

University Instructors' Challenges in Using Student-Centered Assessment Strategies in EFL Classes

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تحديات مدرّسي الجامعات في استخدام استراتيجيات التقييم المتمركزة حول الطالب في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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Abstract

Student-centered assessment strategies are widely recognized for promoting active engagement, critical thinking, and learner autonomy in EFL classes; however, their implementation by university instructors presents significant challenges. This quantitative study aims to identify the major challenges that university instructors face in using these strategies in EFL classes. For data collection, a close-ended questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used, divided into four sections: systemic and

institutional difficulties, student-related difficulties, teacher-related difficulties, and logistical and classroom difficulties, each containing five items. Participants were selected through convenience sampling; data were collected from EFL instructors (N = 33) at two Iraqi public universities during the 2025–2026 academic year. A major limitation of the study is the small sample size, which limits generalizability. Responses were collected both electronically and in person over four weeks, with ethical considerations including

confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were computed using SPSS to indicate the extent of challenges. For reliability, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Findings reveal that logistical and classroom difficulties are the most prominent challenges, due to heavy workloads, large class sizes, time constraints, limited access to technology, and overcrowded curricula. These factors often lead university instructors to rely on traditional teacher-centered

assessment strategies. The study highlights the need for comprehensive interventions, including resource allocation, professional development programs, student training, and institutional reform, to enhance effective SCA implementation in Iraqi EFL university settings and better align assessment practices with modern educational goals.

Key Words: Assessment Challenges, EFL Assessment, Formative Assessment, Student-Centered Assessment, University Instructors.

والصفية، يحتوي كل قسم على خمسة عناصر. تم اختيار المشاركين باستخدام عينة ملائمة؛ وتم جمع البيانات من محاضري اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (N = 33) في جامعتين حكوميتين عراقيتين خلال العام الأكاديمي ٢٠٢٥-٢٠٢٦. أحد أهم قيود الدراسة هو صغر حجم العينة، مما يقلل من إمكانية تعميم النتائج. تم جمع الاستجابات إلكترونياً وشخصياً على مدى أربعة أسابيع، مع مراعاة الاعتبارات الأخلاقية بما في ذلك السرية، والمشاركة الطوعية، والموافقة المستنيرة. تم حساب الإحصاءات الوصفية (المتوسط والانحراف المعياري) باستخدام برنامج SPSS لتوضيح مدى التحديات. ولضمان الموثوقية، تم تقييم الاتساق الداخلي باستخدام معامل ألفا كرونباخ. تكشف النتائج أن

المُلخَص

تُعدُّ استراتيجيات التقييم المرتكزة على الطالب معروفة على نطاق واسع لتعزيز المشاركة النشطة، والتفكير النقدي، واستقلالية المتعلم في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ ومع ذلك، فإن تطبيقها من قبل المحاضرين الجامعيين يمثل تحديات كبيرة. تهدف هذه الدراسة الكمية إلى تحديد أبرز التحديات التي يواجهها المحاضرون الجامعيون عند استخدام هذه الاستراتيجيات في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. لجمع البيانات، تم استخدام استبيان مغلق يحتوي على مقياس ليكرت من خمس نقاط، مقسم إلى أربعة أقسام: الصعوبات النظامية والمؤسسية، والصعوبات المتعلقة بالطلاب، والصعوبات المتعلقة بالمعلم، والصعوبات اللوجستية

والإصلاح المؤسسي، لتعزيز تنفيذ فعال
لاستراتيجيات التقييم المرتكزة على الطالب في
الجامعات العراقية وتحقيق توافق أفضل
لممارسات التقييم مع الأهداف التعليمية الحديثة.
الكلمات المفتاحية :

التقييم التكويني، التقييم المرتكز على الطالب،
تحديات التقييم، تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة
أجنبية، المحاضرون الجامعيون.

الصعوبات اللوجستية والصفية هي أبرز
التحديات، نتيجة لأعباء العمل الثقيلة، وكبر حجم
الصفوف، وضيق الوقت، والوصول المحدود
إلى التكنولوجيا، والمناهج المزدحمة. غالبًا ما
تدفع هذه العوامل المحاضرين الجامعيين إلى
الاعتماد على استراتيجيات التقييم التقليدية
المتركزة حول المعلم. تُبرز الدراسة الحاجة
إلى تدخلات شاملة تشمل تخصيص الموارد،
وبرامج التطوير المهني، وتدريب الطلاب،

Introduction

Student-centered learning which is known also as a learner-centered teaching, is a personalized, self-directed, and constructivist approach in education (Emaliana, 2017; Kang & Keinonen, 2018; Murphy et al., 2021). It enhances collaborative, democratic, and participatory learning setting (Tabulawa, 2003; Dupin-Bryant, 2004). In practice student-centered learning is used by different teaching strategies like project-based learning, problem-solving activities, small-group discussions, flexible learning arrangements as well as student-led feedback (Tang, 2023). Different from traditional teacher-centered lectures, utilizing this approach prioritizes learning process and learners rather than content delivery and teachers (Blumberg, 2008). This

shift from instruction to learning has changed perceptions of the education process; it is no longer just a transmission of facts from teacher to students, but education is an empowering process which students construct knowledge actively (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Even though SCL (Student-centered learning) includes a variety of educational practices, Glowa and Goodell (2016) highlight four foundational principles which are: competency-based, personalized, promotes student ownership, and accessible anywhere and anytime. Though, the idealized portrayal of the SC approach has contributed to a false dichotomy formulating SCL as good and teacher-centered instruction as a bad (Del Valle, 2021). In fact, the two approaches represent opposite ends of a continuum, by a variety of

teaching practices located between them (Chen & Tsai, 2021). Student-centered learning has reformed classroom assessment role; traditional assessment associated with testing often were utilized to measure individual's knowledge of procedures and basic facts (Pellegrino, 2001). The traditional assessment typically includes multiple-choice, true/false, essay, or short-answer questions (Dikli, 2003). As a result of the chance, formative assessment has gained a prominence, reforming evaluation as an opportunity for learning not only as a tool for sorting, scoring, and classifying students (Duncan & Cohen, 2011). SC assessment focuses on authentic learning which enhance students to engage with real-world problems and construct understanding (Sturgis & Patrick, 2011). Rich et al. (2014), acknowledged five SC assessment strategies: short-answer tests, formative assessments, take-home exams, learning style inventories, and audience response systems. Universities continue to grapple with post recovery in the Iraqi education context, large class sizes, centralized ministerial oversight, and resource constraints that often reinforce

traditional, exam focuses assessment practices (Al-Aayed, 2025; AlMofti, 2020). In Iraqi universities assessment in EFL classes predominantly depend on summative, high-stakes tests like final exam as well as standardized procedures that prioritize content coverage and factual recall over formative or SC methods (Muhammad, 2019; Al-Bayan Center, 2019). Specific institutional realities contain large size classes, limited infrastructure, challenges in implementing alternative assessment amid cultural and systemic traditional assessment, heavy reliance on TCA because of workload pressures and lack of training (Al-Aayed, 2025; Sharif, 2025; AWLA, 2023).

Research Problem, aim and question

Even student-centered assessment is recognized widely for enhancing learner autonomy, active engagement, and critical thinking (Davison & Leung, 2020; Yan & Brown, 2021; Berry et al., 2021), its implementation in English as a Foreign Language class for university instructors remains a challenge. Many factors like large

class sizes (Gan et al., 2022; Muñoz-Luna & Jurado-Navas, 2023), lack of training (Alharbi, 2021; Ghosn-Chelala, 2023), lack of support from institutions (Sampson & Yoshida, 2020; Sulistyo et al., 2024), resistance by students (Ismail & Kassem, 2022), as well as heavy workloads (Gan et al., 2022; Ghosn-Chelala, 2023) cause challenges in using Student-Centered Assessment (SCA) strategies. Because of the above-mentioned reasons instructors often revert to classical or teacher-centered assessment strategies to assess students which are not align with modern educational goals (Alharbi, 2021; Yan et al., 2023). For that, it is crucial to investigate the challenges that university instructors face in using SC assessment strategies in EFL classes. The current study aims to identify the major challenges that are faced by university instructors in EFL classes in using student-centered assessment strategies. The research aims to answer the question: what are the major challenges that university instructors face when implementing student-centered assessment strategies in EFL classes? The main objective of the study is to identify: institutional

challenges, teacher-related challenges, student-related challenges, and logistical challenges. Previous studies have examined the advantages of SCA in enhancing learner autonomy, critical thinking, and engagement in EFL classes and the barriers like inadequate teacher training, large class sizes, heavy workloads, student resistance, and overcrowded classrooms. These insights often arise from teacher perceptions, mixed-methods, interviews in general EFL settings, secondary/K-12 education, or region-specific contexts (Indonesia, China, Saudi Arabia). Previous studies have not examined the major challenges of university instructors in using SCA strategies in EFL classes. The current study bridges the identified gap by focusing on the major challenges university instructors face in implementing SCA strategies in EFL classes.

Previous Studies

Several studies have examined student-centered learning in classes in regard to teaching and assessment such as a study by Nazim, M., Alzubi, A. A. F., & Fakihi, A.-H. in 2024. The research is entitled "Teachers' Awareness of Student-

Centered Pedagogy and Assessment in EFL Context" which aimed at investigating English teachers' awareness concerning student-centered pedagogy and assessment practices in EFL classes at Najran University in Saudi Arabia. As well as, exploring variations relying on demographic variables like experience, degree, gender, and specialization, and how these practices impact EFL learners' language success. To achieve the aim of the study a mixed-methods used which included a questionnaire of five-point-Likert-scale distributed to EFL faculty members to measure awareness across items. As well as, semi-structured interview with participants for qualitative insights; SPSS (Statistical Analysis for Social Sciences) program was used for data analysis. The results of the study indicated a high level of awareness among teachers with no significant demographic influences. Qualitative findings highlighted a positive relation to language success themes of engagement, encouragement, responsibility, and overall positive impact, underscoring implications for enhancing training for teachers and future practices of EFL despite gaps at Najran University. A study

by Todorova, I. in 2024 which is entitled "Student-Centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment – Student Opinion", was aimed at determining students' subjective perspectives concerning the extent to which teaching, learning and assessment at Technical University of Varna are used based on student-centered. Methodology of research involve a literature review comprehensively of indicators impacting students' perceptions, like qualities and pedagogical practices. As well as, a questionnaire which was created in 2021 by the Department of Social and Legal Sciences. Results of the study indicate strong perceptions of student-centeredness; the lectures were attractive, responsive, and respectful, using different methods and case studies, as well as enhancing international mobility and autonomy. Results concerning assessment showed that assessment was seen as transparent, and fair, and majority of students seen process as being directed toward their needs, development and aspirations. A study by Rich, J. D., Jr., Colon, A. N., Mines, D., & Jivers, K. L. in 2014 entitled "Creating Learner-Centered Assessment Strategies for Promoting Greater Student Retention

and Class Participation". Primary aim of the research was to discuss and propose six research-based strategies to shift classical assessment to learner-centered approaches which include learning experience, high-order thinking, problem-solving, ownership in learning, and dialogic instruction to promote participation and retention. Methodology of the research include a literature review concerning Bloom's taxonomy, without conducting new original research. The results shed light on the efficacy of these strategies: take-home exams foster retention, pre-class quizzes increase preparedness, short answer tests promote conceptual thinking and better performance in hard questions. The above-mentioned previous studies explored teacher's awareness and students' perspective concerning SCA without focusing on challenges university instructors face in EFL classes while using student-centered assessment strategies. The previous studies provide a useful insight into SCA strategies, but have district strengths and weaknesses like the study by Nazim et al. demonstrates strengths in research design, integrating semi-structured interview and questionnaires with

EFL teachers. However, weaknesses include heavy reliance on self-reported perceptions; the main focus on awareness and attitudes not actual barriers. Todorova (2024), presents strengths by its direct capture of students' subjective perceptions by a literature review and a questionnaire, its methodological approach focuses on learner-centered benefits from students' perspectives. Weakness of the study lies in its emphasis on student opinion without empirical observation of classroom practices. Rich et al. (2014), contributes strengths by a theoretically grounded literature review relying on Bloom's taxonomy, which provide benefits for preparedness, retention, participations and conceptual thinking. Limitations of the study are the absence of original empirical research, it does not provide implementation obstacles, and instructor difficulties. The previous studies justify collectively current study by establishing the recognized value and positive perceptions of SCA in higher education and EFL classes, while exposing a critical gap in examining the practical challenges university instructors face in implementing SC assessment strategies in EFL classes.

Learner-Centered Assessment

Jonassen (2000), states that SCL demands that students set their objectives to learn and determine the activities and resources that enhance them meet those objectives. This approach starts by a central question which creates a need for certain activities and knowledge, as well as learning is a result of attempts by students to respond to the questions (Jonassen, 1999). In learner-centered teaching, assessment is used for the purpose of providing a balance between promoting learning and generating grades (Weimer, 2002). Cambourne (2002), introduced the principles of engagement in learner-centered teaching as follows:

- Students like deeply engage with demonstrations if they think that they are able to learn or do whatever is being demonstrated.
- Students like to engage with demonstrations if they think that what they have learned has potential value, use of them and purpose.
- Students like to engage with demonstrations if they are out of anxiety.
- Students like to engage with demonstrations that are given by someone that they like, admire, respect, trust, and like to emulate

(p.28). This study is guided by Schiller (2009); learner-centered framework that conceptualizes SCP and assessment. This model delivers a theoretical structure of examining how barriers disturb the elements in EFL university contexts, that cause transition from TS to SC practices.

Challenges and Solutions in Implementing Learner-Centered Pedagogy

Implementing learner-centered teaching presents a number of challenges, but each of them has solutions; one of them is teacher resistance as well as lack of training. Many teachers are accustomed to classical methods of teaching and may face challenges in shifting towards student-centered approach (Freeman et al., 2014). Hoidn & Klemenčič (2020), state that collaboration among teachers, gradual implementation, and professional development programs can help teachers to adapt. One more challenge is assessment; standardized tests fail to assess creativity and critical thinking effectively (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Brookhart (2013), state that the use of formative assessments, technology-driven evaluation tools and rubrics can provide accurate

insights into student learning. Furthermore, time constraints and rigid curricula limit the integration of active learning strategies, but block scheduling, blended learning models, and adapting curriculum flexibility can enhance deeper engagement (Prince, 2004). One more challenge in student-centered teaching is classroom management because of autonomy and increased student activity, but active monitoring, establishing structured guideline, and group working enhance maintaining order while fostering collaboration (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). Gap of technology also can be addressed by joining mobile learning as well as policies of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) (West, 2012). Another obstacle is student resistance to independent learning; some students struggle with motivation and self-direction. To solve this problem, teacher can introduce student-centered learning gradually, provide guidance and scaffolding, as well as engaging strategies like real-world applications and gamification to enhance motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Methodology

The current study adapted a quantitative research methodology to examine the challenges university instructors face in using student-centered assessment strategies in EFL classes. Quantitative research design is suited for this research purpose because it enables the systematic collection and statistical analysis of numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To collect data for the study a close-ended questionnaire designed to assess challenges in using student-centered assessment strategies. The questionnaire was employed a five-point Likert scales of 1 (Not a challenge at all) to 2 (Minor challenge), 3 (Moderate challenge), 4 (Major challenge), and 5 (Very major challenge). This form of questionnaire is recognized widely for its effectiveness in measuring perceptions and attitudes in quantitative research (Taherdoost, 2019). The items were aimed to assess challenges that are divided into four different sections of Systemic and Institutional Issues, Logistical and Classroom Difficulties, Student-Related Difficulties, and Difficulties Associated with Teachers, each

section contains at five statements. Research items were developed relying on a review of relevant literature. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small number of similar instructors for the purpose of refining reliability and clarity (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014). The study involved total of 33 university instructors in English language departments in two public Iraqi universities; 15 were from the University of Al-Hamdaniya, and 18 from Salahaddin University. Participants of the study were selected through convenience sampling, targeted instructors actively involved in EFL teaching (Sedgwick, 2013). Etikan et al (2016), state that convenience sampling is a non-probability method which is used commonly in educational research because of its efficiency and accessibility, though it may limit generalizability. Low number in this research of participants can be attributed to the unwillingness of some instructors to engage, possibly because of workload pressures, and time constraints, or concerns about sharing professional challenges (Patel et al., 2003). Despite the efforts to reach a broader sample of

participants, this limitation reflects the common issues of researchers in educational research that involves busy academic professionals; participants unwillingness is a frequent challenge (Bullo et al., 2021). The questionnaire of this study was distributed electronically and in person to instructors in the two selected university in the academic year 2025-2026. A consent form was obtained from the participants, emphasizing confidentiality and voluntary participation. Responses of the questionnaire were collected over a period of four weeks with follow-up reminders to the participants to enhance completion. Collected data of the research were analyzed through using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (IBM Corp., 2021), that is a robust tool in social science researches data analysis; facilitating inferential and descriptive statistics (Field, 2018). Descriptive statistics include, mean, standard deviation and frequencies, were computed to summarize the extent of the challenges that are reported by the instructors. This approach allowed a clear identification of minor and major challenges across the sample,

enhancing empirical support for the findings of the study. To establish content validity of the research the questionnaire items were reviewed by a number of experts in EFL assessment and education for relevance, representativeness of the construct and comprehensiveness

(Lawshe, 1975). For the purpose of reliability, internal consistency was assessed through using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, a standard measure for Likert-scale instruments in educational research (Cronbach, 1951).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	Not a challenge at all		Minor challenge		Moderate challenge		Major challenge		Very major challenge		Mean	SD
	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%		
Q1	2	6.1%	4	12.1%	10	30.3%	14	42.4%	3	9.1%	3.364	1.025
Q2	0	0.0%	8	24.2%	11	33.3%	10	30.3%	4	12.1%	3.303	0.984
Q3	0	0.0%	6	18.2%	10	30.3%	14	42.4%	3	9.1%	3.424	0.902
Q4	0	0.0%	8	24.2%	14	42.4%	11	33.3%	0	0.0%	3.091	0.765
Q5	0	0.0%	6	18.2%	12	36.4%	11	33.3%	4	12.1%	3.394	0.933
1- Systemic and Institutional Issues											3.315	0.698
Q6	2	6.1%	5	15.2%	8	24.2%	12	36.4%	6	18.2%	3.455	1.148
Q7	0	0.0%	5	15.2%	6	18.2%	22	66.7%	0	0.0%	3.515	0.755
Q8	0	0.0%	2	6.1%	17	51.5%	9	27.3%	5	15.2%	3.515	0.834
Q9	0	0.0%	6	18.2%	6	18.2%	11	33.3%	10	30.3%	3.758	1.091
Q10	0	0.0%	6	18.2%	8	24.2%	13	39.4%	6	18.2%	3.576	1.001
2- Logistical and Classroom Difficulties											3.564	0.703
Q11	0	0.0%	12	36.4%	7	21.2%	7	21.2%	7	21.2%	3.273	1.180
Q12	2	6.1%	4	12.1%	11	33.3%	11	33.3%	5	15.2%	3.394	1.088
Q13	0	0.0%	2	6.1%	7	21.2%	20	60.6%	4	12.1%	3.788	0.740
Q14	2	6.1%	4	12.1%	11	33.3%	11	33.3%	5	15.2%	3.394	1.088
Q15	2	6.1%	3	9.1%	17	51.5%	10	30.3%	1	3.0%	3.152	0.870
3- Student-Related Difficulties											3.400	0.636
Q16	5	15.2%	5	15.2%	15	45.5%	8	24.2%	0	0.0%	2.788	0.992
Q17	0	0.0%	9	27.3%	12	36.4%	11	33.3%	1	3.0%	3.121	0.857
Q18	1	3.0%	9	27.3%	14	42.4%	7	21.2%	2	6.1%	3.000	0.935
Q19	2	6.1%	5	15.2%	13	39.4%	13	39.4%	0	0.0%	3.121	0.893
Q20	0	0.0%	10	30.3%	14	42.4%	8	24.2%	1	3.0%	3.000	0.829
4- Difficulties Associated with Teachers											3.006	0.623

Data Analysis

Overall mean of 3.315 (SD = 0.698) indicates that systemic and institutional issues continue to moderately restrict the use of student-centered assessment strategies in higher education settings. The two main issues are overcrowding of curriculum with the of (3.394), and lack of institutional support for the use of student-centered assessment (mean = 3.424). University instructors are under pressure to prioritize covering content because of overburdened curricula, that leaves little time for formative or other assessment strategies. Results of table 2 illustrate that logistical and classroom difficulties are primary obstacles to the use of student-assessment strategies at Iraqi university setting. The findings show a number of connected challenges in using student-centered assessment strategies in EFL classes at university level, such as time-related limitations, heavy content-driven teaching methods, instructional workload. The mean of (3.455) indicates class large size a barrier in using SCA strategies in EFL classes; supporting the concerns regarding

the feasibility of interactive, and individualized assessment in large class sizes. The highest mean of the results which is (3.758) indicate that lack of technology and materials for online self-assessment and digital portfolios is also a challenge, closely followed by insufficient classroom technology or access for interactive assessment tasks. The results in table 3 which is about student-related difficulties indicate moderate but persistent challenges to the use of student-centered assessment strategies at university level. Overall mean score of the table 3.400, shows general agreement of respondents that students' preparedness, cultural background, and attitudes influence the effectiveness of using SCA strategies. The most prominent issue identified by respondents is lack of students' training in self and peer-assessment (mean = 3.788), the result highlights the crucial role of assessment literacy in enhancing students to engage actively in student-centered assessment practice. Both items concerning students' English proficiency and cultural reluctance to openly assess oneself or critique peers received identical mean of (3.394), showing

that these factors are perceived as significant challenges equally. Results of the table 4 indicate that teacher-related factors present moderate challenges to the use of SCA assessment strategies at university level. Overall mean of the table is 3.006 suggest a neutral to moderate level of agreement among participants, showing that while teachers do not perceive these challenges as severe, however they constitute meaningful challenges to reform assessment effectively. Results of the items, lack of expertise in designing valid SCA tools, like rubrics and difficulties in providing useful feedback after assessment are the same, showing that instructors may lack the specified pedagogical knowledge which is required to use SCA strategies in classes. Respondents of the study moderately agreed that abandoning teacher-centered assessment in classes is challenging as well as involving students in assessment practice causes raising concerns about impartiality and equality, specifically in peer-assessment. The lowest mean score of this table relate to the item which is concerning the lack of personal

training in SCA strategies (mean = 2.788). the mean falls slightly below the neutral midpoint, it shows some level of perceived insufficiency in opportunities for personal development.

Discussion

This degree of agreement shows that these issues are not seen as overwhelming, they indicate environments which are less favorable to reform assessment, that may cause student engagement, learning outcome equity and teaching efficiency. These results are consistent with related previous studies that highlight how institutional framework prioritize teacher-centered assessment over student-centered assessment (Padden & Padden, 2021). Previous studies have highlight challenges in using student-centered assessment strategies due to curriculum destiny and insufficient institutional support (National Forum, 2016; Padden & Padden, 2021; Poirier et al., 2023; West, 2020). To promote inclusive, student-centered assessment and sustainable assessment strategies in higher education, results of the study highlight the necessity of coordinated institutional

interventions like curriculum simplification, improved support structure, and more balanced strategies of assessment (Morris et al., 2021; Padden & Padden, 2021). University instructors' high enrollments increase workload and decrease opportunities for using meaningful engagement and formative feedback, often pushing instructors toward using easily graded and standardized assessments, even though they have weaker impact on critical thinking and deep learning (Carless, 2015; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Having no adequate platforms and digital tools, SCA strategies become difficult to implement (Redecker, 2017; Morris et al., 2021). The results show that without systemic institutional measures like reducing teaching loads, managing class sizes, as well as investing in assessment-related technology, the use of SCA strategies will remain challenging (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Carless, 2015; Morris et al., 2021). Without continuous guidance and structured practice, students may face challenge in evaluating their own or peers' work effectively. Previous studies have emphasized that self and peer-

assessment are learned skills rather than intuitive practices, they require ongoing support and systematic scaffolding (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Panadero et al., 2017). Linguistic challenges and cultural expectations can inhibit active engagement in reflective learning and peer assessment, particularly in multilingual or non-Western higher education settings (Carless, 2016; Leung & Kember, 2003; Panadero et al., 2019). The combined results of the table suggest that student-related difficulties are interconnected and multifaceted, language proficiency, motivational factors, encompassing assessment literacy, and cultural norms. It also indicates that while these challenges are not insurmountable, they need deliberate pedagogical strategies to address. Fostering students' assessment literacy, consistent with the literature, and confidence is crucial for sustainable and successful of using student-centered assessment strategies at university level (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Panadero et al., 2017). Previous studies have shown that without adequate practice and training, instructors may face

challenges of reliability, validity, and consistency in alternative assessment formats (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Carless et al., 2011; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). DeLuca et al., (2016) and Morris et al., (2021) state that sustained and context-specific professional development is crucial for building confidence and competences of instructors regarding the use of SCA strategies. The combined results of the table 4 suggest that teacher-related challenges are revolving around assessment literacy, interconnected, perceptions of fairness and pedagogical change. The overall mean of the table 3.006, illustrates that these issues are less pronounced than student-related challenges, logistical, and institutional, they remain significant enough to enhance assessment practices. Solving these challenges require specific professional development, institutional support, and mentoring which should aim at enhancing

fostering trust in student involvement, enhancing teachers' assessment expertise as well as simplifying gradual transitions from Tc to Sc assessment strategies (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Carless et al., 2011; DeLuca et al., 2016).

Reliability Assessment of the Research

Before presenting the results, the research tool was tested for foundational validity and reliability. A test of reliability was carried out through using Cronbach's alpha, that measures internal consistency of a construct. The recommended minimum acceptable limit of reliability "alpha" for this measure is 0.60 (Hair et al., 2003; Blbas et al., 2025; Blbas, 2019). After data collection Cronbach's alpha was estimated to assess internal consistency, and it is a scale-based reliability measure (Blbas et al., 2025; Zhong et al., 2017; Vaske et al., 2017).

Table 2 Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the Study Variables

	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Systemic and Institutional Issues	5	0.810
Logistical and Classroom Difficulties	5	0.766
Student-Related Difficulties	5	0.725
Difficulties Associated with Teachers	5	0.764
Overall	20	0.881

Table 2 shows the reliability result for all variables, the result for Cronbach 's alpha is (0.810) for Systemic and Institutional Issues, (0.766) for Logistical and Classroom Difficulties, (0.725) for Student-Related Difficulties, (0.784) for Difficulties Associated with Teachers and (0.881) for Overall.

Conclusion

The current study has shed light on the challenges that university instructors face in using student-centered assessment strategies in EFL classes. By examining instructors' perceptions from two Iraqi public universities, the study reveals that while there is a clear recognition of the importance of shifting towards student-centered assessment strategies, number of barriers hinder their using effectively. Systemic and institutional level, moderate restrictions stem from entrenched structures ordering exam-focused, high-stakes summative assessments over formative, student-involved

methods. Instructors face lack of support for using student-centered assessment strategies like peer review or portfolios. Overcrowded curricula cause pressure to instructors to focus on content coverage not meaningful assessment. These factors make an unsupportive environment to reducing student engagement, reform, and equitable outcome. Limitations of the study include small size number of participants as well as low responses from EFL instructors due to workload pressure and ignorance of responding to the questionnaire. Findings of the study indicate that logistical and classroom difficulties emerge as the most prominent

challenge. Large class sizes impact interactive or individualized assessments requiring active engagement. Time constraints driven by content demands and heavy workload, limit chances to use student-centered assessment strategies in EFL classes. Lack of technology for assessing digital portfolios or online self-assessment is also challenge in assessing students. These challenges enhance instructors toward standardized methods of assessment. Challenges related to students show moderate but significant results. Majority of students are accustomed to teacher-centered assessments, insufficient training in self-or-peer-assessment as well is the primary challenge. Difficulties related to instructors are moderate and center on professional readiness. Instructors indicate limited expertise in designing tools

such as rubric and providing constructive feedback. Shifting from teacher-centered assessment is challenging, with concerns about fairness and impartiality in student-centered process such as peer-assessment, because of bias or risks of inconsistency. In conclusion, logistical and classroom barriers are the most substantial, then student-related and systemic issues, as well as teacher challenges being less severe yet noteworthy. Student-centered assessment is achievable by comprehensive strategies: resource allocation, institutional reform, professional development, and student training. Based on the findings, it is recommended to provide professional development for students, improve institutional support, and prepare and train students for SCA strategies.

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