Iranian EFL teachers’ assessment for learning practices and barriers: Do textbooks taught and teaching context matter?

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Abstract: The mixed methods study reported here explored the extent to which Iranian EFL teachers perceived to adopt monitoring and scaffolding practices of assessment for learning. The study also investigated EFL teachers’ perceptions of assessment for learning as a function of textbooks taught and the teaching context. To this end, 384 Iranian EFL teachers participated in a self-report assessment for learning questionnaire consisting of 28 items on a Likert scale. Likewise, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 EFL teachers to cross-validate the questionnaire results and to identify barriers to the implementation of assessment for learning practices. The semi-structured interview results bore out those of the questionnaire revealing that EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes showed marked preferences for scaffolding practices i.e. questioning and student contribution in the classroom. Moreover, EFL teachers’ perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding practices were significantly different with regard to the textbooks taught and the context of teaching. That is, EFL teachers teaching American English File, Touchstone, and Top Notch perceived to employ monitoring and scaffolding practices more than those teaching Prospect and Vision. In addition, EFL teachers in language institutes demonstrated significantly higher degrees of perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding than high school EFL teachers. Furthermore, the findings of

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Assessment for learning is a means whereby teachers can make their classroom assessment more focused on learners’ achievement. There is ample evidence that increased use of assessment for learning results in higher quality learning. The authors in this study investigated Iranian EFL teachers’ perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding practice of assessment for learning as a function of the context of teaching and the textbooks taught. Likewise, the barriers in the way of implementation of assessment for learning were explored. The results demonstrated that the practices in question differed with regard to the context of teaching and the textbooks taught.
semi-structured interviews suggested that EFL teachers in high schools encountered more barriers in the way of implementation of assessment for learning. The key implications of findings for the implementation of assessment for learning practices are also addressed.

**Subjects:** Teaching Methodology & Practice; Bilingualism - Second Language; Bilingualism / ESL; English; Language Teaching & Learning

**Keywords:** Assessment for learning; monitoring; scaffolding; EFL teachers; teaching context; textbooks; barriers

2. Introduction

It is a common practice in classrooms that teachers evaluate their students’ progress employing assessment of learning and formative assessment (Afitska, 2014). The former, otherwise known as summative assessment viewed as being a term-test happening at the end of a learning cycle (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010) has been more widely in use (Ataç, 2012). Recently, however, given the integration of assessment and instruction, assessment for learning (henceforth, AFL) has been advanced (Harlen, 2006). Accordingly, assessment and learning are inextricably intertwined and assessment is seen as a tool for nurturing student learning (Davison & Leung, 2009; Stiggins, 2008). The shift from assessment of learning toward a more alternative assessment resulted from the introduction of assessment for learning by Black and Wiliam (1998) and also the formation of Assessment Reform Group in 1998 (Broadfoot et al., 2002). In the meantime, researchers acknowledged the pivotal role of AFL in student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In light of the new assessment stance, the interrelationship between teaching, learning, and assessment has gained ground (Lee, 2007). This is indeed in tune with the assessment bridge where assessment, teaching, learning, and curriculum are interwoven to aid learning. In the language teaching context, the term assessment bridge is also understood to be classroom-based area linking language assessment and second language acquisition with the hoped-for learning outcomes (Colby-Kelly & Turner, 2007).

However, the paradigm shift turned the spotlight on the significance of studying AFL. More importantly, despite a wealth of studies on AFL in mainstream education, it has not figured prominently in language teaching studies and remained mostly un researched. Moreover, notwithstanding a rich portfolio of empirical research studies on factors enhancing the effective implementation of AFL, teacher and learners seem unable to reap all the potential promises of AFL (Loveau & Allal, 2016). In addition, research has underscored challenges encountered by EFL teachers on the path towards the implementation of AFL. Inspired by these gaps, we attempted to explore Iranian EFL teachers’ AFL perceptions drawing a linkage between AFL practices and variables including textbooks taught and the context of teaching (language institutes vs. high schools). Of the central themes of AFL, scaffolding and monitoring were investigated in the present study. These two salient components of AFL according to Pat-El, Tillema, Segers, and Vedder (2013) encompass most of the principles of AFL as mentioned in the literature. More specifically, we sought answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent do EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes perceive to adopt monitoring and scaffolding practices of assessment for learning?
2. Are there significant differences between Iranian EFL teachers perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding with respect to textbooks taught?
3. Are there significant differences between Iranian EFL teachers perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding with respect to the context of teaching?
4. What are the barriers to the implementation of assessment for learning practices?
3. Literature review

3.1. Assessment for learning
Assessment for learning is defined as a process by which evidence of learning is gleaned from the classroom by teachers as well as students. Drawing on such evidence, teachers identify where students stand in their learning route, where they need to be, and how to get there (Broadfoot et al., 2002). Assessment for learning refers to assessments undertaken by teachers throughout instruction in order to diagnose students’ problems, plan next steps in teaching, and provide them with feedback to improve the learning process (Stiggins, Arter, Chappius, & Chappius, 2004).

As put forth by Stiggins (2002), the central theme of AFL is that assessment serves to enhance student learning. Another underlying premise of assessment for learning is that crucial decisions in the classroom are made by students (Berry, 2008). This accentuates the role of learner autonomy in the AFL-styled approach (Tsagari, 2016).

Conducted informally as teachers’ teaching styles, AFL is integrated into the teaching and learning process (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2003). In effect, AFL is a formative and developmental assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Recently, however, a distinction is drawn between AFL and formative assessment (Roos & Hamilton, 2005). As a case in point, the former, provides descriptive feedback to students, while the latter centers on evaluative feedback (Stiggins, 2002). Additionally, AFL has always learning-oriented goals, whereas formative assessment does not necessarily serve the purpose of enhancing students’ learning (Broodfoot et al., 1999). Wiliam (2011) endorses the idea that there is no clear consensus about the definitions of formative assessment and AFL. Along the same lines, Broadfoot et al. (2002) and Black and Wiliam (1998) maintain that AFL is characterized by several practices including classroom questioning, self-assessment, peer-assessment, and feedback/feedforward. These practices were subsumed under two main themes i.e. scaffolding and monitoring (Pat-El et al., 2013). Overall, AFL integrates assessment into instruction and enables teachers to use assessment information to make necessary adjustments in their instruction. In like manner, AFL makes learners modify their learning processes (Pat-El et al., 2013). It also actively directs students learning based on their current level of attainment (Chappuis & Chappuis, 2007).

Assessment for learning works hand in hand with assessment of learning serving different purposes and priorities (Davison & Leung, 2009). Assessment of learning summarizes what language learners acquire during a course. It is usually loaded towards the end of the semester e.g. final exams or proficiency tests (Brown, 2004). In other words, assessment of learning refers to any assessment activity which results in a grade serving to inform student achievement (Irons, 2007). In contrast to assessment of learning, assessment for learning is characterized by questioning, feedback, sharing quality criteria, and learner self-assessment (Wiliam, 2000). Of these concepts, feedback and self-assessment stand out as two of the most striking differences (Harlen, 2005; Wiliam, 2000). In an assessment for learning culture, even summative assessments of the students’ language skills should also be used formatively to give constructive student feedback and enhance learning (Davison & Leung, 2009).

3.2. Monitoring and scaffolding
Scaffolding is a collaborative and interactional process by which the teacher assists the student in the form of hints, encouragement, and cognitive structures to carry out a particular learning task with explicit learning goals (Joshi & Sasikumar, 2012). Instructional scaffolding such as interactional dialogues can help learners achieve learning targets as they are challenging and supporting. Teachers scaffold learners by involving them in the interaction, clarifying examples, and reflecting on their responses (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). Teachers take on these scaffolds to promote students’ knowledge in order to take ownership of their learning (Joshi & Sasikumar, 2012). Scaffolding as an integral part of AFL aligns teaching for optimizing learning and makes students enjoy greater autonomy in the learning process (Black & Wiliam, 1998). According to Pat-El et al. (2013), scaffolding entails
strategies that determine learning goals and criteria as well as classroom questioning which are primarily instruction-oriented processes. Adjusting language teaching to learners’ level, providing guidance and descriptive feedback to language learners, using questioning techniques, encouraging language learner questioning, and creating language group work activities and discussions are among the scaffolding practices that language teachers employ in the classroom.

Monitoring, on the other hand, embraces assessment practices that deal with feedback and self-monitoring which share a common intent to maximize learning (Pat-El et al., 2013). To Lee and Mak (2014), monitoring taps into learners’ strengths and weaknesses in learning regularly. In a similar vein, Pat-El, Tillema, Segers, and Vedder (2015) hold that during monitoring, teachers examine student learning progress, enhance their self-monitoring, and identify challenges and opportunities to improve learning. Wragg (2004) views monitoring as an integral part of the informal assessment that enables the teacher to realize how instruction is taking place and what should be done when guidance is needed. Taken together, AFL serves to monitor learner’s progress toward an intended goal (Clark, 2012).

3.3. Empirical studies on AFL

A few studies have touched upon AFL in second language acquisition (e.g., Alavi & Dashtestani, 2015; Colby, 2010; Colby-Kelly & Turner, 2007; Gan, Liu, & Yang, 2017; Nasr, Bagheri, Sadighi, & Rassaei, 2018; Oz, 2014; Sardareh, 2014). One of the first studies on the implementation of AFL in the classroom was of Colby-Kelly and Turner (2007) who investigated the use of formative assessment and AFL in an L2 classroom in pre-university English for academic purposes classes in Quebec. Employing a mixed-methods approach including curriculum document analysis, questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations, they found that teachers strongly supported the use of formative assessment practices. Furthermore, they discovered that language teachers preferred to adopt AFL practices including classroom monitoring, written feedback, modeling answers, self-assessment, and peer-assessment for written assignments. Evidence of assessment bridge was also observed in their study.

Along the same lines, Colby (2010) presented an exploratory study investigating the effects of employing AFL practices in an L2 classroom setting where AFL principles were implemented in two pre-university English for academic purposes classes in Quebec. The study centered on the learning of would and will as a tool for investigating AFL. The study discovered some instances of the assessment bridge. The results suggested that the application of AFL strategies may improve the learning of would and will.

Furthermore, Sardareh (2014) investigated the implementation of AFL by first and second-year primary school ESL teachers in Malaysia. More specifically, she studied how ESL teachers practiced classroom questioning and discussion during AFL and how they provided language learners with formative feedback. The results of her qualitative study indicated that teachers asked many questions to build a learning community in the classroom. She also found that most of the teachers’ questions did not encourage reflective thinking.

Pat-El et al. (2013) constructed and validated a self-report on AFL questionnaire for both teachers and students. They developed the AFL questionnaire in two subscales of monitoring and scaffolding. The questionnaire was verified employing confirmatory factor analysis using EQS. They concluded that the questionnaire could be useful for both teachers and students in finding out assessment practices in the classroom.

Concerning AFL barriers facing EFL teachers, Alavi and Dashtestani (2015) studied obstacles to the implementation of formative assessment in English for academic purposes instruction in Iran. According to the triangulated findings of their questionnaire and interviews, the lack of formative assessment knowledge and the lack of time were reported as the main challenges facing teachers.
Exploring prospective EFL learners' perceptions of assessment for learning practices as a function of their learning approaches, Gan et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study in three different mainland China and Hong Kong universities. They found a significant positive correlation between language learners' AFL perceptions and their propensity to employ an achieving or deep approach to learning.

There are two studies investigating EFL teachers' scaffolding and monitoring practices in terms of their demographic features (e.g., Nasr et al., 2018; Oz, 2014). In the quantitative study by Oz (2014), Turkish teachers' practices of AFL in English as a foreign language setting were investigated as a function of variables including years of teaching experience, gender, and public vs. private school context. Employing Pat-El et al.'s (2013) AFL questionnaire, he discovered significant differences in Turkish EFL teachers' AFL practices, especially monitoring with respect to years of teaching experience, gender, and the context of teaching i.e. private vs. public schools.

Nasr et al. (2018) investigated Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of assessment for learning practices, namely scaffolding, and monitoring. They also examined EFL teachers' perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding as a function of their years of teaching experience, academic degree, and proficiency levels taught. Adopting a triangulation mixed method approach, they found that a great majority of EFL teachers adopted scaffolding and monitoring practices of AFL. Moreover, the results of their quantitative phase obtained from the administration of Pat-El et al.'s (2013) AFL questionnaire indicated no significant differences between EFL teachers' perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding practices regarding the demographic characteristics in question. However, they did not examine EFL teachers' AFL practices as regards textbooks taught and the context of teaching. It is worth mentioning that they validated the factor structure of Pat-El et al.'s (2013) AFL questionnaire in the context of language teaching in Iran using confirmatory factor analysis via Amos.

4. Methodology
To answer the research questions of the current study, a mixed methods approach was followed. This approach is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data obtained from a self-report questionnaire followed up with the collection and analysis of semi-structured interview data. According to Creswell (2015), survey research is utilized when the researcher intends to analyze opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population in the form of variables within a study. Likewise, research exploring teachers’ perspectives concerning assessment has often hinged on the use of questionnaires (Brown, 2004; Hargreaves, 2005).

4.1. Participants
The sample of the quantitative phase was comprised of 384 Iranian EFL teachers (199 females and 185 males) working in language institutes and high schools in Iran. We used convenience sampling to select participant teachers in the study. Their ages ranged from 25 to 60.

As for the participants in the qualitative phase, 40 EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes were selected from among respondents to the questionnaire who expressed their willingness to take part in semi-structured interviews. Maximum heterogeneity sampling (Dörnyei, 2007) was applied to select the participants for this stage.

Table 1 presents the profiles of EFL teachers who participated in the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study.

4.2. Setting
EFL teachers were selected from two educational contexts including language institutes and high schools.
4.2.1. Language institutes
Language institutes are private institutions that provide English instruction to students to improve their English at all proficiency levels with different age ranges. Language learners in language institutes may include a wide range of people including students in different educational settings or others wishing to improve their language skills.

4.2.2. High schools
High schools are educational centers affiliated with the Ministry of Education of Iran.

4.3. Data-collection procedures
The data for the quantitative phase were collected through a questionnaire administered on a popular social media network called Telegram through which we could capture a wide range of EFL teachers across the country. To this end, an invitation, as well as a link to the questionnaire, was posted in Telegram groups related to EFL teachers. They were requested to participate in the survey study taking 5 minutes to accomplish. The data collection lasted approximately 10 months starting from June 2017 and ending in April 2018.

Besides, semi-structured interviews were conducted after the participants completed the questionnaire. The goal was to cross-validate the questionnaire results and to explore barriers to the use of AFL in high schools and language institutes. The interviews took a period of three months.

For the purpose of confidentiality and anonymity of the participant teachers, the codes of HT1-20, LT1-20 were allocated for high school and language institute teachers, respectively. We conducted 40 interviews, of which 10 were on the phone. Face to face interviews were done in EFL teachers’ offices in high schools and language institutes. All the interviews were performed in Persian (participants’ native language). Each interview lasted between 20 to 25 minutes and was recorded with their permission.

4.4. Instruments
The instrument for the quantitative phase of the study was a validated questionnaire (see Appendix A) adapted from Pat-El et al. (2013) consisting of two parts. The first section of the questionnaire captures specific demographic characteristics. The second part consists of 28 statements measuring two salient constructs of AFL, namely monitoring (16 items) and scaffolding (12 items) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It is worth mentioning that minor changes were made to the questionnaire to fit the language teaching context. For instance, the words, “language” and “English”, “language institutes/high schools” were included where appropriate. However, the number and order of the items remained the same.

| Table 1. EFL teachers’ profiles |
|-------------------------------|
| Demographics | Interviews | Questionnaire | Description |
| Gender       | 21         | 185          | Male        |
|             | 19         | 199          | Female      |
| Institution | 20         | 220          | Institutes  |
|             | 20         | 164          | High schools|
|             | 10         | 88           | Prospect    |
| Textbooks taught | 10      | 75           | Vision      |
|               | 7          | 80           | American English File |
|               | 8          | 63           | Top Notch   |
|               | 5          | 78           | Touchstone  |

Nasr et al., Cogent Arts & Humanities (2019), 6: 1646691
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Moreover, semi-structured interviews were performed with 40 EFL teachers working in high schools and language institutes. The interview questions are given in Appendix B.

4.5. Reliability of the instrument
The internal consistency using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the whole questionnaire was calculated to be .87. Likewise, the internal consistency of the two subscales of the questionnaire i.e. perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding turned out to be .86 and .84, respectively. Thus, the questionnaire was deemed reliable according to an acceptable reliability coefficient of .70 (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

4.6. Data analysis
The data were analyzed quantitatively. Statistical data analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 24. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The inferential statistics employed included a one-way ANOVA as well as an independent samples t-test. The former was run to compare five groups of EFL teachers teaching five different textbooks. The latter, however, was utilized to compare two groups of EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes.

In addition, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dörnyei, 2007) was employed for the analysis of main patterns within the semi-structured interview data. For this purpose, the data were first transcribed and repeatedly reviewed in Persian by the main researcher. Recurrent words and phrases were then coded and analyzed on a semantic level to form themes and sub-themes. The themes were repeatedly refined resulting in the generation of final themes and names. The themes unearthed from the interviews were reviewed by another researcher in the study and modifications were made. Moreover, for the purpose of reporting, exemplary quotes, the themes, and their related sub-themes were translated into English by the main researcher. Care was taken to preserve the original meaning. Then, a certified English translator was asked to check the English translations for accuracy.

5. Results

5.1. Results of the first research question
To what extent do EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes perceive to adopt monitoring and scaffolding practices?

Descriptive statistics were employed to address the extent to which EFL teachers perceived to employ AFL practices. Table 2 depicts the results of the descriptive statistics of perceived AFL practices of high school EFL teachers.

Following Table 2, the highest mean score was ascribed to item 21 (Mean = 4.40). Likewise, Item 22 (Mean = 4.40), and Item 11 (Mean = 4.38) were perceived to be extensively adopted by EFL teachers in high schools. The lowest mean scores of AFL practices of high school EFL teachers were obtained for item 6 (Mean = 4.12), item 19 (Mean = 4.11), and item 3 (Mean = 4.09).

Here again, as depicted in Table 3, the same practices i.e. item 22 (Mean = 4.60), item 11 (Mean = 4.57), and item 21 (Mean = 4.52) were observed to be extensively employed by EFL teachers in language institutes. Moreover, the lowest mean scores pertained to items 6 (Mean = 4.29), 16 (Mean = 4.27), and 5 (Mean = 4.27).

It is evident that item 6 was perceived to be least widely implemented by EFL teachers in high schools (Mean = 4.12) and language institutes (Mean = 4.29). The mean scores obtained for the least and the most frequent AFL practices of the two groups are in the vicinity of the maximum values indicating that the EFL teachers put a high premium on AFL practices.
| Items                              | N  | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------------|----|------|----------------|
| Item 21                           | 164| 4.40 | .603           |
| By asking questions during class, I help my students gain an understanding of the content taught. |
| Item 22                           | 164| 4.40 | .572           |
| I am open to student contribution in my language class. |
| Item 11                           | 164| 4.38 | .620           |
| I give students guidance and assistance in their language learning. |
| Item 10                           | 164| 4.36 | .595           |
| I encourage my students to improve their language learning processes. |
| Item 8                            | 164| 4.34 | .659           |
| I inform my students about their strong points concerning language learning. |
| Item 9                            | 164| 4.31 | .582           |
| I inform my students about their weak points concerning language learning. |
| Item 28                           | 164| 4.30 | .628           |
| I can recognize when my students reach their language learning goals. |
| Item 7                            | 164| 4.30 | .619           |
| I encourage students to reflect upon their learning processes and how to improve their learning. |
| Item 12                           | 164| 4.28 | .670           |
| I discuss language learning assignments with my students to help them understand the content better. |
| Item 18                           | 164| 4.27 | .620           |
| I provide my students with guidance to help them gain an understanding of the content taught. |
| Item 23                           | 164| 4.27 | .656           |
| I allow my students to ask each other questions using English during class. |
| Item 13                           | 164| 4.26 | .605           |
| I discuss with my students the progress they have made in learning English. |
| Item 14                           | 164| 4.24 | .608           |
| After an assessment, I inform my students on how to improve their weak points. |
| Item 17                           | 164| 4.24 | .563           |
| I adjust my language teaching whenever I notice that my students do not understand a topic. |
| Item 26                           | 164| 4.24 | .635           |
| My students know what the evaluation criteria for their work are. |
| Item 24                           | 164| 4.23 | .620           |
| I ensure that my students know what areas they need to work on in order to improve their results. |
| Item 27                           | 164| 4.21 | .492           |
| I ensure that my students know what they can learn from their assignments. |
| Item 20                           | 164| 4.20 | .616           |
| I ask questions in a way my students understand. |
| Item 4                            | 164| 4.19 | .526           |
| I involve my students in thinking about how they want to learn English at the language institute/high school. |
| Item 25                           | 164| 4.17 | .582           |
| I give my students opportunities to ask questions. |
| Item 1                            | 164| 4.16 | .629           |
| I encourage my students to reflect upon how they can improve their language learning assignments. |

(Continued)
To cross-validate the results of the first research question, we interviewed 40 EFL teachers (20 high school teachers and 20 language institute teachers). Our findings generally substantiated the results of the questionnaire. To put it better, EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes reported being strongly in favor of the same AFL practices including questioning, giving guidance, and encouraging student contribution. Concerning the least widely adopted AFL practices, we observed variations among EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes with the former being less favorably disposed toward metacognitive practices of AFL, namely monitoring and planning. For instance, EFL teachers in high schools did not feel obliged to make their students reflect on the language learning process. Additionally, they did not involve students in deciding their own language learning objectives.

An overwhelming majority of EFL teachers in language institutes (80%) held strongly favorable attitudes toward AFL and reported integrating AFL practices into their instruction. Few teachers (10%) however, did not seem to be adequately aware of the theory and practices of AFL. The remaining 10 percent of EFL teachers in language institutes held both favorable and unfavorable attitudes toward AFL. To wit, they greatly supported AFL practices including questioning, group work while they were not heedful of those associated with identifying learners’ weaknesses or practicing self-reflection.

As for EFL teachers in high schools, the interview findings demonstrated that the majority of them were in favor of scaffolding rather than monitoring practices. However, EFL teachers in high schools encountered more serious obstacles to the implementation of AFL practices than did EFL teachers in language institutes.

| Items                                                                 | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|---------------|
| Item 15: I discuss with my students how to utilize their strengths to improve on their language learning assignments. | 164 | 4.16 | .589          |
| Item 16: Together with my students, I consider ways on how to improve on their weak points. | 164 | 4.13 | .628          |
| Item 5: I give my students the opportunity to decide on their language learning objectives. | 164 | 4.12 | .644          |
| Item 2: After a test, I discuss the answers given with each student. | 164 | 4.12 | .594          |
| Item 6: I ask my students to indicate what went well and what went badly concerning their assignments. | 164 | 4.12 | .640          |
| Item 19: During my class, students are given the opportunity to show what they have learned. | 164 | 4.11 | .576          |
| Item 3: While working on their language learning assignments, I ask my students how they think they are doing. | 164 | 4.09 | .621          |

Valid N (listwise) 164
| Items | N  | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------|----|------|----------------|
| Item 22 | 220 | 4.60 | .526 |
| Item 11 | 220 | 4.57 | .581 |
| Item 21 | 220 | 4.52 | .577 |
| Item 8 | 220 | 4.52 | .576 |
| Item 28 | 220 | 4.52 | .527 |
| Item 10 | 220 | 4.52 | .585 |
| Item 9 | 220 | 4.50 | .608 |
| Item 17 | 220 | 4.49 | .577 |
| Item 12 | 220 | 4.49 | .608 |
| Item 23 | 220 | 4.46 | .584 |
| Item 24 | 220 | 4.46 | .599 |
| Item 19 | 220 | 4.40 | .601 |
| Item 13 | 220 | 4.40 | .577 |
| Item 27 | 220 | 4.40 | .560 |
| Item 18 | 220 | 4.40 | .622 |
| Item 26 | 220 | 4.40 | .607 |
| Item 4 | 220 | 4.39 | .551 |
| Item 14 | 220 | 4.39 | .627 |
| Item 20 | 220 | 4.39 | .656 |
| Item 25 | 220 | 4.38 | .612 |
| Item 1 | 220 | 4.38 | .604 |

(Continued)
5.2. Results of the second research question

Are there significant differences between Iranian EFL teachers perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding with respect to the textbooks taught?

As there are five independent variables i.e. five textbooks, a one-way ANOVA was performed to investigate the second research question. The results of the descriptive statistics and the one-way ANOVA are depicted in Tables 4 and 5.

According to Table 4, Prospect (Mean = 4.21) and Vision (Mean = 4.21) gained the lowest mean scores with regard to perceived monitoring. In addition, the lowest mean scores concerning perceived scaffolding were ascribed to Prospect (Mean = 4.24) and Vision (Mean = 4.26).

To examine whether there were significant differences in the mean scores on dependent variables across the five groups, a one-way between groups ANOVA was run, the results of which are shown in Table 5.

Following Table 5, the difference between the textbooks taught was significant for both perceived monitoring (sig. = .000, p < .05) and perceived scaffolding (sig. = .000, p < .05). The effect size using eta squared which was calculated by dividing the sum of squares for between-groups by the total sum of squares (Pallant, 2010) turned out to be .063 and .076 for monitoring and scaffolding, respectively. The values obtained indicate a moderate effect for group comparisons (Cohen, 1988).

Given the significant differences, post hoc Tukey was employed to locate the differences among the means. As shown in Table 6, the asterisks assigned to Vision and Prospects are indicative of significant differences between the textbooks taught. Consequently, they were examined for further elaboration. Tukey post hoc testing revealed that the mean scores for Prospect
Vision (Mean = 4.21, SD = .34) and Vision (Mean = 4.26, SD = .32) differed significantly. However, EFL teachers’ perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding did not differ significantly with respect to other textbooks taught including American English File, Top Notch, and Touchstone.

5.3. Results of the third research question

Are there significant differences between Iranian EFL teachers perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding with respect to the context of teaching?

In the next step, an independent samples t-test was run to determine if there were significant differences between the two groups’ means (language institute and high school) in terms of monitoring and scaffolding practices. The results of the descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-test are shown in Tables 7 and 8.

| N  | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error |
|----|------|----------------|------------|
| Monitoring | Top Notch | 63 | 4.4177 | .34976 | .04407 |
|       | Touchstone | 78 | 4.3918 | .37101 | .04201 |
|       | American English File | 80 | 4.3859 | .32128 | .03592 |
|       | Prospect | 88 | 4.2188 | .34220 | .03648 |
|       | Vision | 75 | 4.2175 | .3284 | .03843 |
|       | Total | 384 | 4.3211 | .35314 | .01802 |
| Scaffolding | Top Notch | 63 | 4.4709 | .38775 | .04885 |
|       | American English File | 80 | 4.4552 | .37384 | .04180 |
|       | Touchstone | 78 | 4.4316 | .32670 | .03699 |
|       | Vision | 75 | 4.2405 | .34031 | .03628 |
|       | Prospect | 88 | 4.2405 | .34031 | .03628 |
|       | Total | 384 | 4.3655 | .36187 | .01847 |

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of EFL teachers’ perceived scaffolding and perceived monitoring concerning the textbooks taught in descending order

| Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----|-------------|---|------|
| Monitoring | Between Groups | 3.041 | 4 | .760 | 6.442 | .000 |
|       | Within Groups | 44.724 | 379 | .118 |
|       | Total | 47.764 | 383 | |
| Scaffolding | Between Groups | 3.825 | 4 | .956 | 7.822 | .000 |
|       | Within Groups | 46.328 | 379 | .122 |
|       | Total | 50.153 | 383 | |

Table 5. One-way ANOVA to compare EFL teachers’ perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding concerning the textbooks taught

(Mean = 4.21, SD = .34) and Vision (Mean = 4.21, SD = .34) were significantly different from the other textbooks in terms of perceived monitoring. Similar results were obtained from the post hoc comparisons of the textbooks in terms of perceived scaffolding; the mean score of Prospect (Mean = 4.24, SD = .34) and Vision (Mean = 4.26, SD = .32) differed significantly. However, EFL teachers’ perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding did not differ significantly with respect to other textbooks taught including American English File, Top Notch, and Touchstone.
Table 6. Post Hoc Test of Tukey on EFL teachers’ perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding concerning the textbooks taught

| Dependent Variable | (I) Textbook | (J) Textbook | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------|------|------------------------|
|                    |              |              |                       |            |      | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Monitoring         | Prospect     | Vision       | .00125                | .05398     | 1.000 | -.1467      | .1492       |
|                    | American English File | -1.16719* | .05307 | .015 | -3.126 | -0.217 |
|                    | Top Notch    | -1.19891*   | .05669                | .015 | 1.000 | -3.543      | -0.435      |
|                    | Touchstone   | -1.17308*   | .05342                | .011 | 1.000 | -3.195      | -0.267      |
|                    | Vision       | Prospect    | -.00125               | .05398     | 1.000 | -.1492      | .1467       |
|                    | American English File | -1.16844* | .05521 | .021 | -.3198 | -.0171 |
|                    | Top Notch    | -1.20016*   | .05871                | .016 | 1.000 | -.3611      | -.0392      |
|                    | Touchstone   | -1.17433*   | .05555                | .016 | 1.000 | -.3266      | -.0221      |
|                    | American English File | Prospect | .16719* | .05307 | .015 | .0217 | .3126 |
|                    | Vision       | .16844*     | .05521                | .021 | 1.000 | .0171       | .3198       |
|                    | Top Notch    | -.03172     | .05786                | .016 | 1.000 | -.1903      | .1269       |
|                    | Touchstone   | -.00589     | .05466                | .016 | 1.000 | -.1557      | .1439       |
|                    | Top Notch    | Prospect    | .19891*               | .05669     | .005 | .0435       | .3543       |
|                    | Vision       | .20016*     | .05871                | .006 | 1.000 | .0392       | .3611       |
|                    | American English File | .03172 | .05786 | .016 | .1269 | .1903 |
|                    | Touchstone   | .02583      | .05819                | .016 | 1.000 | -.1337      | .1853       |
|                    | Touchstone   | Prospect    | .17308*               | .05342     | .011 | .0267       | .3195       |
|                    | Vision       | .17433*     | .05555                | .016 | 1.000 | .0221       | .3266       |
|                    | American English File | .00589 | .05466 | .016 | -.1439 | .1557 |
|                    | Top Notch    | -.02583     | .05819                | .016 | 1.000 | -.1853      | .1337       |
| Scaffolding        | Prospect     | Vision      | -.02391               | .05494     | .093 | -.1745      | .1267       |
|                    | American English File | -.21468* | .05401 | .001 | -.3627 | -.0666 |
|                    | Top Notch    | -.23037*    | .05770                | .001 | 1.000 | -.3885      | -.0722      |
|                    | Touchstone   | -.19109*    | .05437                | .004 | 1.000 | -.3401      | -.0421      |

(Continued)
| Dependent Variable | (I) Textbook | (J) Textbook | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------|------|------------------------|
|                    |              |              | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |      |                        |
|                    | Vision       | Prospect     | .02391     | .05494     | .993 | -.1267                 | .1745 |
|                    | Vision       | American English File | -.19076* | .05619     | .007 | -.3448                 | -.0367 |
|                    | Vision       | Top Notch    | -.20646*   | .05975     | .006 | -.3702                 | -.0427 |
|                    | Vision       | Touchstone   | -.16718*   | .05654     | .027 | -.3222                 | -.0122 |
|                    | American English File | Prospect     | .21468*   | .05401     | .001 | .0666                  | .3627 |
|                    | American English File | Vision      | .19076*   | .05619     | .007 | .0367                  | .3448 |
|                    | American English File | Top Notch   | -.01569   | .05889     | .999 | -.1771                 | .1457 |
|                    | American English File | Touchstone | .02358   | .05563     | .993 | -.1289                 | .1761 |
|                    | Top Notch    | Prospect     | .23037*   | .05770     | .001 | .0722                  | .3885 |
|                    | Top Notch    | Vision       | .20646*   | .05975     | .006 | .0427                  | .3702 |
|                    | Top Notch    | American English File | .01569   | .05889     | .999 | -.1457                 | .1771 |
|                    | Top Notch    | Touchstone   | .03928   | .05922     | .964 | -.1231                 | .2016 |
|                    | Touchstone   | Prospect     | .19109*   | .05437     | .004 | .0421                  | .3401 |
|                    | Touchstone   | Vision       | .16718*   | .05654     | .027 | .0122                  | .3222 |
|                    | Touchstone   | American English File | -.02358 | .05563     | .993 | -.1761                 | .1289 |
|                    | Touchstone   | Top Notch    | -.03928  | .05922     | .964 | -.2016                 | .1231 |

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.
As presented in Table 7, language institute teachers’ perceived monitoring mean score (Mean = 4.39) was higher than that of the high school teachers (Mean = 4.22). Likewise, the perceived scaffolding mean scores of language institute teachers and high school teachers were 4.45 and 4.25, respectively.

In order to see if the differences between language institute and high school teachers’ perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding were statistically significant, an independent t-test was used.

As depicted in Table 8, there was a significant difference between language institute and high school teachers regarding perceived monitoring (sig. = .00, p < .05). The magnitude of the differences in the means of the two groups was medium (eta squared = .05) following Cohen’s (1988) guidelines. In other words, language institute teachers took on monitoring practices (Mean = 4.39) more than high school teachers (Mean = 4.22). Likewise, there was a significant difference between language institute and high school teachers in terms of perceived scaffolding (sig. = .00, p < .05). The magnitude of the differences in the means of the two groups was large (eta squared = .07) based on Cohen’s (1988) criteria. Therefore, the results of the descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test showed that language institute teachers took on scaffolding practices (Mean = 4.45) more extensively than did high school teachers (Mean = 4.25).

5.4. Results of the fourth research question

What are the barriers to the implementation of assessment for learning practices?

In light of the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview data, four main themes were uncovered concerning barriers to the implementation of AFL. These themes included: 1) cultural barriers, 2) barriers associated with curriculum 3) barriers related to students, and 4) external barriers.

5.4.1. Cultural barriers

Cultural barriers are a set of shared attitudes, and practices associated with assessment that characterizes high schools and language institutes. The majority of EFL teachers in high schools expressed their concerns over the cultural obstacles in the way of implementing AFL in the classroom. However, few EFL teachers in language institutes described cultural issues as barriers hindering AFL integration in their instruction. The sub-themes related to the cultural barriers are described below:

5.4.1.1. Grading culture. Grading culture concerns the significance attached to grades and marks. In fact, more weight is placed on grades in high schools. Thus, the grading system was described as a formidable barrier by EFL teachers in high schools. These teachers asserted that summative assessment has deeply been integrated into the assessment system. Obsession with grades was
Table 8. Independent samples t-test to compare language institute and high school teachers’ perceived monitoring and perceived scaffolding

|                      | Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances | t-test for Equality of Means | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|                      | F | Sig. | t  | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Monitoring           |   |      |    |    |                |                |                          |       |       |
| Equal variances      | .042 | .837 | 4.840 | 382 | .000 | .17138 | .03541 | .10175 | .24100 |
| assumed              |    |      |    |    |                |                |                          |       |       |
| Scaffolding          | 2.041 | .154 | 5.559 | 382 | .000 | .19986 | .03596 | .12917 | .27056 |
|                      |      |      |    |    |                |                |                          |       |       |
| Equal variances      |    |      |    |    |                |                |                          |       |       |
| assumed              |    |      |    |    |                |                |                          |       |       |
abundantly evident in their perceptions of the barriers to AFL implementation. EFL teachers used
traditional grading practices where grades rather than learning were emphasized. By contrast, very
few EFL teachers in language institutes viewed grading culture as a real barrier.

5.4.1.2. Lack of support. EFL teachers in high schools also maintained that there was limited
administrative support and incentives for the integration of AFL practices into instruction.
Additionally, 2 out of 20 EFL teachers in language institutes mentioned that there was no focused
support for the improvement of AFL.

5.4.1.3. Lack of AFL culture. Closely related to the grading culture, EFL teachers did not feel
obligated to implement AFL practices. The lack of motivation on the side of teachers to adopt AFL
practices was also mentioned by some EFL teachers, especially in high schools. Most of the
teachers maintained that this mode of assessment is not culturally motivated.

5.4.1.4. EFL teachers’ misconceptions of AFL. In most cases, EFL teachers lacked adequate knowl-
dge concerning AFL. Some teachers conceived of AFL as a kind of formative assessment. In fact,
they were not fully informed of AFL strategies and practices. Along the same lines, EFL teachers
perceived AFL and summative assessment as disconnected processes. This misconception led to
the lower implementation of AFL.

5.4.1.5. Teacher commitment. Some EFL teachers who were partially or fully aware of AFL prac-
tices were not committed to practicing AFL in the classroom setting. They were of the opinion that
it was not their duty to implement AFL. This was evident in high school teachers where they were
required to stick to the school curriculum.

5.4.1.6. Educational expectations. Educational expectations have to do with common practices in
an educational system e.g. high schools or language institutes. The teachers in these two teaching
contexts usually pursue different learning objectives. As a result, their requirements, expectations,
and success criteria differ.

Some of the EFL teachers’ accounts concerning cultural barriers to the AFL implementation are
as follows:

Assessment for learning is not the focus of attention in my school. I need to follow the curriculum
to be able to make my students prepared for the exams to assign a grade .... .... we are not motivated
by school authorities to employ assessment for learning. (HT 12) (Grading culture) (Lack of support)

I guess, implementing assessment for learning necessitates special expertise. I don’t think it is
necessary to do it. By the way, as far as I know; it is not a common practice in high schools. (HT17)
(Lack of AFL culture)

Unfortunately, I do not have sufficient language assessment literacy. We usually administer
quizzes at the end of each unit. I guess this is conducted to evaluate the extent to which learners
have acquired new vocabulary items and grammatical structures. (LT 3) (Misconception about AFL)

In high schools, traditional assessment is still dominant and assessment for learning is not
practiced. There is actually little room, for the implementation of assessment for learning. (HT 5)
(Lack of AFL culture)

I believe my school does not hold a welcoming view on assessment for learning. That is the reason
why teachers are not strongly in favor of assessment for learning. (HT 2) (Lack of support)

Table 9 summarizes the sub-themes associated with cultural barriers.
5.4.2. Barriers associated with curriculum

The second theme concerned curriculum-related issues. Overall, curriculum pertains to what institutions attempt to teach which might include content, skills, practices, learning objectives, and assessment practices. Here again, EFL teachers mostly in high schools cited some issue as barriers to the AFL implementation. The most frequently reported barriers were the lack of appropriate professional development and consequently insufficient knowledge and awareness of assessment for learning.

5.4.2.1. Insufficient professional development and in-service training. An overwhelming majority of teachers in high schools reported that they were not sufficiently provided with quality training and professional development opportunities concerning assessment for learning principles and practices. Moreover, they attributed their inability to use AFL to insufficient in-service training courses on assessment-related issues.

5.4.2.2. Curriculum. Curricular barriers refer to the constraints of centralized curricula and textbooks use deterring EFL teachers from embedding AFL practices into their curriculum at the classroom level. They believed that AFL can narrow the curriculum to content areas and skills which are not usually covered at the end of the term tests. As such, they needed to stick to the classroom curriculum set by policymakers.

5.4.2.3. Pace of instruction. Some teachers in high schools mentioned that they could not practice AFL extensively because they needed to maintain a brisk pace of instruction.

5.4.2.4. Teaching methods. A great majority of EFL teachers in high schools pointed out that traditional teaching methods in high schools affected their choice of assessment selection. They held that there was a mismatch between traditional teaching methods adopted in high schools and new modes of assessment, namely assessment for learning.

5.4.2.5. Inconsistent assessment criteria. In some cases, EFL teachers in high schools complained about the lack of robust and clear alternative assessment criteria i.e. assessment for learning laid down by curriculum developers and syllabus designers. They believed this would result in inconsistency in the implementation of AFL.

5.4.2.6. Lack of AFL awareness. Some EFL teachers stated that they were not familiar with AFL principles. They also believed that AFL practices were not sufficiently integrated into textbooks to be implemented. These teachers seemed to have difficulty performing alternative assessment tasks to change assessment focus.
5.4.2.7. Lack of a long-term plan. A few EFL teachers referred to the lack of a definite and long-term plan that presents instructions and guidelines on AFL e.g. the amount of time needed to use AFL.

Some of the curricular barriers to AFL implementation stated by the EFL teachers are reported in the following interview extracts:

Our students are usually instructed at a quick pace, so, we are unable to take on assessment for learning practices. (HT19) (Pace of instruction)

Assessment criteria seem to be inconsistent in high schools. I don’t know much about assessment for learning practices and its theory. I really don’t know how to practice that properly … … … . We did not receive any in-service or pre-service training on professional assessment issues. (HT 11) (Lack of AFL awareness) (Lack of insufficient training) (Inconsistent assessment criteria)

We usually have training courses on a regular basis. These courses are, however, concerned with primarily teaching methods. Assessment related issues are not sufficiently addressed. (LT 14) (Lack of long-term plan)

Table 10 depicts the barriers to AFL implementation associated with curriculum and the sub-themes drawn from the interview data.

5.4.3. Barriers related to students

The third theme drawn from the interviews pertained to the barriers to AFL implementation related to students. EFL teachers pointed to four obstacles in the way of practicing AFL.

5.4.3.1. Lack of motivation. An absolute majority of EFL teachers in high schools expressed concerns that students were not highly motivated to learn English making them less focused on the AFL implementation.

5.4.3.2. Student low expectation. Closely related to students’ lack of motivation, low expectations of students in terms of language learning influenced teachers’ behaviors of AFL in the classroom. Further, they evinced little appreciation of AFL practices and held low expectations of their achievement.

5.4.3.3. Students’ proficiency levels. EFL teachers maintained that their students possessed different language proficiency levels and this hinders the effective use of AFL within classrooms where students’ learning objectives were different.

Table 10. Barriers associated with curriculum (N = 40)

| Sub-themes                                      | High schools | Language institutes |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Insufficient professional development and in-service training | 14           | 6                   |
| Curriculum                                      | 13           | 4                   |
| Pace of instruction                             | 10           | 4                   |
| Teaching methods                                | 9            | 2                   |
| Lack of AFL awareness                           | 7            | 2                   |
| Inconsistent assessment criteria                | 6            | 1                   |
| Lack of a long-term plan                        | 4            | 0                   |
5.4.3.4. Using L1. In high schools, instruction is primarily provided in the students’ native language. EFL teachers noted using L1 as a major barrier to the AFL implementation as it obviated the need to elaborate on content areas.

5.4.3.5. Insufficient interaction. Some EFL teachers in high schools held that there were not good teacher-student and student-student interactions for doing paired/group work activities in the class. Since the application of AFL practices is dependent on the interaction in question, EFL teachers were not able to completely employ AFL practices.

The following are some of the EFL teachers’ quotes on the barriers related to students:

- We prefer to speak Persian in the class to optimize instruction and learning. This will eliminate the need to apply assessment for learning practice to a great degree. (HT 4) (Using L1)

- My students are of different proficiency levels. Some of them have taken English courses in language institutes thus, requiring different learning needs. For this, it is really difficult to practice assessment for learning. (HT 7) (Students’ proficiency levels)

- When I adopt assessment for learning I feel my language learners do not appreciate that. I think it is not an obligation though. They actually prefer me to stay focused on my regular course of instruction. (LT 16) (Student low expectation) (Lack of motivation)

Table 11 illustrates the barriers associated with students.

5.4.4. External barriers
The last theme extracted from the semi-structured interviews concerned external barriers associated with AFL implementation. Here, EFL teachers referred to four main obstacles to the use of AFL in the class over which they had no control. The most significant ones were the large class size and time constraints. Further, they reported that heavy workloads and planning constraints created barriers to AFL implementation.

5.4.4.1. Class size. Class size refers to the number of students attending a class. The class size for high schools is larger than language institutes. Given large class sizes; teachers were not able to provide descriptive feedback, and scaffolds to language learners.

5.4.4.2. Time constraints. Tense time constraint was reported to be one of the obstacles for the teacher to implement AFL. EFL teachers pointed to their tight schedule for teaching English. Consequently, they believed that they were not able to practice AFL extensively within the classroom.

5.4.4.3. Planning constraints. EFL teachers stated that they mostly devoted their time to teaching. Consequently, the planning and implementation of effective assessment in particular AFL are often overlooked. In a similar vein, teachers were not involved in planning assessment. Neither could

| Table 11. Barriers related to students (N = 40) |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| **Sub-themes**                      | **High schools** | **Language institutes** |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| Frequency                                       | Frequency  | Frequency |
| Lack of motivation                              | 18         | 3          |
| Student low expectation                        | 15         | 2          |
| Students’ proficiency levels                   | 14         | 1          |
| Using L1                                       | 13         | 1          |
| Insufficient interaction                       | 9          | 0          |
they devise and present a plan for the application of AFL at their schools. They also expressed that they could not come up with assessment plans to enhance learning. However, they noted that planning for effective assessment for learning requires considerable time, study, and knowledge.

5.4.4.4. Workload. EFL teachers reported having high levels of workload in high schools. Heavy teaching workload and busy schedule prevented them from employing AFL.

The following interview excerpts were taken from three EFL teachers in high schools and one EFL teacher in a language institute:

The adoption of assessment for learning is time-consuming mainly because of the large number of students in a class ... ... . there are a lot of classroom activities to be done within a short period of time. (HT 8) (Time constraints) (Class size)

I guess, teaching multiple skills in overcrowded classes makes it difficult for EFL teachers to conduct assessment for learning ... . In fact, we are under time pressures to pursue the curriculum. (HT 10) (Class size)

I really enjoy implementing assessment for learning strategies but, I need to be on schedule, I really cannot do it due to crowded classes. Actually, I feel overwhelmed by my workload. That is why I skip practicing that. (LT 7) (Workload) (Class size)

We are not involved in scheduling the assessment process. We do not have as much control over planning for assessment-related issues. (HT 14) (Planning constraints)

The sub-categories subsumed under external barriers are illustrated in Table 12.

It is clearly evident from the interview results that EFL teachers in high schools are faced with major barriers to adopting AFL practices in the classroom. In contrast, language institute teachers seemed to overcome the barriers inherent in the high school context.

6. Discussion
The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which Iranian EFL teachers perceived to adopt monitoring and scaffolding practices of assessment for learning. It also examined the practices in question as a function the context of teaching, and the textbooks taught.

The results manifested that both groups of EFL teachers appreciated AFL practices. EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes showed to be disposed toward the same AFL practice. To wit, they drew on scaffolding practices in the classroom (items 22 and 21). This is evident particularly in AFL practices most extensively adopted by EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes. In principle, they capitalized on questioning (item 21), and opening spaces for student contribution (item 22) in the classroom. One line of explanation is that these practices are typical of language learning classes. Language teachers are usually suggested to make language learners produce the target language. In doing so, they need to pose questions to

Table 12. External barriers (N = 40)

| Sub-themes         | High schools | Language institutes |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Class size         | 16           | 4                   |
| Time constraints   | 15           | 2                   |
| Planning constraints | 10         | 3                   |
| Workload           | 9            | 2                   |
make them use the language and also help them gain a better understanding of the materials taught. One possible reason for welcoming student contributions in the classroom might be that teachers intend to make learning an enjoyable experience for language learners to motivate them to learn better. In this regard, Black and Wiliam (1998) state that scaffolding guides instruction in support of learning and makes students more independent in their learning processes. This might be another reason for the eager embrace of scaffolding practices. However, EFL teachers more likely scaffold their learners in the language learning process through questioning, providing guidance, sharing evaluation criteria, encouraging student participation, and making teaching adjustment. To Pat-El et al. (2013) such practices are instruction-oriented which realize growth. Consistent with our results, Kayi-Aydar (2013) highlighted the significance of scaffolding in language classroom settings through the negotiation of meaning and linguistic assistance.

Turning to the least widely adopted AFL practices; we realized that EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes were less inclined toward performing similar practice subsumed under monitoring practices. As a case in point, they showed to be less favorably disposed toward checking on their students while doing language assignments in the classroom (item 6). One possible reason for this as EFL teachers put in the interviews might be that they are under tense time constraints. Large class size may also result in less time for monitoring practices.

The results concerning the second research question examining EFL teachers’ perception of monitoring and scaffolding practices as a function of the textbooks taught demonstrated that there were significant differences between Prospect, Vision and the other three textbooks (Top Notch, American English File, and Touchstone). Noteworthy to mention is that the two textbooks, namely Prospect and Vision are taught in junior high schools and senior high schools, respectively.

The textbooks in high schools for more than three decades were based on the audio-lingual method, but the grammar-translation method was extensively practiced. However, the newly developed textbooks taught in high schools are communicative language teaching-oriented. Yet, some EFL teachers prefer to practice audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods of teaching (Gholami, Sarkhosh, & Abdi, 2016). As the sociocultural theory of language learning underpins AFL, its practices are of communicative nature which is dominant in language institutes. According to Gholami et al. (2016), the textbooks in high schools are highly teacher-centered while textbooks in language institutes are of communicative nature. This might be a reason for greater appreciation of scaffolding and monitoring practices on the part of EFL teachers in language institutes. In a similar vein, Kheirabadi and Alavimoghaddam (2016) pointed to the lack of supplementary materials and time constraints as the main pitfalls of the Prospect series. Nonetheless, these factors may impede the implementation of AFL. Another line of explanation for the difference is that activities, skills, objectives, and content in the textbooks in high schools (Prospect and Vision) differ from those in language institutes.

The results concerning the third research questions demonstrated that EFL teachers working in language institutes differed significantly in their perceived scaffolding and perceived monitoring practices. That is, they were more apt to implement scaffolding and monitoring practices compared to EFL teachers in high schools. This finding is entirely in agreement with Oz (2014) who discovered that perceived scaffolding and perceived monitoring practices of Turkish EFL teachers in private sectors were significantly higher than those of public schools. The difference could be attributed to some factors ranging from different curricula, course objectives, and teaching methodologies in the two contexts in question. Furthermore, teacher assessment literacy, teacher autonomy, availability of facilities, and school accountability (Brown, 2008) might be among the influential factors which could justify the difference.

On the other hand, EFL teachers in language institutes, rather than high schools are considerably supervised and monitored (Afshar & Hamzavi, 2017). Thus, they are diligent in implementing assessment for learning practices to a great extent.
Overall, in high schools, pre and in-service teacher training programs are not taken so actively and a little incentive is created for teachers to perform their jobs with professionalism. EFL teachers in language institutes, by contrast, are compelled to actively take pre/in-service teacher training programs; they receive professional development support throughout their teaching career (Gholami et al., 2016). This, however, could account for the difference between EFL teachers in high schools and language institutes in terms of perceived scaffolding and perceived monitoring practices. Furthermore, EFL teachers in language institutes capitalized on communicative teaching ingredients including questioning techniques and feedback which are less dominant in English classes in high schools.

The results of semi-structured interviews revealed that EFL teachers were faced with several types of barriers in the way of implementing scaffolding and monitoring practices of assessment for learning. The sub-themes unfolded were encapsulated into four main themes. Based on the findings, more barriers stood in the way of AFL implementation on the side of EFL teachers working in high schools. Some of the sub-themes in our study were cited as challenges in enhancing AFL in other studies. For example, Gardner (2006) reported misalignment between teaching and AFL as an obstacle to AFL adoption. Moreover, time constraints were frequently highlighted in other research studies indicating that AFL implementation demands too much time. Likewise, class size was found to be a distinguishing factor in teachers’ assessment preferences (Gonzales & Aliponga, 2011; Han & Kayan, 2014). Further, the lack of AFL awareness as stated by EFL teachers in our study is in line with misconceptions about AFL viewed as a barrier to AFL implementation by DeLuca, Luu, Sun, and Klinger (2012), Bennett (2011), and Gardner (2006).

7. Conclusion and implications
The present study, in the first place, yields novel insights into EFL teachers’ perceived scaffolding and monitoring practices of AFL. Further, it adds to a greater understanding of AFL in relation to variables including the context of teaching and the textbooks taught.

An important finding emerging from the current study is that EFL teachers working in high schools as well as language institutes assigned great value to AFL practices. More specifically, the same-self AFL practices were found to be most widely adopted by these groups of EFL teachers.

It is evident from the results that EFL teachers in language institutes drew upon AFL practices more than those in high schools to drive instruction. That is, they revealed a markedly higher level of perceived scaffolding and perceived monitoring practices. EFL teachers in high schools are therefore recommended to adopt a more severe orientation toward AFL to reap more benefits of its practices. On this point, in-service training courses on AFL can provide opportunities for EFL teachers in high schools to assimilate AFL principles into their assessment structure. In light of this finding, EFL teachers in high schools are suggested to be more mindful of monitoring and scaffolding practices.

Moreover, given the saliency and currency of both scaffolding and monitoring practices among EFL teachers in language institutes as demonstrated by the results, EFL teachers in high schools are proposed to devote more room for integration of AFL practices into their instruction.

The results indicated that there were significant differences between EFL textbooks taught in high schools and those of language institutes. On this point, syllabus designers and materials developers in the Ministry of Education should integrate AFL instances into language activities and assignments in the textbooks. These textbooks are suggested to be modified in line with recent advances in assessment namely, assessment for learning and assessment bridge. In this regard, materials writers need to construct frequent no-stakes exams and quizzes for the purpose of learning only. Through this, language learners can self-test and self-determine their strengths and
weaknesses. Furthermore, textbooks could interleave metacognitive strategies including planning, monitoring, and self-assessment to improve learning.

The knowledge gained from the challenges to the implementation of AFL in the context of language teaching particularly in high schools in Iran can pave the way for the successful transition from AFL theory to classroom practice. Armed with this knowledge, educators are well-prepared to devise possible ways of meeting these challenges. To remove barriers to AFL implementation, educational policymakers need to make initiative assessment reforms with a view to blossoming assessment for learning. Two main barriers in the way of AFL implementation namely score inflation and class size within schools call for far-reaching reforms. Hence, it is suggested that future research studies address the identified barriers and other possible ones to provoke greater AFL integration within the current context of language teaching.

The study holds significant implications for pre/in-service teacher education programs in the Ministry of Education to embrace AFL as well as assessment literacy programs to raise teachers’ awareness of AFL. The results of the study provide support for curricula in teacher professional development to encourage prospective teachers to be more appreciative of AFL practices. Specifically, teacher professional development needs to take account of AFL teachers’ perceptions of AFL practices if they are to be effectively utilized by EFL teachers. Similarly, materials developers are required to design course books and pedagogical materials for high school students in conformity with the principles of AFL. School administration should also encourage AFL teachers to keep focused on AFL practices.

Moreover, this study carries important implications for teacher educators and researchers to seek new directions to incorporate AFL into instruction to foster student learning. Equally, the findings attained from the study ascertain the significance of keeping EFL teachers abreast of AFL practices.

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Appendix A

Dear Instructor:

You are invited to complete a 28-item questionnaire as part of a Ph.D. study aiming to explore EFL teachers’ perceptions of assessment for learning practices. The questionnaire is ANONYMOUS and no personally identifiable information will be collected. Your participation in this research is entirely VOLUNTARY.

Should you have any questions about the study, please contact me at Muhammadreza.nasr@gmail.com. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Kindest Regards

Part A: Demographic information.

1. Gender:
   [ ] Female [ ] Male
2. Academic degree earned:
   [ ] Bachelors [ ] Masters [ ] Doctoral candidate/PhD
3. Please select ONE educational institution at which you teach English the most.
   [ ] English language institute [ ] High school
4. Which of the following textbooks do you teach the most?
   [ ] Prospect [ ] Vision [ ] American English File [ ] Top Notch [ ] Touchstone

Part B: EFL Teachers’ Perceptions of assessment for learning practices

Instructions:

Using the rating scale provided below, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Choose the response that comes closest to describing your opinion concerning scaffolding and monitoring practices of assessment for learning.

1 = Strongly disagree (SD)  2 = Disagree (D)  3 = Not sure (NS)  4 = Agree (A)  5 = Strongly agree (SA)

|   | Perceived monitoring                                                                 | SD 1 | D 2 | NS 3 | A 4 | SA 5 |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| 1 | I encourage my students to reflect upon how they can improve their language learning assignments. |      |     |      |     |      |
| 2 | After a test, I discuss the answers given with each student.                          |      |     |      |     |      |
| 3 | While working on their language learning assignments, I ask my students how they think they are doing. |      |     |      |     |      |
| 4 | I involve my students in thinking about how they want to learn English at the language institute/high school. |      |     |      |     |      |
| 5 | I give my students the opportunity to decide on their language learning objectives.    |      |     |      |     |      |
| 6 | I ask my students to indicate what went well and what went badly concerning their assignments. |      |     |      |     |      |
|   |   | I encourage students to reflect upon their learning processes and how to improve their learning. |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | I inform my students about their strong points concerning language learning. |   |   |
| 9 | I inform my students about their weak points concerning language learning. |   |   |
| 10 | I encourage my students to improve their language learning processes. |   |   |
| 11 | I give students guidance and assistance in their language learning. |   |   |
| 12 | I discuss language learning assignments with my students to help them understand the content better. |   |   |
| 13 | I discuss with my students the progress they have made in learning English. |   |   |
| 14 | After an assessment, I inform my students on how to improve their weak points. |   |   |
| 15 | I discuss with my students how to utilize their strengths to improve on their language learning assignments. |   |   |
| 16 | Together with my students, I consider ways on how to improve on their weak points. |   |   |
| 17 | I adjust my language teaching whenever I notice that my students do not understand a topic. |   |   |
| 18 | I provide my students with guidance to help them gain an understanding of the content taught. |   |   |
| 19 | During my class, students are given the opportunity to show what they have learned. |   |   |
| 20 | I ask questions in a way my students understand. |   |   |
| 21 | I am open to student contribution in my language class. |   |   |
| 22 | By asking questions during class, I help my students gain an understanding of the content taught. |   |   |
| 23 | I allow my students to ask each other questions using English during class. |   |   |
| 24 | I ensure that my students know what areas they need to work on in order to improve their results. |   |   |
| 25 | I give my students opportunities to ask questions. |   |   |
| 26 | My students know what the evaluation criteria for their work are. |   |   |
| 27 | I ensure that my students know what they can learn from their assignments. |   |   |
| 28 | I can recognize when my students reach their language learning goals. |   |   |
Appendix B
Interview questions
(1) Do you implement assessment for learning practices?
(2) What assessment for learning practices do you most/least widely adopt in the classroom?
(3) What are some barriers to the implementation of assessment for learning in your language institute/high school?