Tracing the Dynamics of Teacher Assessment Identity (TAI) Through Web-Based Audio Diaries

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Abstract
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Keywords
teacher assessment identity, audio diary analysis, narrative inquiry, EFL teacher, novice teacher, experienced teacher, teacher perception

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Acknowledgements
The authors highly appreciate the insightful comments suggested by the editor and anonymous reviewers.

This article is available in The Qualitative Report: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol28/iss9/10
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Teacher assessment identity (TAI) as a vital element of teacher professionalism has recently flourished in educational assessment. However, unpacking its developmental trajectories has been left uncharted. Against this gap, this study scrutinized the dynamics of TAI under the influence of audio diaries. In so doing, 22 novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers uploaded their audio-diaries on a website for two months. They did so once a week and ultimately 176 audio diaries were gleaned. Moreover, to explore the participants’ perceptions of TAI considering audio diary, a semi-structured interview was held with ten teachers. The results of content and thematic analysis revealed that both novice and experienced EFL teachers’ assessment identities were improved by audio diaries. Initially, the participants concentrated on the theoretical principles of assessment, while at the end they shifted toward social aspects of assessment and professionalism. Furthermore, the results of interviews indicated that audio diaries are promising tools to capture TAI as they allow the participants to do self-reflection, deep thinking, iterative analysis of ideas, and keep a record of their assessment perceptions and practices for future use. The study has implications for EFL teachers and teacher educators by enhancing their knowledge and understanding of TAI and its dynamism.

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Introduction

The concept of teacher identity (TI) and the ways it enlightens the understanding of second/foreign language education have captured a surge of scholarly attention in the last two decades (Beijaard, 2019; Richards, 2021). Identity is a teacher’s image of his/her inner self presented to others in varying contexts and interactions (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004). TI reflects various features of teaching that cannot be separated from who the teachers are (Richards, 2021). It is a vital element of teaching and teacher education that influences teachers’ practices, beliefs, attitudes, and cognition (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Jupp et al., 2016; Schutz et al., 2018). TI is now conceptualized as a dynamic, ongoing, multiple, negotiated, and related to intrinsic interpersonal relations with others (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Golzar, 2020). This conception of TI provides a more nuanced view of what it means to be a teacher (Beijaard et al., 2004).

As research corroborates, TI (re)construction facilitates language learning, teaching, and professional development (Barger, 2022; Noonan, 2019). These potentialities inspired bulks of research on TI, especially in relation to factors like age and gender (Park, 2017), context (Van Lankveld et al., 2017), socio-cultural factors (Buchanan, 2015), emotion (Kocabaş-Gedik & Ortaçtepe Hart, 2021), and experience (Noonan, 2019). However, what seems to be left unnoticed by L2 researchers is the role of TI in classroom assessment...
perceptions and practices. It can be asserted that teachers’ perceived identities are by no means limited to their teaching behaviors/practices; instead, they may perceive or manifest their identity differently in the context of assessment (Adie, 2013). That is why assessment is considered a fundamental component of teacher professionalism (O’Neill & Adams, 2014; Wood, 2016). Nowadays, in addition to pedagogical expertise, teachers need assessment competencies and conceptions to justify the use of specific assessment methods/techniques (Popham, 2018; Sahinkarakas, 2012; Soodmand Afshar et al., 2018). However, the current literature lacks a clear theorization of teacher identity in relation to assessment. This shortcoming set the scene for the concept of teacher assessment identity (TAI) and motivated the current study. TAI concerns how teachers perceive themselves and their assessment practices (Adie, 2013; Estaji & Ghiasvand, 2022). It goes beyond assessment literacy and is formed by teachers’ perceived self-image as assessors and the way they are seen by others regarding their assessment (Looney et al., 2017). TAI is a broad term, encompassing the teachers’ assessment knowledge, skills, practices, confidence, perceptions, beliefs, and professional identity as assessors (Adie, 2013; Looney et al., 2017).

TAI is now obtaining a separate identity different from professional identity owing to some groundbreaking studies conducted in Australia and Iran. For example, Looney et al. (2017) ran a seminal study in Australia and conceptualized TAI and its dimensions for the first time. Then Estaji and Ghiasvand (2021) and Jan-nesar et al. (2021) conducted two separate validation studies and offered scales to measure TAI and its components. These studies have taken either theoretical or quantitative approaches to glean their data and make interpretations. What is still uncharted is the dynamism and developmental paths of this novel type of TI. Unlike other teacher identities, the nature and stages of (re)construction in TAI are unknown to date. One way to capture that dynamism is to use audio diaries, which allow the researchers to longitudinally investigate the participants’ lived experiences and identities in-action, in-situ, and in a particular context (Monrouxe, 2009). Although research has approved their potential to showcase the teachers’ professionalism and identity formation (Crozier & Cassell 2016; Verma, 2021), they are still underestimated in L2 research (Milligan & Bartlett, 2019). Likewise, the way experience, as an influential factor, affects the developmental trajectories of TAI is yet unclear. Against these backdrops, this study aimed to trace the developmental path that novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers’ assessment identity undergoes by using audio diaries in a virtual context. It is assumed that web-based audio diaries trigger more changes in TAI in comparison with simple, direct submission of diaries to the researchers.

**Literature Review**

**Teacher Identity**

As a dynamic, multi-faceted, and social concept, teacher identity concerns a teacher’s awareness and understanding of being a teacher (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2004; Rodrigues & Mogarro, 2019). It reflects how a teacher perceives him/herself at a specific moment and in a specific context (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Azim, 2017); therefore, it is one’s self-image as a teacher (Leeferink et al., 2019). Teacher identity signifies that being a teacher is more than what is seen and highlights the invisible spheres of teaching (Castañeda, 2011). Structural views of identity that regarded it as a fixed entity are now superseded by post-structural perspectives that highlight the dynamism, multiplicity, discontinuity, and social nature of identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004). Moreover, teacher identity is now an ongoing process that is time- and context-bound (Yazan, 2018). Given its complicated nature, teacher identity is believed to be (re)constructed under the influence of several internal (personal) and external (social) factors (Fairley, 2020). In this regard, Peterman (2017)
pinpointed teacher identity as affected by one’s practical and theoretical experiences, personal development, and professional identity.

Such a development depends on the teachers’ teaching environment, relationships with colleagues, and their interactions with other community members (Teng, 2019). Similarly, Beijaard and Meijer (2017) contended that teachers’ experiences and pedagogical goals are deeply intertwined with how they see themselves as teachers (current identity) and the teachers they want to become (future identity). For Akkerman and Meijer (2011), teacher identity is a (self) dialogic and evolving process of negotiating and interconnecting multiple I-positions to preserve a stable self-image as a teacher. In sum, identity plays a critical role in the teacher’s professionalism (Buchanan, 2015) and reflection of soul in teaching (Palmer, 2007). However, its role in assessment is still blurry even though assessment knowledge and skills are elements of a teacher’s professional identity (Wood, 2016).

Teacher Assessment Identity: Conceptualizations and Dimensions

The concept of identity assessment has long been kept under the shadow of assessment literacy (AL) and conceptions of assessment (COA), as two broad terms in educational assessment that were introduced by Stiggins (1995) and Brown (2011), respectively. The former concerns assessment knowledge and skills pertaining to teacher practice that may develop as one gains more experience (Zolfaghari & Ashraf, 2015), while the latter refers to the teachers’ general mental structures that affect their assessment beliefs, practices, attitudes, intentions, strategies, and mental connection (Brown, 2011; Hill & Eyers, 2016; Jan-nesar et al., 2021; Muñoz et al., 2012; Xu & Brown, 2016). Both AL and COA can be affected by the teachers’ assessment attitudes and experiences (Bhargava & Pathy, 2014; Suja, 2007). Given the constraints of AL and COA in capturing the dynamics and complexities of identity in assessment, the concept of TAI emerged in educational assessment that encompassed AL, COA, assessment beliefs, and assessment dispositions. It was first appeared in a landmark study by Adie (2013), who regarded TAI as the teachers’ perceptions of themselves as assessors and how other stakeholders evaluate and perceive them concerning the quality of their assessment practices. Later, two elements of “self-efficacy” and “dispositions” of teachers toward assessment were imbedded in the conceptualization of TAI by Looney et al. (2017). Teacher self-efficacy in relation to assessment concerns one’s beliefs in his/her capabilities to apply specific assessment methods/techniques in a given context (Dellinger et al., 2008). However, dispositions are related to the teachers’ values, obligations, and ethics in their job that affect their classroom practices. Resting on these definitions, TAI can be operationally defined as a multi-dimensional concept that involves different assessment domains and influences teachers’ assessment decisions, confidence, roles, beliefs, attitudes, consistency, practices, among others.

After Looney et al.’s (2017) seminal study, the concept of TAI was identified to be multi-dimensional covering different aspects of teacher identity and assessment. Drawing on the leading figures of identity and educational research (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Beijaard et al., 2004; Mockler, 2011), Looney et al. (2017) proposed five components of TAI under the categories of “I know,” “I feel,” “my role,” “I believe,” and “I am confident.” They also pinpointed that TAI components are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they have overlapping boundaries. Furthermore, Jan-nesar et al. (2021) added three components to the construct, namely “assessment literacy,” “assessment dispositions,” and “contextual factors.” Using these influential studies, Estaji and Ghiasvand (2021) ran a validation study and identified 12 components for TAI comprising assessment “knowledge,” “beliefs,” “practices,” “use assurance,” “consistency and consequence,” “feedback,” “rubric/criteria,” “attitudes,” “skills
and confidence,” “roles,” “grading/scoring,” and “question-types.” These components indicate that TAI is a complicated variable with many layers.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study employed the framework proposed by Estaji and Ghiasvand (2021), which was as an extension of Looney et al.’s (2017) model of TAI (Figure 1). It includes twelve dimensions of TAI that focus on different aspects of assessment. These dimensions significantly contribute to TAI development, explained as what follows. Assessment attitudes concern the teachers’ opinion about specific assessment techniques; assessment knowledge pertains to one’s knowledge and awareness of various assessment principles; assessment feedback is the reaction of a teacher to his/her students’ language performance during assessment, assessment rubric/criteria concerns teachers’ knowledge of assessment criteria and skills in developing different rubrics for their classes; assessment grading/scoring highlights teachers’ rating skills; question-types refer to various forms of tests that a teacher uses in the class; assessment consistency/consequence concerns teachers’ stability of assessment across time and contexts and the consequence of such assessment practices for different stakeholders; assessment practice pertains to different assessment techniques that teachers employ in the class; assessment roles means what responsibilities the teacher takes concerning assessment (e.g., mediator, counsellor, feedback provider, and the like); assessment confidence and skills refers to teachers’ self-confidence regarding assessment practices and skills in implementing them; assessment use assurance concerns teachers’ assurance in practically applying a specific assessment practice; and finally, assessment beliefs refers to teachers’ general views and perceptions about assessment principles and practices.

**Figure 1**

*The Theoretical Framework of TAI (Ghiasvand, 2022)*

This framework indicates that the construct of TAI is complex and multi-layered. Moreover, there are some overlapping boundaries among these components since one’s identity as an assessor is a composite of different aspects of assessment. The reasons for choosing this framework were its comprehensiveness, novelty, recency, and approved validity.
to capture the complexities of TAI in the scant literature. The previous model, proposed by Looney et al. (2017), had a limited scope focusing on some broad dimensions of assessment without clearly covering their manifestations. Another problem with their model was its theoretical nature and lack of construct validity.

Previous Studies

The use of diaries in exploring teachers’ identity development has long been endorsed in the literature (Arvaja, 2016; Sequeira & Dacey, 2020). Such instruments can showcase the stages of teacher identity construction as they require reflection and narration of lived experiences (Verma, 2021). Despite their potentialities, the use of diaries (especially audio diaries) in investigating the concept of TAI have been insufficiently explored in educational research. This negligence is partly due to the dominance of professional identity in the scientific trends of this domain (Wood, 2016). The existing body of knowledge has overlooked the fact that assessment itself plays a crucial role in forming teachers’ PI. Nevertheless, the first stones of TAI have recently been laid by some studies in Iran and Australia. Likely the first study in this area is that of Adie (2013), who scrutinized the assessment identity of 50 middle school teachers in Queensland in light of participating in an online moderation. The results revealed that TAI modified and developed due to the participation in online moderation as a venue for shaping and negotiating identity. Later, Looney et al. (2017) proposed a model for the concept by capitalizing on its dimensions. As stated earlier, their model encompassed the five dimensions of “I know, I feel, my role, I believe, and I am confident” (p. 15).

In Iran, Estaji and Ghiiasvand (2021) and Jan-nesar et al. (2021) took the first steps to design and validate scales for measuring the different dimensions of TAI. The former was more comprehensive involving twelve dimensions of TAI, while the latter was a general scale classifying the items under three far-reaching categories of “assessment literacy,” “assessment dispositions,” and “contextual factors.” These insightful studies demonstrate that investigating this line of inquiry is yet in its inception and needs more empirical studies to flourish. Like other types of teacher identity, TAI can show itself over time and through self-reflection. One way to testify this possibility is using an audio diary as a qualitative instrument, which has been scientifically corroborated to capture the dynamics of teachers’ professionalism and identity formation in a lived, in-action, and in-situ manner (Crozier & Cassell 2016; Monrouxe, 2009). However, its potentials to represent EFL teachers’ assessment identity journey is as of yet an uncharted territory. Additionally, the role of teaching experience in TAI development considering audio diaries has remained under-researched. To fill these gaps, this study intended to trace the developmental paths of novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers’ assessment identity through web-based audio diaries. Thus, the following research questions were posed and sought:

1. To what extent does the use of audio diary contribute to the development of novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers’ assessment identity?
2. What are the perceptions of novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers regarding the use of audio diary to improve their identity as L2 assessor?

Method

To unpack the participants’ perspectives and lived experiences and explore the change in TAI, methodologically, this study employed a narrative inquiry for three reasons. First, narratives are promising tools for expressing identity (De Fina, 2015). Second, they encompass temporality that assists scholars to scrutinize identity development across contexts/situations
(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Third, these instruments effectively capture the turning points in one’s identity construction (Denzin, 1989).

**Research Design**

This study followed a descriptive narrative design using a series of audio diaries and interviews to describe the phenomenon of TAI (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). In doing so, the researchers drew on the seven stages of conducting descriptive narrative design proposed by Edmonds and Kennedy (2017, p. 163). As illustrated in Figure 2, the first stage is identifying the phenomenon (i.e., novice and experienced EFL teachers’ assessment identity). The second stage is selecting the participants using proper sampling technique. Here, the researchers employed convenience sampling to include available and willing participants in the study. Collecting stories is the third stage, where the researchers asked the participants to produce their narratives regarding TAI using some prompts as a guide. The fourth stage is restory or retell in which the researchers found categories in the narratives and sequenced them. The fifth stage, which is the core of descriptive narrative design, concerns collaboration with the participants using clarifications, requests, and discussions about their narratives. In the sixth stage, the researchers wrote their own stories about the participants’ TAI according to the participants’ narratives and field notes jotted down during interactions with the participants. In the last stage, the researchers validated the accuracy of the narratives and analyzed them meticulously.

**Figure 2**
Descriptive Narrative Design (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 163)

![Descriptive Narrative Design](image)

**Participants and Research Setting**

The participants of this study were 22 Iranian EFL teachers with different teaching experiences and educational degrees (Table 1). They were non-homogenized and chosen by convenience sampling, including both genders (male = 32%, female = 68%). They all majored in applied linguistics and taught English at different language institutes in Tehran, Iran. Their age ranged from 26 to 46 years old (\(M = 31.86, SD = 5.81\)). According to their teaching experiences, the participants were classified into novice (n = 11) and experienced (n = 11) teachers. The yardstick for dividing the teachers was the cut-point proposed by Gatbonton (2008), who argued that teachers with teaching experiences of less than five years are novice, while those with and above five years of experience are considered experienced. Moreover, in
the interview phase, ten EFL teachers (five from each group) participated in a semi-structured interview about their perceptions of TAI development and the influence of using audio diaries. They were selected non-randomly based on convenience sampling (Mackey & Gass, 2005) and their willingness to cooperate further in the study.

Table 1
Participants’ Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>13 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-41</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-46</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15 (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>11 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>10 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>22 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also critical to note that the researchers assured the teachers that they were free to leave the investigation at any time for any reasons. Similarly, they were ensured that their identity, responses, voices, and personal information would be kept confidential and utilized only in this study.

Instruments

In order to obtain rich data and capture the dynamism of TAI, the researchers decided to employ a qualitative approach that better portrays the nature and development of teacher identities. In tune with the developmental essence of TAI, audio diary and interview were used to glean the data in the present study. The details are presented in the following sections.

Audio Diary

To explore the participants’ perceptions, practices, and developmental trajectories of TAI, the researchers took advantage of audio diary as the main instrument. In so doing, the participants were requested to record, report, and reflect on various aspects of assessment identity as experienced in the moment using a series of prompt sheets. A sample of audio diary prompts can be found in Appendix A. Regarding content validity, a high degree of agreement was reached between three experts in L2 research who approved the appropriateness of language, content, structure, purpose, and directions of the prompts (0.97). Furthermore, to obtain robust data, a model on implementing audio diary in research proposed by Verma (2021) was followed. It included five steps: (1) running an entrance interview, (2) handing audio diary prompts, (3) submitting audio diaries by the participants, (4) transcribing the audio diaries, and
(5) conducting an exit interview to unpack the participants’ experiences about using audio diaries (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

It is also worth noting that before initiating the process, ethical considerations of consent, confidentiality, and privacy were ensured by the researchers. The submitted diaries had a structured format and were provided in English with varying durations.

**Semi-Structured Interview**

After collecting and analyzing the audio diaries, to triangulate the data, the researchers conducted a semi-structured interview with ten EFL teachers (five novice, five experienced) to explore their opinions about assessment identity. For instance, they were asked about the ways through which audio diaries could contribute to TAI development. This interview phase differs from the exit interview in that the former is technical and focuses on TAI, while the latter includes non-leading questions about the experience of keeping diaries, in general. The semi-structured interviews were held in non-instructional times, each taking about ten to 15 minutes of the teachers’ time. Concerning the selection criteria of the interviewees, the researchers considered their responses to audio diaries, experience levels, and willingness to have further cooperation. After developing the interview questions, three experts, who were Ph.D. holders in applied linguistics with ample experience in assessment research and practice, were requested to examine the appropriateness of the questions and their content validity (Appendix B). The degree of agreement in the experts’ responses was calculated and regarded as the index of content validity. Using their comments and feedback, the researchers made revisions in the questions and finalized them. To ensure item clarity, the experts rated the questions on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not clear*) to 4 (*very clear*). Likewise, item relevance was examined on a scale ranging from 1 (*not relevant*) to 4 (*very relevant*). Then the content validity index (CVI) was calculated, which demonstrated a high overall degree of agreement over the content of the interview questions (0.96). Although the interview questions were fixed and pre-determined, the participants were free to clarify their responses and probe into other pertinent points.

**Data Collection Procedure**

In collecting the required data, the researchers in this study took advantage of both intra- and inter-personal approaches to make within and between-group comparisons among Iranian EFL teachers regarding the developmental paths of their assessment identity as narrated in audio diaries. In so doing, first, an entrance interview was held with six EFL teachers (three novice, three experienced) to sensitize them to the scope and process of the research, inspire
them to think about their assessment experiences and practices, and spot and solve their questions and problems before initiating the audio diary journey. The entrance interview explored teachers’ thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences concerning the research process and the logistics of taking part in audio diary research. The questions were systematic and non-leading so that the danger of collecting heterogeneous data was minimized.

Next, to provide a structure for the participants to navigate their assessment experiences, eight prompt sheets were designed for different components of TAI, as a minimum number of audio diaries for research (Verma, 2021). Such a guide can decrease attrition and adds consistency to the participants’ responses in audio diary studies (Monrouxe, 2009). Then all the participants were requested to provide answers to the prompts as much as they wished. Moreover, they had freedom to respond to all or specific prompts in each session. Furthermore, based on interval-contingent design that requires submitting diaries in pre-specified times (Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013), the participants recorded and then uploaded their audio diaries in the designed website in a predetermined interval, once weekly for a period of two months.

The researchers sent text messages to the participants as a reminder on determined days. Additionally, an instruction pack was given to the participants, which encompassed a description of the study, the prompt sheets, a diary template, a consent form, and an instruction on how to upload and post their audio diaries on the website. Like other diary studies, intra and inter-personal variations existed in the length of the submitted diaries (Monrouxe, 2009). The shortest diary was 44 seconds, and the longest was 15 minutes. The overall recording time also differed, with the lengthiest being 33 minutes and the shortest took four minutes. The total number of diaries was 176 (eight per participant), taking 434 minutes across the whole sample. All the participants completely submitted the requested audio diaries during the two months period. After gleaning and organizing the files, the researchers transcribed all the diaries verbatim using Atlas.ti software (v. 9) that allows users to transcribe audio files within the program through timestamps associated with each part of the audio. Then they re-listened to the audio diaries and compared them with the transcriptions to ensure their precision before running content and thematic analysis.

Furthermore, to debrief the participants’ experience of using audio diaries and clarify misconceptions and doubts in the data and interpretations, an exit interview was carried out with the same six EFL teachers, who attended the entrance interview. The justifications for recruiting these participants were Verma’s (2021) suggestion to carry out entrance and exit interviews with the same sample and data saturation. Exit interview was done to obtain their feedback about using audio diaries in L2 and teacher identity research. Since audio diary research demands a close relationship between the researcher and participants to share and constitute their perceptions, experiences, and identities over time, the researchers took a facilitator positionality in this phase of the study. Finally, to enrich and triangulate the data, a semi-structured interview was also held with ten participants to unpack their perceptions about the possible contributions of using audio diaries to develop TAI.

**Data Analysis**

To analyze the gleaned data from audio diaries, the researchers utilized a constructivist perspective presuming that each participant shared his/her perspective on reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). To this end, a combination of content and thematic analysis was carried out in line with the design of the study. Since all narrative inquiry is concerned with content (spoken, written, or visualized), the researchers first conducted a basic content analysis of the narratives (Drisko & Maschi, 2016; Riessman, 2008). This type of content analysis focuses on “content features that could be categorized with little or no interpretation by the coder” (Baxter, 1991, p. 239). In basic content analysis, data analysis is quantitatively done using descriptive
statistics. In this study, the researchers first condensed and quantified the relevant contents of the narratives and then to complement the content analysis, theorize from the data, and interpret the stories, they used thematic analysis as a common approach to narrative inquiry and identity construction (see Bülow & Hydén, 2003; Meihami, 2023; Riessman, 2008, Chapter 3).

For conducting thematic analysis, the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. The analysis began with familiarization with the data through (re)reading the transcripts. Next, the transcripts were examined to produce initial codes, then the codes were collated into potential themes forming a deductive thematic framework. After that, the codes/themes were reviewed to generate a thematic map of the analysis, and finally, the extracted codes/themes were defined, refined, and named, generating the results in this study. It is also essential to note that the frequencies of each theme/code were calculated by summing up their incidence across the whole sample. For instance, if five novice teachers raised a certain theme/code, its frequency was estimated by dividing five by eleven and then multiplied by 100 to obtain the percentage. Additionally, in this study, time, as a unique aspect of audio diary, was considered as part of the analysis to reveal how EFL teachers’ perceptions, practices, experiences, and thoughts changed over time.

The next step in the analysis was ensuring Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) principles of trustworthiness to enhance the rigor of the study. To adhere to the principles of credibility and dependability, the extracted codes/themes of both instruments were member checked by the participants. Additionally, an experienced L2 researcher, who had done research on assessment and identity cross-checked 30 percent of the data gathered by audio diaries and interviews, which respectively culminated in inter-coder reliability indices of 0.95 and 0.96 as obtained by Cohen’s Kappa coefficient. Lastly, another expert in L2 research audit trialed the whole data analysis to secure the confirmability of the results. In this final step, minor disagreements emerged that were then resolved in a face-to-face meeting.

Findings

This section presents the findings concerning the formulated research questions in the study. Moreover, sample quotations and responses are offered in support of the emergent themes.

The First Research Question

A Descriptive Account of Novice Teachers’ Diaries

To answer this research question, which aimed to unravel the possible contribution of using audio diary in changing and developing novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers’ assessment identity, the participants’ thoughts, and reflections on different dimensions of TAI and their representations were scrutinized. The results indicated that in the first two audio diaries of novice teachers, there were clear traces of assessment knowledge, assessment beliefs, and assessment attitudes as narrated by the participants. More specifically, at the beginning of their audio diary journey, novice EFL teachers’ assessment identities were limited to their assessment considerations and practices, the constituents of assessment knowledge, and factors influencing their assessment beliefs. They maintained that, in their assessments, they “take different aspects into account” (Novice Teacher, 7, Audio Diary) as signs of assessment knowledge (Figure 4).
Another theme was narrated by two participants (18%) that concerned their attitude toward assessment and its purpose. They regarded assessment as “the heart of teaching and learning processes” (Novice Teacher, 2, Audio Diary) that intends to “diagnose students’ academic strengths and weaknesses” (Novice Teacher, 3, Audio Diary). Additionally, all the participants contended that assessment knowledge is a “broad concept” that pertains to teachers’ “knowledge” and “familiarity” with various assessment methods/techniques, their design, implementation, scoring, and interpretation. In this regard, novice teacher #3 argued “assessment knowledge is a broad concept that concerns teachers’ knowledge of methods, techniques, and strategies of test development” (Audio Diary).

The last frequently mentioned theme in novice teachers’ first two audio diaries was that assessment beliefs are influenced by many factors. More specifically, 74% of the participants argued that this dimension of TAI is affected by “many internal and external factors” (Novice Teacher, 11, Audio Diary) including “teachers’ experience, academic degree, power relations, and working context” (Novice Teacher, 3, Audio Diary). In the third and the fourth audio diaries, novice teachers highlighted assessment skills, classroom practices, confidence, and feedback in their narratives. Concerning assessment skills, a majority of the teachers maintained L2 assessors must be skilled in different areas. For example, one of the participants believed that teachers need to be competent in “providing feedback, choosing and using proper assessment methods, developing different assessment methods/techniques, and implementing, interpreting them, reporting/sharing the results, designing scoring rubrics, identifying ethical issues, justifying the use of assessment, and conducting needs analysis in assessment” (Novice Teacher, 6, Audio Diary). With regard to assessment practices, 50% of the participants argued that they use “a variety of assessment techniques in their classes” (Novice Teacher, 9, Audio Diary). The rest, however, suggested “formative” and “a combination of formative and summative practices” (Figure 5). In support of these codes, novice teacher #2 contended that “teachers can draw on formative and summative practices in L2 assessment situations. Yet, I myself recommend only formative assessment given its flexibility” (Audio Diary).
Another repeated theme in audio diaries three and four concerned “assessment confidence” that was perceived as “a teacher’s self-efficacy and certainty in using specific assessment techniques” (Novice Teacher, 3, Audio Diary) occurred six times (54%) in the diaries. Moreover, two participants (18%) pinpointed that “confidence and assurance in assessment largely depend on context and practicality of techniques” (Novice Teacher, 5, Audio Diary). Assessment feedback and the features of a good feedback were the last themes appeared in the third and fourth audio diaries. In these two diaries, novice teachers agreed on “the utility of feedback during and after an assessment practice” (Novice Teacher, 11, Audio Diary). A deeper analysis of their responses revealed that the teachers favored the use of “both oral and written assessment feedback” (45%), “different types of feedback” (27%), “oral assessment feedback” (18%), and “both collective and individual feedback” (10%). As evidence, one of the participants stated, “I prefer to use different types of feedback such as oral, written, direct, indirect, immediate, delayed, recast, and so on” (Novice Teacher, 6, Audio Diary). Considering the features of a good assessment feedback, the diaries involved 13 characteristics. More specifically, about half of the teachers argued that an effective assessment feedback is “useful for learning and teaching” (27%) and “non-judgmental” (18%). Others proposed dissimilar features for feedback such as being objective, constructive, engaging, specific, positive, genuine, gentle, non-obtrusive, non-confrontational, understandable, and motivating for students (each raised once). For novice teacher #8, an effective assessment feedback was the one that is “useful for both learners and teachers, non-judgmental, and facilitative” (Audio Diary).

In the fifth audio diary, novice teachers re-emphasized “assessment feedback” and “assessment attitudes” as their reflections were laden with representations of these two components of TAI. Particularly, 72% of the participants argued that they “prefer to use oral feedback for speaking skills and written feedback for writing skills” (Novice Teacher, 4, Audio Diary). As for their attitudes, three teachers (27%) considered “oral feedback” as more effective because of its “informality, spontaneity, and “unintended nature” (Novice Teacher, 10, Audio Diary), while two teachers (18%) preferred “written feedback” given its “formality, seriousness, and permanence for future use” (Novice Teacher, 11, Audio Diary). Another
common theme that was unanimously put by novice teachers (100%) concerned their positive opinions about using “self and peer-assessment” in the class “only if the students are trained for using them” (Novice Teacher, 1, Audio Diary).

In the sixth diary, novice teachers accentuated the significance of assessment “rating” and different “scoring rubrics.” They further argued that they use different rubrics in their classes to assess students’ performance (Figure 6). In particular, most teachers favored a mixture of holistic and analytic rubrics “depending on the purpose of the assessment” (Novice Teacher, 4, Audio Diary). Others, however, posited to use “analytic” and “personal” rubrics “to assess students’ language skills based on their levels and course essence” (Novice Teacher, 8, Audio Diary).

**Figure 6**

**Novice EFL Teachers’ Preferred Assessment Rubrics**

![Pie chart showing the distribution of preferred assessment rubrics among novice EFL teachers.]

They also considered the use of scoring rubrics beneficial for generating assessment “fairness” (44.4%), “accuracy” (22.2%), “reliability” (1.1%), “objectivity” (5.6%), “validity” (5.6%), “classroom engagement” (5.6%), and providing “diagnostic information” (5.6%) as repeated across narratives. For example, one of the participants stated, “the benefits of rubrics lie in their fairness, objectivity, reliability, validity, and accuracy of scoring” (Novice Teacher, 5, Audio Diary).

In the seventh audio diary, novice teachers were more concerned about the “consistency” and “consequences” of assessment for stakeholders. They mostly (72%) contended that “teachers’ assessment consistency is influenced by their experience and perceptions” (Novice Teacher, 2, Audio Diary). The rest added socio-economic status, instructional facilities, beliefs, working context, perspectives, knowledge, and practices as other influential factors. Concerning test consequences, as a social aspect of language
assessment, all participants (100%) pinpointed that language tests have both positive and negative consequences for stakeholders. They also referred to these influences as “negative and positive washback effect.” Moreover, two teachers (18%) stated that depending on their stakes, “tests have various consequences at both micro level and macro levels” (Novice Teacher, 3, Audio Diary).

In their last audio diary, novice teachers capitalized on “grading,” “features of a good L2 assessor,” “assessment roles,” and “question-types” that they use in their classes. Seven teachers (63%) distinguished between “feedback” and “grading” in their narratives. For example, novice teacher #9 considered “feedback as a process-oriented practice, while grading is outcome-oriented and numeric” (Audio Diary). For most of the participants (81%), “a good assessor is the one, who has ample assessment knowledge and skills in developing, implementing, scoring, and interpreting various assessment methods” (Novice Teacher, 4, Audio Diary). Others pinpointed the four features of being fair, organized, confident, and committed once across the data. Furthermore, all novice teachers (100%) argued that EFL teachers must “take various roles” in assessment other than traditional roles. They pinpointed that besides test development and administration, EFL teachers must be “feedback providers, prompt providers, counsellors, supporters” (Novice Teacher, 7, Audio Diary), “test interpreter, and mediator” (Novice Teacher, 11, Audio Diary). The last point extracted from novice teachers’ audio diaries was that most of them (82%) used “a variety of question-types in their classes depending on the students’ needs, levels, course objectives, and language skills” (Novice Teacher, 9, Audio Diary).

A Descriptive Account of Experienced Teachers’ Diaries

Regarding experienced EFL teachers’ audio diaries, the results of content analysis revealed many similarities with novice teachers. However, there were more explanations and advanced understandings of TAI and its manifestations in experienced teachers’ narratives. In their first audio diary, experienced EFL teachers talked about various assessment considerations such as “removing stress” (3.4%), “leniency” (3.4%), “purpose of assessment” (10.3%), “reliability” (3.4%), “validity” (10.3%), “practicality” (6.9%), “interactiveness” (3.4%), “authenticity” (3.4%), “washback” (6.9%), “students’ needs” (3.4%), “students’ levels” (3.4%), “problematic areas” (3.4%), “test quality” (3.4%), “fairness” (3.4%), “item difficulty” (3.4%), “students’ emotions” (10.3%), “learning styles” (3.4%), “scoring criteria” (3.4%), “feedback” (3.4%), “test consequences” (3.4%), and “testing atmosphere” (3.4%). In this diary, some experienced teachers regarded “assessment knowledge as a composite of different assessment experiences and skills affected by previous experience and training” (Experienced Teacher, 4, Audio Diary). Furthermore, three participants (36%) associated assessment knowledge with one’s “familiarity with assessment theories, methods, principles, and test-types” (Experienced Teacher 1, 6, 10, Audio Diary).

In the second diary, experienced teachers’ narratives signified their “assessment beliefs” and the use of “alternative assessment techniques.” The analysis of diaries indicated that most of the experienced teachers (72%) believed that “teachers’ assessment beliefs are influenced by several internal and external factors including experience, attitude, expectation, knowledge, and educational policies and rules” (Experienced Teacher, 9, Audio Diary). The results also revealed that most of the experienced teachers (63%) used performance-based assessment, oral interview, and role-play as alternative assessments “since they demand students’ real performance” (Experienced Teacher, 2, Audio Diary). The rest employed a variety of other techniques to assess their students (Figure 7).
In their third audio diary, experienced teachers highlighted “assessment skills” and “assessment practices.” Different areas of skills were narrated by teachers as illustrated in Figure 8. Among them, “designing tests,” “scoring,” and “interpreting” skills were the most frequently repeated themes/codes across audio diaries. Then “providing feedback,” “designing rubrics,” “having assessment literacy,” and “knowing assessment principles and strategies” were each repeated twice (18%). The rest were raised only once across the data.

**Figure 7**
*Experienced EFL Teachers’ Employed Alternative Assessments*

**Figure 8**
*Experienced EFL Teachers’ Perceived Assessment Skills*
In this audio diary, the participants also discussed different “assessment practices.” Specifically, 54% of the participants argued to “use different assessment practices depending on the context and the students” (Experienced Teacher, 8, Audio Diary). Yet, 36% explicitly narrated to employ “formative assessment and peer-assessment techniques in my classes” (Experienced Teacher, 10, Audio Diary). Others used summative assessment, dynamic assessment, alternative assessments, self-assessment, direct assessment, and indirect assessment.

In their fourth diary, experienced teachers capitalized on “assessment confidence” and “assessment feedback.” Some participants confessed that they are “not sufficiently confident in their assessment, especially alternative assessments” (Experienced Teacher, 2, Audio Diary). As for the determinants of assessment confidence, the participants stated “experience, educational degree, and understanding of assessment theories shape this dimension of TAI” (Experienced Teacher, 7, Audio Diary). It was also seen as “a developmental process that enhances over time as the course continues” (Experienced Teacher, 4, Audio Diary). Concerning “assessment feedback,” as stressed in this diary, the participants narrated different forms of providing assessment feedback (Figure 9). The participants mostly supported the use of “an integrative approach in using feedback by using a combination of different types of feedback” (Experienced Teacher, 4, Audio Diary). Others, however, enumerated specific types of assessment feedback. Another represented feature of the fourth diary was characterizing an effective assessment feedback by experienced teachers. They maintained that good feedback must be “based on students’ level, non-judgmental, and understandable” (Experienced Teacher, 9, Audio Diary), “constructive for learners and learning” (Experienced Teacher, 11, Audio Diary), “specific, concrete, non-threatening, and data-driven” (Experienced Teacher, 3, Audio Diary), and “create positive washback” (Experienced Teacher, 2, Audio Diary).

Figure 9
*Experienced EFL Teachers’ Employed Assessments Feedback*
In the fifth diary, experienced teachers highlighted the benefits and outcomes of “assessment feedback” and their attitudes toward “self and peer-assessment.” The results revealed different benefits of providing assessment feedback (Figure 10). In support of this claim, some teachers believed assessment feedback has been useful for “locating students’ strengths and weaknesses, establishing classroom rapport, and diagnosing students’ progress” (Experienced Teacher, 6, Audio Diary), while other participants considered it beneficial for “encouraging students, motivating students, engaging students, improving teaching effectiveness, and fostering language learning” (Experienced Teacher, 9, Audio Diary).

Figure 10
Experienced EFL Teachers’ Perceptions about the Benefits of Assessments Feedback

The analysis of this audio diary also demonstrated that all experienced EFL teachers (100%) had a positive attitude toward self and peer-assessment. However, they opined that the implementation of these techniques “requires students’ training” (Experienced Teacher, 3, Audio Diary). Moreover, three teachers (27%) argued that these assessment techniques “increase learner autonomy, agency, motivation, and engagement in the class” (Experienced Teacher, 9, Audio Diary).

In the sixth audio diary, the participants shifted their attention toward various types of “assessment rubric” and their “outcomes” for L2 education. More particularly, 63% of the participants argued that they use “both holistic and analytic rubrics in their classes” (Experienced Teacher, 7, Audio Diary). However, the rest referred to other types of rubrics depicted in Figure 11.
Most of the experienced EFL teachers (45%) perceived assessment rubrics “beneficial for generating transparency, objectivity, fairness, reliability, consistency, and accuracy in measurement” (Experienced Teacher, 3, Audio Diary). Furthermore, one participant maintained “rubric is an authentic tool to assess students’ performance and support assessment as learning” (Experienced Teacher, 11, Audio Diary).

In their last two audio diaries, the experienced teachers stressed out the social aspects of assessment and professionalism in assessment and practice, as signs of identity development. More specifically, in the seventh diary, the participants explained the factors influencing their “assessment consistency,” “the consequences of tests,” and the distinction between “grading and feedback.” The results indicated that teachers’ perceptions, attitudes, interpretations, mental and physical conditions, familiarity with students, testing time, knowledge-base, assessment conceptions, assessment approaches, understanding of assessment principles,
purposes, and criteria, understanding of units of competency, students’ psychological factors, students’ learning styles, and external pressures affect their assessment consistency. Among these factors, “teachers’ understanding of assessment principles, purposes, and criteria were more critical” (Experienced Teacher, 8, Audio Diary). Lack of consistency in assessment was also believed to “damage test fairness, reliability, validity, and accuracy of measurement” (Experienced Teacher, 9, Audio Diary).

Regarding the consequences of tests, all participants unanimously (100%) pinpointed that tests have several positive and negative consequences (washback effects) for different stakeholders. However, three participants (27%) attributed such consequences to “the degree of accountability, stakes, and functions of tests” (Experienced Teacher 2, 3, 8, Audio Diary). Likewise, the first participant stated that “language tests have personal, social, and vocational effects on test-takers (i.e., micro and macro washback effect). Going even further, the second participant highlighted critical language testing (CLT) by contending “tests are by no means neutral, but tools involving power and prestige.” In this diary, all experienced teachers (100%) distinguished “feedback” from “grading”, stating that the former is “formative, descriptive, and process-oriented,” while the latter is “summative, numerical, one-shot, and outcome-oriented” (Experienced Teacher, 10, Audio Diary).

In the last audio diary, experienced teachers discussed “the features of a good L2 assessor,” “assessment roles” that he/she can take, and various “question-types.” The results provided 18 features for a good L2 assessor (Figure 13). For most of the participants, “a good L2 assessor is the one, who is knowledgeable in choosing and implementing different assessments, constructing tests, and considering test-takers’ psychological conditions and differences” (Experienced Teacher, 2, Audio Diary). Other frequent features of a good assessor were “being fair and innovative in conducting assessment” (Experienced Teacher, 3, Audio Diary).

**Figure 13**

*Experienced EFL Teachers’ Perceived Features of a Good L2 Assessor*
Additionally, the majority of the participants (63%) maintained that a professional and effective EFL teacher takes various roles in assessment (Figure 14). They referred to roles such as “being a test developer, administrator, interpreter, feedback provider, mediator, counsellor, supporter, and advisor” (Experienced Teacher, 4, Audio Diary).

**Figure 14**
*Experienced EFL Teachers’ Perceived Roles to be taken by L2 Assessors*

![Diagram showing perceived roles of EFL teachers](image)

The last issue narrated by experienced teachers concerned their assessment practices and question-types that they used in their classes to evaluate their students’ performance. The results revealed that all the participants (100%) concurred with “using an integrative approach and utilizing a variety of question-types” (Experienced Teacher, 11, Audio Diary). However, some teachers expressed their preferences for particular types of tests such as “multiple-choice and essay-type questions” (Experienced Teacher, 9, Audio Diary). In summation, the narratives of novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers revealed that audio diary is an outstanding way to depict L2 teachers’ assessment identity journey and disclose the developmental paths through which TAI dimensions can grow. The following section theorizes and makes interpretations on the narratives described earlier.

**An Interpretative Account of Teachers’ Identity Construction Trajectory**

To go a step further in analyzing the narratives, the researchers conducted a thematic analysis on the eight rounds of audio diaries submitted to the website. The results indicated that both novice and experienced EFL teachers almost took similar roads to manifest and develop their assessment identity. More precisely, four macro themes were extracted from the narratives to display the developmental trajectories of TAI in both groups (Figure 15).
The extracted macro-themes are further explained below:

**Theoretical Principles and Considerations of Assessment**

During the first two audio diaries, both novice and experienced EFL teachers were concerned with theoretical principles of language assessment. They described the conceptualizations of assessment knowledge and assessment beliefs and the factors that shape these dimensions of TAI. They regarded assessment knowledge as an over-arching concept that “encompasses teachers’ familiarity with various assessment methods and their implementation, scoring, and interpretation” (Experienced Teacher, 6, Audio Diary). Moreover, assessment belief was considered as “a core of identity, which is affected by many internal and external factors” (Novice Teacher, 11, Audio Diary). Other theoretical issues such as test reliability, validity, practicality, ethics, fairness, difficulty, quality, and the like were also expressed in teachers’ narratives.

**Practical Domains and Considerations of Assessment**

Another macro theme extracted from the next two diaries pertained to teachers’ emphasis on assessment practices and considerations such as assessment skills, feedback, confidence, literacy, and rubric designation. Practically, the participants of both groups argued to “use a variety of formative and summative assessment practices” (Novice Teacher, 2, Experienced Teacher, 6, Audio Diary). They also pinpointed that “L2 assessors need several skills and competencies in planning, designing, implementing, scoring, and interpreting different tests” (Novice Teacher, 7, Experienced Teacher, 2, Audio Diary). The conceptualization of assessment feedback and confidence was another sub-theme here. In this regard, novice teacher #10 argued to “offer a combination of assessment feedback practices depending on students’ level, context, and language skill” (Audio Diary). The participants regarded assessment confidence as a construct related to “teachers’ certainty in using a specific assessment technique affected by several factors” (Novice Teacher, 9, Audio Diary). “Being
assessment literate in various domains of assessment” was also highlighted by teachers (Experienced Teacher, 6, Audio Diary).

**Rating and Assessment for Learning (AfL) Approaches**

The amalgamation of smaller codes, in the next pair of diaries, led to this macro-theme that concerned benefits and outcomes of assessment feedback and rubrics as well as teachers’ attitudes toward self and peer-assessment that underscore learning. Assessment feedback was believed to be momentous in that it “can locate students’ strengths and weaknesses in academic domains” (Novice Teacher, 3, Audio Diary). Moreover, the participants of both groups defended the use of assessment rubrics like “holistic, analytic, and primary trait depending on language skills” (Experienced Teacher, 10, Audio Diary) since such tools “guarantee the reliability, validity, accuracy, fairness, and objectivity in assessment” (Novice Teacher, 9, Audio Diary). Another sub-theme concerns teachers’ emphasis on AfL approaches in their assessment practices in which they recurrently highlighted “the use of learning-oriented techniques like self-assessment and peer-assessment in EFL contexts, which are necessary and beneficial in improving students’ engagement, motivation, agency, and autonomy” (Experienced Teacher, 9, Audio Diary).

**Consequential Validity and Modern L2 Assessor**

The last two diaries were representing different aspects of consequential validity and features of a modern L2 assessor. Considering the first part of this macro theme, the participants frequently narrated their concerns about the consequences of teachers’ assessment practices or “washback effect on different stakeholders at different levels; micro and macro” (Experienced Teacher, 8, Audio Diary). Regarding the features and requirements of a modern L2 assessor, novice teacher # 12 stated “teachers, these days need to be consistent in assessment and take several roles including feedback provider, test mediator, prompt provider, test interpreter, counsellor, and learner and learning supporter” (Audio Diary). Another feature was claimed to be “using a variety of question-types in classroom assessment practices” (Experienced Teacher, 11, Audio Diary). Finally, it was repeatedly pinpointed that “a good L2 assessor has assessment knowledge and literacy and tries his/her best to be fair and innovative during assessment practices” (Experienced Teacher, 7, Audio Diary).

To conclude this research question, it is asserted that over the two months period of uploading audio diaries on the website, both novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers had similar assessment concerns in their narratives. Initially, they talked about theoretical issues of L2 assessment, then they expressed their understanding and emphasis on assessment skills and practices. In the middle of their journey, they shifted toward the importance of scoring rubrics and self and peer-assessment as two approaches of assessment for learning (AfL). As the study approached its end, they narrated more about the social aspects of language testing such as washback effect and consequences at both micro and macro levels followed by features that embody professionalism in L2 assessment, that is, taking various assessment roles and an integrative approach toward using question-types.

**The Second Research Question**

To answer this research question concerning the novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers’ perceptions about the extent to which the use of audio diary contributed to the development of their assessment identity, a semi-structured interview was conducted. The analysis of interviews indicated that all the novice EFL teachers approved the potential and
efficacy of using audio diary as a tool to develop TAI. More specifically, the analysis led to the emergence of four main themes/codes in the data (Figure 16).

Figure 16
Novice EFL Teachers’ Perceptions about the Contributions of Audio Diary to TAI Development

Audio Diary Develops TAI through Reflection

The most frequent theme raised by novice teachers was that “audio diary develops TAI by providing an opportunity for EFL teachers to do reflections” (Novice Teacher, 1, Interview). Another participant stated, “audio diary allows teachers to thinking deeply about their own as well as others’ assessment beliefs and practices” (Novice Teacher, 6, Interview). “Reflection on self and others’ actions” was another feature of audio diary that fosters TAI (Novice Teacher, 10, Interview).

Audio Diary Develops TAI through Listening to Colleagues’ Ideas

The second frequent theme (30.8%) had to do with the potentiality of audio diary to offer a chance to EFL teachers “to listen to their colleagues’ ideas about assessment” (Novice Teacher, 7, Interview). Another teacher pointed out that “TAI is created in interactions with others, so using audio diaries in groups let us know others’ opinions and practices, too” (Novice Teacher, 2, Interview).

Audio Diary Captures the Developmental Process of TAI

Another frequent theme among novice teachers pertained to the developmental nature of both TAI and audio diary preparation. In support of this theme, one of the participants stated, “since both TAI and audio diary are developmental in nature, they are a perfect match for capturing the dynamism of identity change” (Novice Teacher, 9, Interview). Another teacher maintained “TAI develops over time and the use of audio diary over a period of time helps this process of change” (Novice Teacher, 4, Interview).

Audio Diary Develops TAI through Examining Ideas Back and Forth

This extracted theme was also pinpointed by novice teachers, who argued that “audio diary allows one to examine assessment ideas back and forth” (Novice Teacher, 10, Interview). Moreover, one of the participants highlighted the iterative process of audio diary preparation “that helps teachers examine and re-examine their ideas” (Novice Teacher, 6, Interview).

Concerning the experienced teachers, they unanimously concurred that audio diary improves their TAI given some inherent features in this instrument. More precisely, the
analysis of experienced teachers’ interview data culminated in four key themes across interviews (Figure 17).

Figure 17
Experienced EFL Teachers’ Perceptions about the Contributions of Audio Diary to TAI Development

Audio Diary Develops TAI through (Re)Listening to Others’ Ideas

This theme was the most frequently raised theme among experienced teachers, who maintained that “audio diary develops TAI by providing an opportunity for EFL teachers to listen and re-listen to others’ ideas about assessment beliefs and practices” (Experienced Teacher, 4, Interview). Another participant made a reference to the process of audio diary preparation in the study in which “teachers could listen to their own voices carefully and compare them with those of other teachers” as a way of TAI development (Experienced Teacher, 9, Interview).

Audio Diary Develops TAI through Self-reflection and Self-Modification

Half of the respondents attributed the potentiality of audio diary in improving TAI to its capacity to “allow teachers to do self-reflection and self-modification regarding assessment beliefs and practices” (Experienced Teacher, 11, Interview). In this respect, a participant pinpointed the flexible nature of audio diaries that “permit teachers to examine self and others’ diaries and deeply think about them to make possible modifications in assessment practices in a flexible way” (Experienced Teacher, 4, Interview).

Audio Diary Develops TAI through Enhancing Interactiveness

Another theme posed by experienced teachers was that audio diary can “enhance interactiveness in teachers’ assessment practices” (Experienced Teacher, 6, Interview). Moreover, some teachers emphasized the role of audio diaries in “encouraging classroom interactiveness that makes teachers test their knowledge on a regular basis and develop their identity” (Experienced Teacher, 4, Interview).
Audio Diary Develops TAI through Keeping a Record of One’s Actions

Regarding this theme, some experienced teachers pointed to the lasting and permanent nature of audio diaries in the interviews. As an evidence, experienced teacher #5 declared that “audio diary facilitates TAI development in that it keeps a record of one’s actions and beliefs concerning assessment over a long period of time” (Interview). Another teacher defended the use of this tool to capture identity by arguing that “audio diaries let teachers dialogically re-examine their own as well as others’ actions for later modifications in assessment” (Experienced Teacher, 1, Interview).

To conclude, in this research question, the results of the interview data revealed that both novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers strongly hold the opinion that audio diary is effective in developing their identity as L2 assessors. For novice EFL teachers, this efficacy was due to audio diary’s capacity to allow teachers to do reflections and deep thinking on their own as well as others’ assessment beliefs and practices and listen to their colleagues’ ideas about assessment. These features were complemented with the ability to show the developmental process of TAI and examine ideas back and forth over a long period of time. Likewise, experienced EFL teachers ascribed the contribution of using audio diary for TAI development to its capability to let EFL teachers (re)listen to others’ ideas, “do self-reflection and self-modification,” “enhance interactivity,” and “keep a record of one’s actions” over a prolonged period of time.

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers’ identity as assessors had similar fluctuations and improvements considering audio diaries. More specifically, at the outset of their audio diary journey, they were concerned with different assessment considerations and the components of assessment knowledge. For novice teachers, “validity” was the most important assessment consideration, while experienced teachers capitalized on various considerations. The point of departure at this stage was that experienced teachers considered the psycho-emotional aspects of testing (e.g., learning styles, leniency, emotions, needs, testing atmosphere), elements of “test usefulness” model (reliability, validity, practicality, interactivity, authenticity, washback), and social dimensions of testing (fairness, test consequences). This can be attributed to their teaching and assessment experiences gained over time. Experience is influential in TAI development in that when a teacher has obtained sufficient experiences regarding assessment practices through trial and errors, he/she may underscore specific and more crucial aspects of assessment. In contrast, a teacher with limited experience in assessment may choose to concentrate on the preliminaries. In this regard, Sahinkarakas (2012) examined the role of EFL teachers’ experience level in their perceptions and conceptions of language assessment in Turkey. She found that the higher the experience of EFL teachers, the more comprehensive their assessment conceptions would become. The results are partly consistent with Xu and Brown (2016), who endorsed that the affective side of assessment conception is constructed on teachers’ assessment experiences. Moreover, the results can be justified by the fact that assessment conceptions and considerations are dynamic and develop as one obtains more training and experience (Hill & Eyers, 2016).

Both groups of teachers regarded assessment knowledge as a composite and broad construct, encompassing different skills, practices, and experiences. A possible reason for this equal perception among novice and experienced may be their understanding of TAI components and assessment competence. This echoes Brookhart’s (2011) claimed that teachers must be aware of a set of knowledge and skills related to assessment to be considered
competent. Likewise, the results revealed that both novice and experienced teachers considered “assessment beliefs” as a construct influenced by internal and external factors. One of the most important internal factors was the teacher’s experience. However, this study proved that this is not necessarily true as novice teachers had the same ideas about this component of TAI. This finding runs counter to Muñoz et al. (2012), who conducted a study on Colombian EFL teachers’ assessment beliefs and found that teachers’ experiences, education, and social background determine their assessment beliefs. A logic for this similarity of beliefs can be the EFL context of Iran and the trainings that the participants have had at university or training courses.

This study also indicated that EFL teachers with varying experiences require different “assessment skills” to (re)craft their assessment identity. Both groups developed their understanding of necessary skills in L2 assessment. However, experienced teachers proposed that L2 teachers “must have assessment literacy” besides the prevalent skills expected from them. This finding signifies that EFL teachers in this study knew the common skills they need to assess L2 students’ performance. Yet, the experienced teachers went further to talk about assessment literacy, which is an indication of developed TAI. The results concur with Zolfaghari and Ashraf (2015), who maintained that EFL teachers’ assessment literacy has a strong and positive correlation with their experience. To justify this finding, it can be contended that experienced teachers might have done many trials and errors, attended professional development programs, and conducted research on assessment that have heightened their literacy.

The analysis of the audio diaries also demonstrated that both novice and experienced EFL teachers utilize different assessment practices in their classes. Nevertheless, experienced teachers accentuated alternative assessment techniques like performance-based assessment, dynamic assessment, role-play, oral interview, peer-assessment, and direct/indirect assessment practices. This shows that the use of audio diaries taped into and developed experienced teachers’ assessment practices more. This is also attributable to their experience and knowledge of alternative assessment. The results are in contrast with Soodmand Afshar et al. (2018), who ran a mixed-methods study on 106 Iranian EAP teachers’ knowledge of alternative assessment and found that teachers’ experience level does not affect teachers’ knowledge of alternative assessment. Furthermore, the results of audio diaries revealed that both novice and experienced EFL teachers signaled improvements in their understanding of “assessment confidence”. For both groups, assessment confidence concerned the teachers’ certainty in using specific assessment techniques. Novice teachers posed “context and practicality” as two factors influencing this dimension of TAI, while experienced teachers regarded “time, experience, educational degree, and assessment knowledge” as influential factors. This is consistent with the conceptual framework of TAI introduced by Looney et al. (2017) in which the components of TAI were claimed to be sensitive to time, experience, and context. A justification for this finding can be the participants’ high self-efficacy in teaching and assessing practices that might be achieved via formal training or learning-through-teaching.

This study also indicated that an “effective assessment feedback”, from the perspective of novice and experienced teachers, is the one that is “useful for teaching and learning”, “non-judgmental”, and “non-threatening”. However, experienced teachers seemed to have a better grasp of this dimension of TAI as they recommended to provide assessment feedback that are data-driven, understandable, and useful in generating positive washback effects. These illustrate that audio diaries have deepened the experienced teachers’ assessment feedback more than the novice teachers. It is possible that experienced teachers’ knowledge of action research, feedback theory, cognitive development, and consequences of assessment led them narrate more comprehensive ideas about assessment feedback. In this study, it was also identified that both groups of teachers developed a positive “assessment attitude” toward alternative
assessment techniques like self and peer-assessment. However, they maintained that the potentiality of these techniques depends on the students’ received training to conduct them. This boost in teachers’ attitude is in tune with Bhargava and Pathy’s (2014) research in India that considered attitude as a dynamic and developmental construct. Yet, this finding runs contrary to Suja (2007), who considered teaching experience as a critical factor in shaping and reshaping the teachers’ attitude. The present study indicated that EFL teachers’ assessment attitudes improved comparatively, regardless of their experience.

Another improvement was the teachers’ awareness of and ability to design assessment rubrics after sharing their audio diaries on the website and listening to their peers’ ideas. Both groups claimed to use “holistic and analytic” scoring rubrics, but experienced teachers went further and pinpointed that they employ “primary traits rubrics,” “rubrics reflecting CEFR,” and “personal or teacher-made rubrics.” This identity shift can be ascribed to the dialogic nature of teacher identity. The results buttress those of Akkerman and Meijer (2011), who perceived teacher identity as a (self and other) dialogic and ongoing process of negotiating multiple I-positions to reach a stable identity. It is possible that checking and negotiating TAI ideas on the website have caused the developments in teachers’ identity. As for experienced teachers, their narration of using different rubrics could be due to their experience of teaching high-stakes examinations (IELTS, TOEFL) preparation courses. Another observable development in experienced teachers’ knowledge of scoring rubrics was that they considered the students’ psycho-emotional factors and units of competency as factors influencing this component. This reflects the experienced teachers’ profound knowledge of assessment, rating, and factors critical for scoring consistency and transparency.

In the last two narratives, there was a clear improvement of both groups’ TAI, especially considering “assessment consequences,” “assessment roles,” and “question-types.” At this final stage, the participants noticeably represented their knowledge of social dimensions of language testing (e.g., test consequence, washback effect, and critical language testing or CLT). They argued that tests exert different impacts on stakeholders depending on their accountability and stakes. This can be due to their received training on assessment either at university or private institutes. Another reason might be their past experiences of taking high-stakes test like university entrance exams with damaging consequences and pressures. The last finding in this study was that both novice and experienced teachers called for a re-imaging on assessment of L2 education in which the teacher takes numerous roles during and after the assessment process and takes an integrative approach regarding the use of question-types. This echoes Adie (2013) and Looney et al. (2017), who contended that for teachers to craft an identity for themselves as assessors of language, they must take various roles in assessment process and use different practices depending on the context and objectives of a course. Overall, the findings showed that throughout the study the participants followed a solid and identical path to represent and develop their assessment identity using audio diaries (Figure 17). Initially, they talked about theoretical issues of L2 assessment, then they expressed their understanding and emphasis on assessment skills and practices. In the middle of their journey, they shifted toward the importance of scoring rubrics and self and peer-assessment as two approaches of assessment for learning (AFL). As the study approached its end, they narrated more about the social aspects of language testing such as washback effect and consequences at both micro and macro levels followed by features that embody professionalism in L2 assessment, that is, taking various assessment roles and an integrative approach toward using question-types.

Owing to their capability to allow the participants to do “self-reflection,” “deep thinking,” “iterative analysis,” and “manifesting developmental paths” over time, in this study, audio diaries were found to be effective ways to maintain and develop TAI. This is in line with previous studies that endorsed the utility of diaries for exploring identity growth (e.g., Arvaja,
This can be attributed to the potential of audio diary to create privacy, immediacy, freedom, and flexibility to the participants to narrate their experiences and perceptions at their own pace and desire (Monrouxe, 2009). Despite these benefits, this instrument was found challenging as it requires “a quiet place for recording,” “a storytelling style,” and “coherence of speech.” This finding is comparable to that of Crozier and Cassell (2016), who ran a study on the methodological considerations of audio diaries in work psychology and identified similar challenges of using this instrument. A reason for these problems among Iranian EFL teachers can be their limited knowledge about the processes and practices of audio diaries in qualitative and longitudinal studies. This shortcoming might be due to their incomprehensive training programs and insufficient awareness of qualitative research instruments in teacher identity research.

In conclusion, based on the findings, it can be asserted that audio diaries can perfectly demystify the dynamism of TAI given their reflective, developmental, and longitudinal nature. It was identified that both novice and experienced EFL teachers represented similar concerns and understandings of TAI and its components as they got used to the audio diary process. Initially they talked about the theoretical underpinnings of assessment and assessment identity, while at the end of the study they were more concerned about some factors involved at the macro level, namely the social dimensions of testing, consequences, CLT, and professionalism in assessment indicative of modern L2 assessors. This identical developmental path took by EFL teachers with various experiences regarding their identity was novel, surprising, and unexpected for the researchers. The present study is hence advantageous at both theoretical and practical levels. Theoretically, it expands the current TAI landscape by signifying the developmental nature of this type of identity. It also revealed that the components of TAI are dynamic and subject to change over time. Practically, the results of this study are promising for EFL teachers, teacher educators, educational policymakers, and researchers. The results would be helpful for EFL teachers in that they can raise the teachers’ knowledge of TAI and its components. Drawing on this study, EFL teachers can employ various assessment techniques to uphold and enhance their assessment identity. Likewise, teacher trainers can benefit from this study in that they can offer assessment-specific training courses and workshops to craft and recraft EFL teachers’ identity as assessors. In such courses, teacher trainers can explain and clarify the components of TAI to both pre-service and in-service EFL teachers. Educational policymakers may also use the findings to revisit their conceptualizations, decisions, and practices regarding the role of identity in assessment and the way assessment can craft teacher identity. L2 researchers are the last group that may find this study valuable in that they can recognize the potentials of audio diaries in teacher education research, especially teacher identity.

Despite these implications, the present study is limited in the generalizability of the findings since the data were gathered in only two months. However, it can be argued that the dynamism of TAI across teaching experience levels could be generalizable to other contexts, but this requires further empirical evidence. Another limitation concerns the small sample size (22 EFL teachers) that demands care when generalizing the results to other contexts. Moreover, TAI was only explored via audio diaries submitted to a website, while using complementary research tools would make the picture more vivid. Therefore, future researchers can explore different areas of TAI, as a novel type of identity, via other qualitative research instruments. In other words, the dynamism of TAI in L2 education, which was the core objective of this study, can be captured using instruments such as portfolios, written diaries, observations, and think-aloud protocols in the future. Further research is also suggested to investigate the applicability of the current TAI frameworks in different contexts. Cross-cultural studies are also recommended to see the impact of cultural factors on EFL teachers’ assessment identity.
Finally, further studies can be carried out on the mediating role of teacher-related factors like agency, pedagogical reasoning, and pedagogical knowledge in assessment identity development of EFL teachers.

References


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Thank you for agreeing to complete this assessment identity diary about your experiences as an EFL assessor.

- You are required to tape record your thoughts and opinions about your assessment practices twice a week, for a period of two month each audio file lasting more than 3 minutes.
- You can use a written diary that gives you opportunities to elaborate more on your ideas during the recording (optional).
- A prompt sheet is provided for you in which key issues and concerns that you should comment on during the recordings are included. You can talk in more detail about the issues which are more relevant to you using personal examples and experiences.
- In addition to posting your audio recordings in your own folders, you can visit other teachers’ folders and listen to their recordings and leave your comments on their ideas.

When to do Recordings:
- Please carry out and post your tape recordings on the website on Fridays and Sundays each week, after you have finished the assignments of the session. You will be sent a text message to remind you that the tape recording should be carried out on that day.

- The assessment considerations that you take in your English classes.
- The elements that constitute a teachers’ assessment knowledge.
- Issues that you consider when interpreting your classroom test results.

Prompt Sheet

- The role of previous experience, power relations, and academic context in teachers’ assessment knowledge construction.
- Alternative assessment techniques that you use in the class.
- The ways your assessment affects your instructional practices.
- Internal and external factors that are influential in teachers’ assessment beliefs.
Appendix (B)
Interview Questions

1) Would you please provide us with an account of your teaching qualifications?

2) How long have you been teaching English?

3) Have you received any kind of training for assessing English language?

4) How much do you think using audio diary can contribute to your assessment identity development?

5) In what ways does the use of audio diary benefit your assessment practices and identity development?
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Acknowledgements: The authors highly appreciate the insightful comments suggested by the editor and anonymous reviewers.

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Article Citation