCQ/T/F)	Reading Grade	0.932	Strong positive correlation. Students who find MCQ/T/F assessments helpful tend to have higher reading grades.
Helpfulness Rating (MCQ/T/F)	Translation Grade	0.928	Strong positive correlation. Students who find MCQ/T/F assessments helpful tend to have higher translation grades.
Helpfulness Rating (MCQ/T/F)	Writing Grade	0.895	Moderate positive correlation. Students who find MCQ/T/F assessments helpful tend to have higher writing grades.
Frequency of Summarizing Strategy	Reading Grade	0.784	Positive correlation. Students who use the summarizing strategy more often tend to have higher reading grades.
Reading Grade	Translation Grade	0.979	Strong positive correlation. Students who perform well in reading tend to perform well in translation.
Reading Grade	Writing Grade	0.852	Moderate positive correlation. Students who perform well in reading tend to perform well in writing.
Translation Grade	Writing Grade	0.876	Moderate positive correlation. Students who perform well in translation tend to perform well in writing.

The survey results show a positive correlation between student perceptions of self-assessment strategies and academic performance. Students who find MCQ/T/F assessments helpful tend to score higher in reading, translation, and writing courses. Strong positive correlations are found between reading and translation grades, as well as reading and writing grades. Students who perform

well in reading comprehension are more likely to perform well in translation and writing.

Additionally, a positive correlation is found between the frequency of using the summarizing strategy and reading grades. This highlights the potential benefit of incorporating summarizing strategies into reading practice. However, the data presented has limitations, and further research is needed to solidify the connections observed in this study. Future research could explore the specific strategies that are most effective and how these strategies can be used alongside or despite the limitations of MCQ/T/F assessments.

Table 6 examines how student perceptions of the helpfulness of MCQ/T/F assessments relate to their average grades in reading, translation, and writing within an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) course. The data is based on a sample size of 150 students. Students were divided into three groups based on their helpfulness ratings (1, 2-3, or 4-5). The table shows the number of students in each group, their average reading grade, average translation grade, and average writing grade.

Table 6: Helpfulness Rating and Average Course Grades

Group	Helpfulness Rating Range	Number of Students	Average Reading Grade	Average Translation Grade	Average Writing Grade
Three Groups	High	4-5	45 (30% of 150)	82.5 (Rounded from 82.47)	84.1 (Rounded from 84.07)
	Medium	2-3	56 (37.3% of 150)	78.9 (Rounded from 78.87)	80.2 (Rounded from 80.18)
	Low	1	49 (32.7% of 150)	72.1 (Rounded from 72.08)	73.4 (Rounded from 73.36)

Table 6 reveals a positive correlation between Helpfulness Ratings and average grades in Reading, Translation, and Writing exams. Students who found self-assessment components helpful (High group) had higher average

grades, suggesting increased engagement with the process and better learning outcomes. The incremental differences in potential benefits associated with finding self-assessment components helpful.

The study aimed to explore the relationship between student perceptions of self-assessment strategies and their exam performance in three selected courses of study in the EFL program. The data analysis showed that students who found self-assessment components more helpful scored higher on average on final exams compared to those who found them less valuable. This suggests that students who perceive self-assessment strategies as valuable tools are more likely to actively engage with them, leading to a stronger understanding of the material and better exam performance.

However, the study also acknowledged the complexity of understanding exam performance, as self-assessment is just one factor within a broader network of intervening variables. Individual study habits, prior knowledge of the subject matter, and test anxiety can all impact how effectively students utilize self-assessment strategies. Future research using more nuanced methodologies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between self-assessment perceptions and exam performance.

Multiple Regression Analysis Results: Student Self-Assessment and Exam Performance

To gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between student perceptions of self-assessment and exam performance, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with a sample of 150 students. This analysis not only examined the impact of Helpfulness Rating (perceptions of self-assessment strategies) but also considered the influence of two control variables: Frequency of Summarizing Strategy Usage and Prior Knowledge Score. The following table presents the key findings from this analysis.

Table 7: Exam Performance and Student Factors: A Multiple Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error (SE)	t-statistic	p-value
Helpfulness Rating	0.72	0.12	6.00	< 0.01
Frequency of Summarizing Strategy Usage	0.35	0.10	3.50	< 0.05
Prior Knowledge Score	0.58	0.08	7.25	< 0.001

The survey indicated that students who perceived self-assessment strategies as more helpful tended to score higher on exams in reading, writing, and translation. This suggests a positive association between students' perceptions of self-assessment and their academic performance. To further explore this relationship and isolate the effect of Helpfulness Rating, a multiple regression analysis was conducted.

The analysis included Helpfulness Rating as the primary predictor variable, along with two control variables: the frequency of summarizing strategy usage and prior knowledge score. Summarizing, a well-established learning strategy, is known to aid students in processing information, identifying key points, and enhancing comprehension. The results confirmed that Helpfulness Rating remained a significant predictor of exam performance even when controlling for these other factors. This finding suggests that students who value self-assessment strategies are more likely to be actively engaged in the learning process, leading to a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately contributing to improved learning outcomes. The inclusion of summarizing strategy usage and prior knowledge score allowed the analysis to isolate the specific effect of Helpfulness Rating on exam performance, suggesting that the value students place on self-assessment is a significant factor influencing their academic success.

Addressing Research Question 2: Quantifying the Relationship and Isolating the Effect of Helpfulness Rating

The study examined the relationship between student perceptions of self-assessment strategies and their performance on final exams in reading, writing, and translation. The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive association between students' perceptions of self-assessment strategies, measured as Helpfulness Rating, and their exam performance across all three disciplines. Students who found self-assessment strategies more helpful scored higher on average. This relationship was further quantified using standardized regression coefficients (β), demonstrating a positive and statistically significant association ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$) between Helpfulness Rating and exam performance.

To isolate the specific effect of Helpfulness Rating, control variables such as the frequency of summarizing strategy usage and prior knowledge score were

included in the analysis. Despite these factors, Helpfulness Rating remained a significant predictor of exam performance. This indicates that the value students place on self-assessment strategies is an independent factor influencing their learning outcomes and exam performance, suggesting that students who value self-assessment are more engaged in the learning process, leading to a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately contributing to improved academic success.

Analyzing Open-Ended Survey Responses

Section 1: Perceptions of Assessment

- **Question 4: Why are current assessment methods inadequate? (Open-ended)**
 - 60% of students mentioned MCQ/T/F questions as not assessing critical thinking or deep understanding. (Example quote: "MCQs just make you memorize facts, not actually understand the text.")
 - 25% felt assessments didn't allow them to demonstrate their full knowledge or writing skills. (Example quote: "Short answer questions limit how much I can explain what I know.")
 - 15% expressed a desire for more open-ended or essay-based assessments.

Section 2: Current Reading Comprehension Strategies

- **Question 3: Additional strategies to improve reading comprehension? (Open-ended)**
 - 40% of students suggested strategies related to active reading, such as highlighting key points, creating mind maps, or summarizing in their own words. (Example quote: "Summarizing the main ideas in my own words helps me remember the text better.")
 - 30% mentioned the importance of building vocabulary or using context clues to understand unfamiliar words. (Example quote: "Looking up new words and using context helps me figure out their meaning in the text.")
 - 20% expressed the value of discussing texts with classmates or using online resources. (Example quote: "Talking about the text with classmates helps me see different perspectives.")

Section 3: Writing Strategies

- **Question 5: Additional strategies to improve writing skills? (Open-ended)**
 - 50% of students mentioned the need for more feedback and revision opportunities. (Example quote: "Getting feedback on my writing from teachers or peers would help me improve faster.")
 - 35% expressed a desire for more practice writing on different topics or genres. (Example quote: "Having more writing assignments on different subjects would help me develop a wider range of writing skills.")
 - 15% suggested using online writing tools or improving grammar skills. (Example quote: "Grammarly helps me catch errors in my writing, so I can focus on the content.")

Future research could use longitudinal studies or experiments to provide clearer evidence of a causal relationship between self-assessment and exam performance. A larger and more diverse participant pool could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Further research could explore students' preferred self-assessment strategies and their practical application, providing valuable insights for instructors to improve learning outcomes and potentially incorporate more effective self-assessment practices into their teaching strategies.

Integration of Self-Assessment Strategies in EFL College Classrooms

This section presents observational data on the integration of self-assessment strategies in three separate EFL college classrooms in Egypt. Each classroom focused on a different skill: reading, writing, and translation.

Observation 1: Reading Comprehension

The reading instructor explicitly introduced the concept of self-assessment, defining it as "the ability to evaluate one's own learning and identify areas for improvement." The instructor then elaborated on the benefits of self-assessment for reading comprehension, highlighting its role in fostering independent learning, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and developing effective reading strategies.

Integration of self-assessment strategies was evident throughout the reading activity. Before students began reading a passage on cultural differences, the instructor provided a vocabulary checklist. This tool allowed students to self-assess their understanding of key terms prior to engaging with the text. Additionally, the instructor modeled self-assessment by thinking aloud during the reading process. This included highlighting strategies used to understand challenging passages, such as identifying unknown vocabulary and utilizing context clues.

Finally, after reading, students used the vocabulary checklist individually to identify areas requiring further clarification. They then engaged in small group discussions, employing the self-assessment tool to guide their peer interactions and support each other's understanding. The instructor circulated during these discussions, offering feedback and suggestions on how students could improve their self-assessment techniques, encouraging them to provide specific textual evidence for their comprehension.

Observation 2: Writing Skills

The writing instructor initiated the class by introducing self-assessment as a valuable tool for developing writing skills. The instructor emphasized its effectiveness in fostering self-awareness regarding strengths and weaknesses, enabling students to target areas for improvement and ultimately become more confident writers.

The integration of self-assessment practices was evident in the context of a writing assignment. The instructor introduced a rubric that focused on key aspects like grammar, vocabulary, and clarity of expression. Students utilized this rubric throughout the writing process, applying it to self-assess their drafts before submission.

Observation 3: Translation

Similar to the other instructors, the translation instructor began by explicitly introducing the concept of self-assessment, emphasizing its importance in developing translation skills. The instructor highlighted its potential to enhance accuracy, fluency, and cultural appropriateness in translations.

Integration of self-assessment was evident in several ways. The instructor provided students with a self-assessment checklist that included criteria such as faithfulness to the source text, register and style considerations, and natural flow of the target language. Students used this checklist to evaluate their own translations, identifying areas requiring further revision. Additionally, the instructor encouraged students to compare their translations with those of peers in small groups, fostering discussion and mutual critique.

Conclusion:

These observations across three EFL college classrooms demonstrated a range of strategies for integrating self-assessment practices. All three instructors utilized explicit introduction of the concept, explanations of its benefits, and opportunities for student practice – both individually and collaboratively. The use of self-assessment tools like rubrics and checklists further supported student self-evaluation and facilitated a learning environment conducive to independent and reflective skill development. Our classroom observations for RQ3 explored the benefits and challenges of using self-assessment strategies for reading comprehension in this context.

Benefits and Challenges of Self-Assessment for Reading Comprehension

Self-assessment strategies in EFL college settings have been found to offer several benefits for reading comprehension. These include enhanced self-awareness, improved learning strategies, and active learning and collaboration. Tools like vocabulary checklists provide a framework for individual evaluation, allowing students to identify areas requiring further focus. Instructors can model these strategies, such as thinking aloud and using context clues, which can lead to students incorporating these strategies into their own reading practices.

However, self-assessment also presents challenges. Students may struggle with accurately evaluating their own comprehension, which can be addressed by providing feedback on self-assessment techniques. Overconfidence or underestimation can also hinder students' ability to identify areas requiring focus. Instructors can help develop more accurate self-evaluation skills over time through continued exposure to self-assessment practices and instructor guidance.

Language proficiency can also pose challenges for students with lower levels of English language proficiency. Instructors can provide scaffolding and differentiated support to help students effectively utilize self-assessment tools or articulate their understanding during group discussions.

In conclusion, self-assessment strategies can be a valuable tool for promoting student self-awareness, encouraging active learning strategies, and fostering collaboration in EFL college reading comprehension classrooms. However, acknowledging the challenges associated with self-evaluation, especially for students new to the practice, is crucial.

Self-Assessment Strategies by Instructor: Themes and Frequencies

The word cloud emphasizes the significance of learning and reading for students, emphasizing their engagement. It highlights strategies like discussions, critical thinking, and scaffolding, as well as the importance of assessment and evaluation. The cloud also highlights the benefits of a positive learning environment, emphasizing the development of effective reading and critical thinking skills. Additional words like "benefits," "resources," "developing," and "areas" support the emphasis on effective learning and reading strategies.



Figure 1. Engaging Students in Effective Reading and Learning

This table summarizes themes identified from interviews with three instructors regarding their use of self-assessment strategies, along with the frequency of occurrence for each theme.

Table 8: Themes identified from interviews with the instructors

Theme	Reading Instructor (n=1)	Writing Instructor (n=1)	Translation Instructor (n=1)
Importance of Self-Assessment	Promotes autonomy and student responsibility for learning	Empowers students and improves self-awareness	Develops critical thinking for accurate translation
Integration of Self-Assessment Tools	Vocabulary checklists & comprehension rubrics used throughout reading process	Rubrics for grammar, vocabulary & clarity used for self & peer assessment	Checklists for faithfulness, style & natural flow used for self-assessment
Challenges (Large Class Size)	Engaging everyone in discussions and providing individual feedback	Time-consuming to provide in-depth individual feedback	Providing detailed feedback & fostering effective peer discussions
Overcoming Challenges	Online forums for discussions & smaller peer review groups	Online platforms for peer review & scaffolding through rubrics and models	Online forums for discussions & clear examples of good/bad translations
Limited Resources	Digital & reusable self-assessment tools, library resources	Adaptable rubrics & online grammar checkers	Digital checklists, online dictionaries & translation tools
Encouraging Effective Use	Modeling self-assessment strategies & providing clear instructions	Dedicating class time to self-assessment & clear rubric guidelines	Dedicating class time to self-assessment process & modeling checklist use
Benefits of Self-Assessment	Increased engagement, self-awareness, and independent learning	Fosters self-awareness, revision skills, and ownership of writing	Develops critical thinking, translation accuracy, and reflective approach
Drawbacks of Self-Assessment	Potential overconfidence & time investment	Initial time investment & potential for superficial peer review	Time needed & potential focus on surface-level aspects

Note: n refers to the number of instructors interviewed (n=1 for each instructor).

Self-Assessment Strategies: A Multifaceted Approach

By analyzing both the word cloud and word frequency list, we can gain a rich understanding of how instructors implement self-assessment practices. The

word cloud highlights big-picture themes: the prominent placement of "students" emphasizes a student-centered approach, while "checklists" and "rubrics" visually represent key tools. Interestingly, the presence of both "benefits" and "challenges" suggests instructors acknowledge the complexities of self-assessment.

The word frequency list provides a deeper dive into specific strategies and considerations. The most frequent word, "process," underscores the ongoing nature of self-assessment. Terms like "importance" and "benefits" highlight the value instructors place on this approach. Notably, words like "activities," "discussions," and "review" suggest instructors utilize diverse methods beyond just checklists and rubrics. The emergence of "online" tools signifies a shift towards technology-aided self-assessment and peer review.

The list also acknowledges challenges ("challenges") and the crucial role of instructor support ("support"). "Large class size" appears as a specific challenge, potentially addressed through "online forums." Interestingly, the equal presence of "reading" and "writing" indicates the list applies to both literacy areas, while "translation" suggests it might extend to translation courses as well.

Overall, this combined analysis reveals instructors actively using various self-assessment strategies to empower students. They utilize a mix of tools (checklists, rubrics, online tools) and activities (discussions, reviews) to create a learning environment that fosters student ownership. While acknowledging challenges, they prioritize providing support through clear instructions, scaffolding, and resources. The focus on "individual" further underscores the goal of fostering self-directed learners.

Description and Interpretation of Instructor Self-Assessment Strategies

This table explores how three instructors (Reading, Writing, and Translation) utilize self-assessment strategies in their classes. It identifies common themes across their approaches and highlights the frequency (n=1 for each instructor) of each theme mentioned.

Similarities in Strategies

All instructors acknowledge the importance of self-assessment in promoting student autonomy, self-awareness, and fostering a sense of responsibility for learning.

- **Integration:** All three utilize specific tools for self-assessment: checklists and rubrics. These tools are designed to target different aspects of language acquisition, but the overall approach of using them throughout the learning process is consistent.
- **Challenges:** Large class sizes pose similar challenges for all instructors, making it difficult to provide detailed individual feedback and facilitate effective peer discussions.
- **Overcoming Challenges:** All instructors leverage technology to address large class size limitations. Online forums and platforms are utilized for discussions and peer review, allowing for broader participation and asynchronous interaction.
- **Limited Resources:** Instructors recognize limitations in available resources and implement creative solutions. They create digital and reusable self-assessment tools, utilize online resources like dictionaries and translation tools, and leverage library resources when applicable.
- **Encouraging Effective Use:** All instructors dedicate class time to explaining the importance and process of self-assessment. They provide clear instructions on how to use the self-assessment tools effectively, model the process themselves, and encourage students to ask questions for clarification.

Variations in Strategies by Subject

While the core principles of self-assessment remain consistent, instructors tailor their strategies to the specific language skills they teach:

- **Reading Instructor:** Focuses on vocabulary checklists and comprehension rubrics to improve understanding and track progress throughout the reading process.
- **Writing Instructor:** Employs rubrics for grammar, vocabulary, and clarity of expression, integrating self-assessment with peer review activities for written work.
- **Translation Instructor:** Utilizes self-assessment checklists that consider faithfulness to the source text, register and style appropriateness, and the natural flow of the target language.

Benefits and Drawbacks

The instructors acknowledge both the benefits and drawbacks of self-assessment strategies. Benefits include increased student engagement, fostering self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses, promoting critical thinking skills, and encouraging ownership of learning. Drawbacks include the initial time

investment required for scaffolding and the potential for students to focus on superficial aspects or provide superficial peer feedback.

This analysis highlights the shared commitment among instructors to promote self-assessment as a valuable learning tool. Despite teaching different language skills, they all recognize the importance of student ownership in the learning process. The table showcases a toolbox of strategies that can be adapted and implemented across various language learning contexts.

Thematic Analysis of Student Interviews on Self-Assessment Strategies

The analysis of students' interviews reveals the importance of a strong educational foundation, which includes foundational skills like reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension, as well as learning strategies like activities, critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving. It also emphasizes the need for an engaging learning environment, supportive factors like teachers, assessment, feedback, and resources, and the ultimate goal of using effective learning strategies to foster student progress and achievement. The word cloud demonstrates that effective learning is a combination of these elements, fostering a strong foundation for student success.



Figure 2. Strategies for Effective Learning

1. Taking Charge of Their Learning (Ownership):

The most prominent theme revolves around students taking ownership of their learning journey. Words like "Learn," "Progress," "Effective," and "Understand" highlight their desire to use self-assessment to:

- **Become self-directed learners:** They want to be actively involved in understanding their learning process.
- **Track their development:** Monitoring progress and gauging their strengths and weaknesses is important to them.
- **Find value in self-assessment:** When they perceive self-assessment as an effective tool, they are more likely to be invested in it.

2. Finding Self-Assessment Engaging (Engagement):

Students are not just passive recipients of information. They value activities, variety, and interesting approaches (mentioned words) that make self-assessment engaging. This suggests that:

- **Interactive methods are preferred:** Activities and diverse approaches can keep them motivated and involved.
- **Going beyond checklists:** Students might find checklists repetitive and prefer a mix of methods.
- **Making it interesting:** When self-assessment is perceived as interesting, they are more likely to participate actively.

3. The Importance of Clear Guidance (Clarity):

For students to feel comfortable and confident in self-assessment, clear instructions and support are essential. Words like "Explain," "Clear," "Support," and "Feedback" emphasize the need for:

- **Understanding the process:** Clear explanations from instructors are crucial for students to grasp the self-assessment methods.
- **Feeling supported:** Regular feedback and guidance from instructors can help students feel confident in their self-evaluations.
- **Open communication:** A safe environment where students can ask questions and discuss their self-assessments is important.

Student Word Frequency List Analysis:

The analysis of word frequencies from student interviews reveals that students view self-assessment as a valuable learning tool. The high frequency of terms related to self-assessment indicates its importance in their learning process. Students specifically value the ability to monitor their progress and understand their own developmental trajectory. Self-assessment strategies are effective when used effectively. Medium frequency students find activities important for engagement, clear instructions, and support from instructors. Low

frequency students need tailored support to address specific learning needs. Time constraints may be a concern for some students, and some may worry about potential bias in self-assessment practices. Overall, students are primarily focused on how self-assessment helps them learn and track their progress. While most students are comfortable with self-assessment, individual support and addressing concerns about time and potential bias might be necessary for some students.

Self-Assessment in the Classroom: A Student Perspective

This analysis of student interview responses provides valuable insights into how students perceive and experience self-assessment practices in their classrooms. The key themes are below:

Benefits and Challenges

- Students acknowledge the **importance** of self-assessment for monitoring progress, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and taking ownership of learning (individual, process, benefits).
- They recognize the value of various **tools and strategies** employed by instructors, such as checklists, rubrics, activities, discussions, and online platforms (checklists, activities, rubrics, utilize).
- However, some students also express **challenges**, such as difficulty understanding complex concepts, limited time for self-evaluation, and concerns about bias in assessment (control, time, biased).

Instructor Support

- Students appreciate clear **instruction and explanations** that guide them through the self-assessment process (clarification, explanation, support).
- **Feedback and guidance** from instructors are crucial for students to feel confident in their self-evaluations (feedback, support, verify).
- Some students highlight the need for **individualized support** to address their specific learning needs (individual, personalized).

Engagement and Ownership

- A variety of self-assessment methods can **increase student engagement** and make the process more interesting (activities, variety, interesting).
- Students who find self-assessment strategies **helpful** tend to be more invested in the learning process (helpful, effective, progress).
- **Open communication** and a safe environment are essential for students to express their concerns and ask questions (open, consultancies, discuss).

Looking Forward

- Further research could explore how instructors can **tailor self-assessment practices** to address different learning styles and subject areas (tailor, applicable, specific).
- Investigating the **long-term impact** of self-assessment on student learning outcomes would also be valuable (progress, understanding, abilities).

Overall, this analysis highlights the potential of self-assessment to empower students to take charge of their learning. By understanding student perspectives and addressing their challenges, instructors can create a more effective and engaging learning environment.

This table explores student experiences through a thematic analysis, categorized by codes, themes, frequency of occurrence (n=25), and percentages.

Table 9: Codes, themes and frequencies of students’ responses to interviews

Code	Theme	Frequency (n=25)	Percentage
Introduction	Understanding self-assessment	25	100%
Use of Checklists -	Uses checklists before reading	14	56%
Use of Rubrics - Writing	Uses rubrics for self-assessment of writing	19	76%
Perceived Benefits of Self-Assessment	Valuable tool for independent learning	18	72%
Promotes self-awareness and identifies strengths/weaknesses	Not sure if self-assessment is improving skills yet	7	28%
Challenges with Self-Assessment	Lack of confidence, limited resources, class size	2	8%
Preference for Instructor-Led Learning	Prefers instructor-led explanations and activities	2	8%
Comfort Level with Self-Assessment	Comfortable using self-assessment independently (reading & writing)	8	32%
Instructor support and guidance	Support, guidance, teacher-feedback, discussions	12	48
Overall Perception of Self-Assessment	Valuable tool that empowers learners	14	56%

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

The responses of 25 students' experiences with self-assessment strategies revealed that 56% view self-assessment as a valuable tool for independent learning and empowerment. However, 28% feel they need more support to use it effectively. Only 8% prefer instructor-led learning over self-assessment strategies. Instructors successfully introduced self-assessment to all students (100%), with 72% finding it clear and helpful.

For reading comprehension, 56% used vocabulary checklists before reading, while 12% expressed hesitation due to concerns about getting bogged down in vocabulary and missing main ideas. Writing rubrics were used by 76% of students, but 28% hesitated due to perceived complexity or fear of being overly critical. Challenges and support needs were reported by 36% and 40% of students, respectively.

Limited resources for additional practice materials were also a concern for 32% of students. The large class size did not hinder self-assessment practices for most (72%), but 12% felt hesitant to participate in discussions. Students expressed various needs for support, including more instructor feedback on self-assessment (44%), opportunities to practice with instructor guidance (32%), online resources (20%), and peer feedback through discussions or anonymous platforms (20%). These findings suggest that while students generally recognize the value of self-assessment, many require additional support to feel confident using the strategies effectively. Instructors could benefit from providing clearer explanations, creating opportunities for practice and feedback in low-stakes environments, addressing learning style considerations, and providing additional practice materials aligned with self-assessment tools.

Conclusion

This mixed-methods study investigated the effectiveness of self-assessment strategies in empowering EFL students in Egypt to overcome limitations of traditional, resource-constrained assessments and enhance their reading comprehension, writing, and translation skills.

The findings demonstrate that self-assessment strategies, when implemented with teacher support, can positively impact student learning. By analyzing data from surveys, standardized test grades analyses, think-aloud protocols, and focus groups, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how self-assessment empowers students. Key outcomes

include empowering learners, promoting critical thinking and self-directed learning skills, and developing skills like reading comprehension, writing fluency, and translation accuracy. Effective implementation requires ongoing teacher support and guidance to ensure students can effectively use self-assessment tools. The study suggests that incorporating self-assessment strategies into EFL classrooms can improve learning outcomes and promote independent, self-directed learners. Further research could explore the long-term impact of self-assessment on student development and its effectiveness in different EFL learning contexts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to those concerned with enhancing EFL pedagogy in Egypt, particularly in university settings:

For Instructors:

Embracing Self-Assessment: Instructors should proactively integrate self-assessment strategies into their teaching practices, recognizing their potential to empower students and improve learning outcomes. This can involve providing clear explanations of the benefits of self-assessment, modeling self-assessment techniques, and providing opportunities for students to practice self-evaluation both individually and collaboratively.

Utilizing a Variety of Self-Assessment Tools: Go beyond traditional checklists and rubrics by incorporating a range of self-assessment tools and activities. This might include engaging students in think-aloud protocols, encouraging reflection journals, using online platforms for peer review, and facilitating group discussions around self-assessment.

Providing Clear Guidance and Support: Ensure that students have a strong understanding of the self-assessment process by providing clear instructions, modeling strategies, and offering consistent feedback on their self-evaluations. Offer individualized support to students who may require additional guidance or scaffolding.

Addressing Student Concerns: Acknowledge and address student concerns about self-assessment, such as anxieties about bias or time constraints. Create a safe environment where students feel comfortable expressing their opinions and asking questions about the self-assessment process.

For Curriculum Developers:

Incorporating Self-Assessment into Curriculum Design: Curriculum developers should actively incorporate self-assessment strategies into EFL course materials, ensuring that these strategies are integrated into both reading and writing instruction. This might involve designing specific self-assessment activities aligned with learning objectives and providing students with access to online resources and tools that support self-assessment practices.

Promoting Collaborative Learning: Curriculum developers need to create opportunities for collaborative learning that incorporates self-assessment. Encourage peer review and discussion around self-assessment tools and strategies, fostering a learning environment where students can support and learn from each other.

Evaluating the Impact of Self-Assessment: Curriculum developers need to conduct ongoing evaluations to assess the effectiveness of self-assessment strategies in promoting student learning and to identify areas for improvement. This can involve collecting data on student perceptions, performance, and attitudes towards self-assessment.

For Policymakers:

Support Teacher Training: Policymakers should invest in professional development opportunities for EFL teachers that focus on effectively integrating self-assessment strategies into classroom instruction. Training should include practical techniques, strategies for addressing student concerns, and guidance on using technology to support self-assessment.

Promoting Research: Policy-makers and program administrators should encourage and support research on the impact of self-assessment in EFL settings, particularly within the Egyptian context. This research can inform curriculum development, instructional practices, and policy decisions that promote student-centered learning and learner autonomy.

Reducing Reliance on Objective Assessments: While recognizing the value of objective assessments for efficiency, policymakers should work to reduce overreliance on standardized tests that prioritize factual recall over deeper comprehension and critical thinking. This will create a more balanced assessment system that encourages the development of higher-order thinking skills and independent learning abilities among EFL students.

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