

Exploring Saudi University Instructors' Awareness Level of EFL Alternative Assessment in View of Saudi Vision 2030

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Abstract: The present study aimed to explore Saudi university instructors' level of awareness of English as a foreign language (EFL) alternative assessment. Participants consisted of 146 instructors from five public universities. Tools used were an electronic alternative assessment awareness inventory, attitudes scale via Google forms and a semi- structured interview. The study adopted descriptive analytical method through using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, a one-way ANOVA test and Scheffé test for post hoc comparisons. The study results indicated that the overall mean of Saudi instructors' awareness level and attitudes towards EFL alternative assessment were high. Furthermore, the results indicated that there were differences in instructors' awareness of alternative assessment and their attitudes attributed to teaching experiences. The findings proved that alternative assessment techniques were helpful to EFL learners. Instructors showed positive attitudes towards the alternative assessment and this represented an important factor in achieving the Saudi Vision 2030. In light of the above-mentioned results, pedagogical implications and recommendations were discussed.

Keywords: EFL Alternative Assessment, Awareness – Attitudes - Saudi Vision 2030

مستوى الوعي لدى أعضاء هيئة التدريس السعوديين نحو استخدام التقويم البديل في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ضوء رؤية المملكة 2030

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ملخص البحث: هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى الكشف عن درجة وعي أعضاء هيئة التدريس السعوديين واتجاهاتهم نحو استخدام التقويم البديل في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ضوء رؤية المملكة 2030. استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وبلغ عدد أفراد عينة الدراسة (146) عضو هيئة تدريس بخمس جامعات حكومية داخل المملكة العربية السعودية. لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم استخدام الاستبانة الإلكترونية، مقياس الاتجاهات والمقابلات شبه الموجهة. وتم معالجة البيانات باستخدام: التكرارات، والنسب المئوية، والمتوسطات، والانحرافات المعيارية، واختبار تحليل التباين الأحادي، واختبار شيفيه للمقارنات البعدية. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن مستوى وعي أعضاء هيئة التدريس نحو التقويم البديل جاء بمستوى مرتفع، كما أوضحت النتائج أن اتجاهات أعضاء هيئة التدريس نحو التقويم البديل كانت إيجابية وجاءت بنسبة مرتفعة، وأشارت النتائج أيضاً إلى تباين الفروق بين متوسطات درجات المعارف والمهارات ودرجات الاتجاهات لدى أعضاء هيئة التدريس السعوديين حول التقويم البديل وفقاً لسنوات الخبرة. واستنتجت الدراسة أن أساليب التقويم البديلة كانت داعمة لتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ وهذا بدوره كان عاملاً مهماً في تحقيق رؤية 2030 فيما يخص مجال تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

كلمات مفتاحية: التقويم البديل للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية- اتجاهات- مستوى الوعي - رؤية المملكة - 2030 أعضاء هيئة التدريس السعوديين



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1. Introduction

Assessment, in general, is a crucial and a complementary component of language learning. Assessment is one of the main tools through which the learning goals can be identified and achieved. In the same vein, deficiencies and shortcoming in the educational process can be diagnosed in order to take the appropriate decisions via emphasizing the positive aspects of language assessment.

Traditional assessment is based on various tests, applied once or several times a year in the school year with the aim of collecting information on student achievement to be presented to stakeholders. Students in traditional assessment do not participate in assessing themselves. This assessment does not positively affect education because it measures simple skills and concepts expressed in figures that do not provide valuable information about student learning and/or the learning outcomes the student has mastered. In light of quality assurance systems in higher education, the need for fundamental adjustments in educational assessment practices has emerged, whether at the national level or at the level of classroom assessment practices.

Recent trends in this field have called for a pattern of assessment that focuses on the combination of learning and assessment. This model is categorized as an alternative assessment. The alternative assessment represents a dramatic change in the pedagogy of assessment as its main concern is to enhance lifelong learning skills and stretch EFL learners' metacognition (Council of Europe, 2001).

One of the studies that tackled awareness term is Sifakis (2019)'s study that focused on English as a lingua franca (ELF) awareness as an important term in English language teaching (ELT). Sifakis defined ELF awareness as a term encompassing language awareness, instructional practice awareness, and learning awareness dimensions. Commenting on instructional practice awareness, it can be theorized as awareness of stakeholders' practices in ELT pedagogy. Specifically, ELF awareness is derived from a group of tenets related strongly to the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of ELT specialists.

To elaborate, the current study adopted the awareness framework used in the previous study, and there was an emphasis on instructional practice awareness, in particular. This, in turn, contributed to the enhancement of instructors' pedagogical knowledge of alternative

assessment. Accordingly, the researcher attempted to explore the Saudi instructors' level of awareness by exploring their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the current study. Thus, there is an emphasis on instructors' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the literature review. Moreover, the current study sheds light upon the role of alternative assessment in achieving Saudi Vision 2030.

2. Statement of the Problem

Traditional assessment failed to consider EFL learners' growth and thwart their progress, and did not provide a true evaluation of students. Due to the dissatisfaction with the traditional form of assessment, educators call for an assessment that motivates EFL learners to acquire problem-solving skills and lifelong learning strategies. Thus, the current study attempts to reflect on the strategies used in assessing language learning. What makes this study contribute to language learning assessment is that traditional tests that focus on memorization are no longer adequate to reveal learners' multiple competencies. Despite the efforts to change traditional educational practices with contemporary ones, it appears that the changes have happened at a slow rate.

3. Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following five main questions:

1. What is the awareness level of Saudi university instructors in EFL alternative assessment?
2. What are the Saudi instructors' attitudes towards EFL alternative assessment?
3. Are there any significant differences in Saudi university instructors' alternative assessment awareness level attributed to their experiences?
4. Are there any significant differences in Saudi university instructors' attitudes towards alternative assessment attributed to their experiences?
5. What is the role of EFL alternative assessment in achieving Saudi Vision 2030?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Knowledge and Skills in Alternative Assessment

Alternative assessment is a nontraditional method of assessment that is used to assess students through using presentation, portfolio assessment, self-assessment, group assessment, projects and so on. This is

clearly different from a traditional one that depends on paper and pen and standard techniques. Martin-Kniep (1993) argues that traditional and externally imposed assessment “neither promotes students’ learning, tend to measure anything more than limited and superficial knowledge and behaviors, nor support the curriculum and instructional approaches used by teachers” (p. 53). According to Sidek (2012), a regular method of testing necessitates learners to understand and work on data in a logical way. This, in turn, results in meaningful learning. It is argued that permanent gauging of learner’s development required for authentic assessment and for designing learning techniques cannot be collected by the traditional evaluation styles (Barootchi & Keshvarz, 2002). Poehner and Van Compernelle (2011) point out that there is a demand for instruction that promotes learning enhancement.

Alternative assessment is a notion that refers to forms different from conventional assessment methods, such as tests and exam essay questions, and its techniques usually refer to self-assessment, peer assessment, and portfolio assessment (Elezovic, 2011). Consequently, it is clear from these above conceptions that this assessment depends on nontraditional techniques and gives the students a chance to participate actively, which is different from the traditional assessment that usually utilizes multiple choice questions (MCQ), T/F exams, short answers, and composition writing (Dikli, 2003). Alternative assessment for assessing English as a second or foreign language encompasses different measures modified for various episodes. Nonverbal strategies for assessment include experiments and pictorial images referring to scientific terms or content knowledge without speech or writing. Other authentic tasks and oral interviews useful for assessing ESL or EFL learners’ performance are metacognition domain and demonstration, reading response logs, and constructed response items, dialogue journals, and teacher observations or text retelling. Portfolios/ e-portfolio are a collection of student’s work selected to demonstrate improvement overtime (Tannenbaum, 1996). Worley (2001) comments on the use of various tools of authentic assessment. Examples of these tools are constructed response items, exhibitions, text retelling, teacher observations, and so on.

Assessment affords the instructors with actual knowledge of student that he or she has; however, a distinction must be made between formative and summative

assessments. According to Hughes (2003), assessment is formative if teachers want to examine the progress of their students to know how they have mastered what they should have learned in order to modify their future plans. In contrast, final or summative evaluation is utilized at the end of the semester or year to know what the students have achieved. Alternative assessment is a formative assessment in contrast to the traditional assessment or summative one that focuses on standard methods to assess students.

One of the techniques of the alternative assessment is self-assessment which enables EFL learners to assess themselves. According to McMillan and Hearn (2008), students monitor and assess their thinking quality and behavior when learning and determine strategies that develop their understanding and skills.

The ultimate goal of a portfolio can show knowledge enhancement, ideological framework, interdisciplinary skills, and the features of the learner profile over a time span. The access to the portfolio should record both the educational process and the product, including evidence and images of students in the process of constructing meaning (IBO 2007, p. 50). Many studies (e.g. Al Qutaiti & Mohin, 2020; Farahian & Avarzamani, 2018) stressed the role of portfolio assessment in improving students’ writing. However, Yurdabakan and Erdogan (2009)’s study showed that the use of portfolios did not have considerable impact in improving listening skill as compared to speaking skill.

Different types of alternative assessment can facilitate such transformation that include task-based assessment (Skehan & Foster, 1997; Byrnes, 2002; Carless, 2007; Sidek, 2012), ongoing assessment through peer- and self-evaluations (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001; Colby-Kelly & Turner, 2007; Byrnes, 2002; Carless, 2007; Tamjid & Birjandi, 2011), and dynamic assessment (Antón, 2009; Wei, 2011; Poehner & van Compernelle, 2011).

4.2 Instructors’ Attitudes

Attitudes represent the link between beliefs and behavior. Attitudes have a high influence on the behavior of the individual as they determine the behavior of the individual, his words, actions and interaction with others with the aim of facilitating the individual’s ability to perform the right behavior and take sound decisions in multiple situations. Attitudes can be defined as strong beliefs when a person thinks that an object or a per-

son owns desirable or undesirable traits that will create reasonable consequences (Fazio & Olson, 2003). Attitudes have great importance in study and research because of the distinguished relationship between individual attitudes and behavior. Instructor's educational attitudes have a strong, effective and influential impact on the behavior of instructors themselves and in guiding their students. Psychological attitudes give meaning to the individual's perception and the activities that help to accomplish his tasks and achieve his goals in a distinctive way.

Attitudes towards the English language are among the goals that English language instructors strive to achieve, which represent stimuli that stimulate the successful study of the English language and refer to the interactions that occur between the student and the language and the activities that he practices, as it is considered a state of mental readiness that helps the individual direct his behavior. Learners usually have attitudes that emphasize objects, people, or institutions, and they also concern the mental category (MEST, 2016). Accordingly, "in order to introduce a new approach in the classroom, it may be necessary for the teacher to revise, refine or change attitudes which may not be compatible with the principle of that approach" (Doukas, 1996, p. 188). English foreign language (EFL) instructors teaching in high schools as well as language institutes gave heavy emphasis to assessment for learning (AFL) practices. The same-self AFL practices were found to be most widely adopted by these groups of EFL instructors, in particular (Nasr, Bagheri, Sadighi, & Rassaei, 2019). However, Arslan and Üçok-Atasoy (2020) attempted to show the accordance between the English language teaching policy and EFL instructors' in-class practices of assessment. The study findings indicated that there is a contradiction between the policy and assessment practices of EFL teachers in the study: EFL instructors had a tendency to design traditional paper and pencil tests based on language structures and vocabulary rather than the assessment of learners' communicative competence or language skills through the techniques of alternative assessment.

Attitudes may be negative or positive. Positive

attitudes must be developed through participation with others, passing through experiences, and mastering the required knowledge, and negative attitudes that do not agree with what is expected must be directed to serve the positive attitudes. Researchers point out that instructors' passive attitudes might be related to various causes representing in teachers' attitudes about novel creative methods; their unwillingness to modify their regular methods; their inadequate training and scaffolding from their administration, and their lack of knowledge and experience in using such alternatives (Krendl & Dupagne, 1992; Dusick, 1998; Ertmer, Addison, Lane, Ross, & Woods, 1999; Bebell, O' Conner, O' Dwyer, & Russell, 2003). It is a common responsibility of both instructors and learners to work and maintain positive perceptions and beliefs or, when possible, to change negative attitudes and perceptions (Marzano & Pickering, 1997).

4.3 Alternative assessment and the Saudi Vision 2030

The vision in Saudi Arabia is a crucial action. It aims at minimizing the dependence on oil income, verifying the sources of the economy, and developing public service sections such as education, big data, technology, recreation, and tourism ("Saudi Vision 2030", n.d.). Thus, this vision tries to improve most of the Saudi public sectors to be independent and pioneer and take advantage of its resources. As it is clear, education is one of the substantial sectors that will assist in fulfilling Saudi reforms and developments. Yusuf (2017) argued that it is not possible to implement cultural, business, and economic reforms within the country without implicating quality education. He also added that English language had been known as one of the significant key factors that are helpful in attaining success and maintain international economic relations.

"Education and Vision 2030" suggested certain ways of educational development, and the two ways, which may be attained through using alternative assessment, are:

1. Enhancing the pedagogical tools that emphasize students rather than instructors, giving heavy concentration to lifelong learning

skills, personality development, improving confidence, and promoting the mode of innovation.

2. Creating arresting, attractive, and stimulant school environment, associating it with supportive and integrated services systems.

In this study, the instructors' attitudes toward the role of alternative assessments to achieve Saudi vision 2030 were investigated based on these suggested points and the extent to which they are applied when using this kind of assessment.

The two main factors of Saudi education needs, as suggested by Fatani (2016) to achieve Saudi vision 2030 in education are:

1. Working as a collaborative team in all Saudi educational institutions.
2. Participation in available social networking platforms to solve the problems of teaching and learning.

Alternative assessment is a vital way in the teaching process which provides instructors with a close image of the student's performance and the instructors with sufficient knowledge of assessment to be more able to motivate their students to learn and succeed. Accordingly, Saudi Vision 2030 aims to qualify and train teachers and educational leaders as a substantial step to invest in education and training. This vision will provide people with knowledge and skills for the jobs of the future (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016, p. 36). Thus, this current study is interested in investigating Saudi university instructors' level of awareness and attitudes toward this non-traditional form of assessment for development purposes to fulfill Saudi Vision 2030 in education.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has already commenced reevaluating the assessment of students' academic performance through founding a project, namely, Tatweer ("progress") which aims at encouraging Saudi teachers to implement alternative forms of assessment that focus basically on reflection and lifelong learning skills. This project stimulates instructors to adopt the suggested entity via merging different techniques of alternative assessment as in the above-mentioned lines (Alghamdi, 2013).

5. Method and Procedures

5.1. Participants

One hundred forty-six EFL instructors (122 males and 24 females) teaching at five Saudi universities were randomly chosen to participate in this study. Their teaching experiences ranged between 1 year to 40 years. At the time of the study (The academic year 2020-2021), the instructors had an average weekly workload of 14 lecture hours.

5.2. Instruments

To increase the credibility and validity of research findings, data triangulation was used through employing both quantitative and qualitative methods:

5.2.1 The Alternative Assessment Awareness Inventory

The inventory had two sections. The first section aimed to collect demographic information on the participants and the second section, designed as a five-point likert scale. The second part includes twelve items. They were prepared to investigate the instructors' awareness of alternative assessment knowledge and skills. The inventory aimed at achieving the following points: a) stimulating awareness of alternative assessment knowledge and b) measuring the level of awareness and the strategies related to Saudi instructors' use of alternative assessment.

The Validity and Reliability of the Inventory

One hundred forty-six instructors participated in the current study. In order to validate the 'inventory', it was submitted to a panel jury members who consisted of TEFL specialists (n= 5). They were asked to judge the clarity and relevance of the items. The reliability of the piloting and the questionnaire were checked using Cronbach's Alpha. The inventory was reliable at 0.712.

The Internal Consistency of the Inventory

The inventory was piloted to a population including 15 instructors. Those instructors did not participate in the basic sample of the study. Then, the Pearson correlation coefficients of the inventory items were used to find the correlation of the statements with the overall score of the inventory and the total scores of the inventory as a whole.

Table 1.
Pearson correlation coefficient of Alternative Assessment Awareness Inventory

No.	Correlation		No.	Correlation	No.	Correlation	No.	Correlation
1	Pearson Correlation	.247**	4	.462**	7	.348**	10	.177*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		.000		.000		.033
	N	146		146		146		146
2	Pearson Correlation	.532**	5	.602**	8	.280**	11	.597**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000		.001		.000
	N	146		146		146		146
3	Pearson Correlation	.734**	6	.387**	9	.241**	12	.401**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000		.003		.000
	N	146		146		146		146
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								

In the above table, all Pearson correlation coefficients between the statements of the inventory and between the total score for this inventory are significant at (0.01) level. This indicates that all statements measure the same attribute or goal, and thus this inventory and its statements have adequate internal consistency.

5.3 Attitudes Scale

This instrument uses a five-point Likert scale system ranging from 1 to 5 (5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 2= disagree, and 1= strongly disagree). A twelve- item scale aimed to show the instructors’ attitudes towards alternative assessment.

The Validity and Reliability of the Attitudes Scale

Establishing the validity of the ‘scale’, it was submit-

ted to six TEFL specialists. They were asked to judge the phrasing and relevance of the items. Some modifications were suggested by the jury members and they were eventually reconsidered. The reliability coefficient of the total score of the scale was also superior than the required percentage. Overall reliability coefficient was 0.745, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha. This proves that the attitude scale is reliable.

The Internal Consistency of the Scale

The attitudes scale was piloted to a population including 20 instructors. Those instructors did not participate in the basic sample of the study. Then, the Pearson correlation coefficients of the scale items were used to find the correlation of the statements with the overall scores of the scale.

Table 2.
Pearson correlation coefficients of Attitudes towards EFL Alternative Assessment

No.	Correlation		No.	Correlation	No.	Correlation	No.	Correlation
1	Pearson Correlation	.226**	6	.686**	11	.411**	16	.308**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006		.000		.000		.000
	N	146		146		146		146
2	Pearson Correlation	.746**	7	.707**	12	.470**	17	.444**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000		.000		.000
	N	146		146		146		146
3	Pearson Correlation	.337**	8	.667**	13	.505**	18	.516**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000		.000		.000
	N	146		146		146		146

4	Pearson Correlation	.341**	9	.646**	14	.177*	19	.324**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000		.033		.000
	N	146		146		146		146
5	Pearson Correlation	.703**	10	.222**	15	.241**	20	.192*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.007		.003		.020
	N	146		146		146		146
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								

As shown in the above mentioned table, all Pearson correlation coefficients between the statements of the scale and between the total score for this scale are significant at (0.01) level. This is an indicator that all statements measure the same attribute or goal, and thus this scale and its statements have adequate internal consistency.

5.4. Semi-Structured Interviews

The second tool was a semi-structured interview. Three questions were directed to 10 instructors about their attitudes towards alternative assessment. The use of the interview would sustain an understanding of the inventory findings (Bloor, 2001). In addition, semi-structured interviews help collect deep results about instructors' attitudes and reflections toward alternative assessment and its role in achieving Saudi vision 2030. In addition, Farrell and Kennedy (2019) found out that reflective practice can greatly reshape teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning throughout their career.

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The three semi-interview questions were:

1. What is the role of alternative assessment in achieving Saudi Vision 2030?
2. What are the constraints that instructors encounter when using alternative assessment?
3. What do you suggest to improve instructors' use of alternative assessment?

6. The Method

The current study made use of descriptive methods to analyze the obtained data. Descriptive statistics were used in the current study utilizing the latest version of the software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). A one-way ANOVA test and Scheffé test for Post Hoc Comparisons were conducted to detect significant differences in instructors' attitudes in relation to instructors' teaching experience. The instructors' responses to the items of the questionnaire were evaluated in view of the following criteria in the table below:

Table 3.
Participants Responses Criteria

Mean Score	Acceptance Degree
(1- 2.33)	low
(2.34- 3.66)	Medium
(3.67- 5)	high

7. Results and Discussion

Discussing the research questions, it was noted that the first question was set to explore the Saudi instructors' awareness towards EFL alternative assessment. The second research question attempted to measure the Saudi instructors' attitudes towards alternative assessment. The third and fourth questions aimed to detect their teaching experiences and their relation to the use of alternative assessment. The fifth question focused

on the role of alternative assessment in achieving Saudi Vision 2030.

7.1 Answer to the First Question

As mentioned earlier in the current study, the first question asked: "What is the awareness level of Saudi university instructors in EFL alternative assessment? To answer this question, participants' responses are presented in the following table:

Table 4.
Means and standard deviations of EFL instructors' awareness of knowledge and skills in alternative assessment

No.	Statement	M	SD	level
1-	I assess students through oral questioning.	3.77	1.06	High
2-	I use observation checklists to assess students during activities.	3.74	0.98	High
3-	I design classroom-based activities that suit my students' levels.	4.40	0.52	High
4-	I use portfolios to assess students' performance.	3.51	0.59	Medium
5-	I get benefit of feedback after the use of the portfolios.	3.07	0.66	Medium
6-	I can guide my students to collect materials for portfolio assessment.	4.10	0.67	High
7-	I help students to self-assess their learning.	3.71	0.71	High
8-	I encourage students to make useful decisions about their learning.	4.51	0.53	High
9-	I encourage students to work in groups and help one another.	4.33	0.93	High
10-	I am keen to define the skills or sub-skills that I will observe.	2.21	0.69	low
11-	I assess students' performance during presenting their tasks.	4.33	0.55	High
12-	I am able to implement different alternative assessments.	4.38	0.49	High
	The overall score of the inventory items	3.84	0.70	High

As shown in Table (4), the means and standard deviations were determined for instructors' knowledge and skills in alternative assessment, instructors reported that they really own the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the alternative assessment. All the statements had a high level. In statement 4, "I use portfolios to assess students' performance", and statement 8, "I encourage students to make useful decisions about their learning", most instructors reported that they "strongly agree" to use portfolios to assess students' performance and encourage students to make decisions, with means (4.51). The other statements were also at a high rank and the means range between (3.71 and 4.40). Statement 1, "I assess students through oral questioning" with a mean (3.77), asserts the importance of questioning techniques. Ralph (1999) pointed out that oral questioning techniques are used for a variety of purposes, including, introducing, summarizing, or reviewing a lesson, in addition to, promoting students' understanding to develop their attitudes and values.

Other studies reported different results. Tavassoli and Farhady (2018) found that teachers of English were in a pressing need to enhance language assessment knowledge. Ölmezer-Öztürk and Belgin (2019) found out that EFL teachers received low scores in the language assessment knowledge scale they developed. As for Statement 2, "I use observation checklists to assess students during activities", the mean reached 3.74), and Statement 3, "I design classroom-based activities that suit my students' levels", ($M = 4.40$), show the importance of such activities. Studies point out that reviewing models of classroom assignments with learners is one of the best methods that may scaffold instructors to foster learners' understanding of the assignments' grading expectations. (Whittaker, Salend, & Duhaney, 2001).

Statements about using portfolios: Statement 4, "I use portfolios to assess students' performance" ($M = 4.51$), Statement 5, "I get benefit of feedback after the use of the portfolios" ($M = 4.26$), and Statement 6, "I can guide my students to collect materials for portfolio assessment" ($M = 4.10$), highlight that portfolios are crucial tools in learners' academic enhancement. Yoo (2001) asserts that learners take more responsibility for their own learning via portfolios. Ghoorchaee and Tavakoli (2020) attributed the improvement in holistic writing and the sub skills of focus, organization, and elabora-

tion to the utilization of portfolio assessment in EFL writing. In the same vein, learners were influenced in a positive way regarding the implementation of their portfolios. In contrast, Abu Rezeq and Abu Taha (2018) revealed that portfolios, debates, conferences, interviews, self-assessment, peer assessment, diaries, free tasks, projects, learning log, and anecdotal records strategies are practiced at low level.

One of the paramount practices of alternative assessment is self-assessment. O'Malley and Valdez (1996, p. 240) refer to self-assessment as an "appraisal by a student of his or her own work or learning process". According to (Watson, 2002), among language learning dimensions that can be evaluated through self-assessment, in particular and minimize instructors' work load are effort and learner beliefs. Statement 7, "I help students to self-assess their learning" ($M = 3.71$), seems to be a window for students to shoulder their responsibilities for their own learning. Self-assessment plays a major role in enhancing learners' motivation and creating language awareness (Watson, 2002).

Statement 8, "I encourage students to make useful decisions about their learning" ($M = 4.51$), highlights the importance of decision making for enhancing learning which also leads for lifelong learning skill. When learners are interested in decisions about how to learn and what to learn and why they are learning, and are also actively engaged in decisions about criteria for assessment and the process of judging their own and others' work, then their relationship to their studies will probably be qualitatively different to those students who are treated as recipients of teaching and who are the object of others' unilateral assessment (Ramsden, 1988). Furthermore, Phongsirikul (2018) suggested that it is important that teachers make appropriate choices among the various assessment options in order to facilitate students' learning and to make an accurate judgment on the intended goals.

Statement 9, "I encourage students to work in groups and help one another" ($M = 4.33$), shows that such help is not a technique to involve students but a value-laden tactic for learning and teaching in which students engage to make judgments on their own and each other's learning. In this respect, instructors can enhance collaborative learning among learners by structuring learning and assessing activities so that students work together and are graded in a cooperative way (Salend, 2001).

In Statement 10, “I am keen to define the skills or sub-skills that I will observe” ($M = 4.21$), the instructor focuses on specific skills so as to give suitable feedback. This does not contradict the integrated language skill approach, which “is based on the concept that in natural, day-to-day experience, oral and written languages are not kept separate and isolated from one another” (Su, 2007, p. 29). Segregated-skill EFL classes often present instruction in terms of skill-linked learning strategies: reading strategies, listening strategies, speaking strategies, and writing strategies (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). However, it can be confusing to think that a given strategy is connected with only one specific language skill. Many strategies, such as paying selective attention, planning, self-evaluating, asking questions, analyzing, synthesizing, and predicting, are applicable across skill areas (Oxford, 1990).

One of the main instructor’s roles is assessing students’ performance. Statement 11, “I assess students’ performance while presenting their tasks” ($M = 4.33$), ensures that such assessment provides students with the support they need to enhance their learning. Assessment is utilized to evaluate how well a student has mastered the material that has been presented in class (Colley, 2008; Speers, 2008). Assessment, as Nunan (2004)

states, is the subcomponent of evaluation that consists of the techniques and procedures to collect information related to what the students can do and cannot do.

Alternative assessment has always been emphasized due to the role it plays in the teaching/learning process at different levels. Statement 12, “I am able to implement different alternative assessments” ($M = 4.38$), confirms how instructors are aware of the use of various techniques for assessment. In a similar vein, Monib et al’s (2020) study indicated that the results of many studies were significant regarding the application of alternative assessment in language learning. Some researchers recommend in-service training to emphasize on different techniques in alternative assessment in learning environment (Bashir, Shahzadi, & Afzal, 2018).

7. 2 Answer to the Second Question

As mentioned earlier in the current study, the second question asked, “What are Saudi University instructors’ attitudes towards alternative assessment? The following Table indicates the means and standard deviations of instructors’ attitudes towards alternative assessment.

With regard to above table, the means and standard

Table 5.
The attitudes of EFL instructors’ towards alternative assessment

No.	Statement	M	SD	level
1.	Alternative assessment helps students to achieve the objectives of the course.	4.19	0.90	High
2.	Alternative Assessment provides feedback on instructor’s performance and teaching effectiveness.	4.30	0.61	High
3.	Alternative assessment keeps pace with recent learning developments.	4.47	0.50	High
4.	Alternative assessment motivates students to learn.	4.27	0.65	High
5.	Alternative assessment gets students to work on tasks that are meaningful to them.	4.48	0.53	High
6.	Alternative assessment encourages the spirit of competition among students.	4.48	0.67	High
7.	Alternative assessment fits into the school environment.	4.36	0.48	High
8.	Alternative assessment is fun for students.	3.77	1.00	High

No.	Statement	M	SD	level
9.	Alternative assessment leads to the development of critical thinking for students.	4.07	0.69	High
10.	Using alternative assessment tools is better than using old assessment tools.	3.67	0.69	High
11.	Alternative assessment enhances the instructor's self-confidence.	3.78	0.75	High
12.	Alternative assessment is not subject to the mood of the instructor, that is, it is objective.	3.95	0.62	High
13.	Alternative assessment is accurate and objective.	4.18	0.45	High
14.	Alternative assessment achieves fairness among students.	3.48	0.88	High
15.	Alternative assessment gives accurate and consistent information about students' abilities.	2.70	0.81	High
16.	Alternative assessment helps the instructor to explore learning difficulties that students may encounter.	4.15	0.68	High
17.	Alternative assessment is easy to apply.	4.29	0.51	High
18.	Students do not encounter difficulties during alternative assessment.	3.89	1.12	High
19.	There is a need to use alternate evaluation tools and strategies in evaluating student performance.	3.74	0.86	High
20.	Alternative assessment reduces the fear and anxiety that accompany pupils while taking tests.	3.84	1.19	High
	Total score of the scale	4	0.31	High

deviations were calculated for instructors' attitudes towards alternative assessment. The highest means (4.48) were for Statement 5, "Alternative assessment gets students to work on tasks that are meaningful to them", and Statement 6, "Alternative assessment encourages the spirit of competition among students". Though all the statements gained a high rank, statement No. 15, "Alternative assessment gives accurate and consistent information about students' abilities" ($M = 2.70$), was the lowest.

This study asserts that students can achieve the course objectives through alternative assessment as shown in Statement 1, "Alternative assessment helps students to achieve the objectives of the course" ($M = 4.19$). Other studies state that if instructors regard how the

objectives of the course will be evaluated at the end of the course and follow through by using the assessment format that best matches each objective, they will be helping to create a strong relationship between the assessment procedures and the objectives and therefore helping to produce a positive wash back effect (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

Instructors were able to make use of the feedback they gain through alternative assessment as shown in Statement 2, "Alternative Assessment provides feedback on instructor's performance and teaching effectiveness" ($M = 4.30$). Other studies found that peer feedback and teacher feedback can be effectively utilized to improve the students' revised work (e.g., Kabilan & Khan, 2012; Nicolaidou, 2013).

Instructors are now ready to adopt recent learning development to make a shift in language pedagogy in the field of testing and assessment, as seen in Statement 3, "Alternative assessment keeps pace with recent learning developments" (mean 4.47). The shift goes from exclusively tests and testing to assessment in language classrooms in broader terms (Cheng & Fox, 2017).

Student motivation through alternative assessment is dealt with in Statement 4, "Alternative assessment motivates students to learn" ($M = 4.27$). Regarding alternative assessment and motivation, Zimbicki, (2007) suggested that motivation levels and self-efficacy reach higher levels when students are involved in alternative assessment. Research by Chang (2005) revealed that teachers often believe that assessment should be conducted in ways that motivate and support students' learning without generating negative emotions. Phong-sirikul's (2018) study found that alternative assessment was valued as a catalyst for enhancing learners' motivation in English skills.

Learners can acquire and comprehend beneficial meaningful tasks through the authentic assessment. The benefits are proved in Statement 5, "Alternative assessment gets students to work on tasks that are meaningful to them" ($M = 4.48$). The regular evaluation was criticized by Sidek (2012) as it obliged learners to become aware of specific data, and had to be modified to include assessments with meaningful tasks that were more communicative in nature.

The role of competition appears in Statement 6, "Alternative assessment encourages the spirit of competition among students" ($M = 4.48$). In this respect, Niveen (2017) stated that using competition for assessment was the least factor among students, whereas, Cheng et al.'s (2008) study contradicted the previous study as the latter study indicated that grading, testing and competition shared among students and communities are the best indicators of success.

The school environment has an impact on the use of alternative assessment. Statement 7, "Alternative assessment fits into the school environment" ($M = 4.36$), asserts that a positive school environment that is free from threat, danger, and humiliation supports safety and security where students pursue learning and excellence. It has been seen that when there exists a positive interaction between the learners and the teacher, they first develop a more positive attitude towards the school environment (Üstünel & Deren, 2010).

This study asserts that instructors perceive assessment as an enjoyable strategy for their students, as reported in Statement 8, "Alternative assessment is fun for students" ($M = 3.77$). In their study about students' conceptions of assessment, Gavin and Gerrit (2008) suggested that instructors and learners become accountable by adopting the techniques of alternative assessment.

Statement 9, "Alternative assessment leads to the development of critical thinking for students" ($M = 4.07$), highlights the effectiveness of alternative assessment in promoting critical thinking. In this respect, Lo (2010) contended that portfolio-based learning program helped her EFL learner participants develop their critical thinking skill and autonomous learning through managing their time and learning.

This study supports the positive attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment tools versus the old ones, as in Statement 10, "Using alternative assessment tools is better than using old assessment tools" (mean 3.67). After discussing literature emphasizing the role of alternative assessment in EFL classrooms, it was noted that 18 out of 24 showed the positive impact of merging alternative assessment in language learning skills in EFL classrooms, according to Monib et al.'s (2020) study. In another study about a learning integrated system, the researchers stated that learning evaluation should make a shift towards assessment for learning in addition to assessment of learning (Birenbaum et al., 2006). Ahmedi's (2019) study results focused on differences between attitudes towards formative assessment and its application in practice. The average of the teachers' attitudes towards formative assessment is higher than the average of teachers who apply formative assessment.

With regard to instructor's self-confidence, Statement 11, "Alternative assessment enhances the instructor's self-confidence" ($M = 3.78$) shows that self-confidence has a great impact on instructor's own abilities to achieve the desirable alternative outcomes when carrying out tasks. The current study results related to Statement 11 concurred with the findings of other studies which investigated teacher competences and proved that they have their effect on motivating students' educational activities (Helus, 2001, as cited in Tichá & Hošpesová, 2013).

The objectivity and accuracy of alternative assessment is dealt with in Statement 12, "Alternative assessment

is not subject to the mood of the instructor, that is, it is objective" ($M = 3.95$), and Statement 13, "Alternative assessment is accurate and objective" ($M = 4.18$). As objectivity is essential for any assessment, yet it might be reconsidered through another perspective where communicative language teaching is the prominent approach nowadays. However, other studies reported that using traditional assessment instruments were favored because of their emphasis on product rather than process (Frodden, Restrepo & Maturana, 2004).

The fairness of alternative assessment is shown in Statement 14, "Alternative assessment achieves fairness among students" ($M = 3.48$). A study about the effects of portfolio assessment on reading, listening and writing skills conducted by Yurdabakan and Erdogan (2009) revealed that portfolio assessment is a fair method compared to traditional applications of assessment.

This study also sought to explore the effect of alternative assessment and students' abilities as shown in Statement 15, "Alternative assessment gives accurate and consistent information about students' abilities" ($M = 2.70$). Other studies examined the practice of alternative assessment in EFL classrooms in regards to its impact on speaking skill and oral abilities of students. Such studies deduced that learners were capable of increasing the quantity of oral communication and to use various lexical items and vocabulary of foreign language by applying alternative assessment methods such as e-portfolio and video portfolio (Safari & Koo-sha, 2016; Putri, Pratolo & Setiani, 2019).

The current study found that instructors believe that alternative assessment can help them figure out students' learning problems as shown in Statement 16, "Alternative assessment helps the instructor to explore learning difficulties that students may encounter" ($M = 4.15$). Such a finding is in line with other studies by Harlen and James (1997) who illustrated that a test which is conducted at the end of a lesson could be categorized as a formative assessment if the data taken from the test is used to explore which parts of learning need further teaching. Another study found that teachers made use of the tests to categorize students for further instruction, explore learning difficulties, and follow up with particular students with remedial teaching and/or remedial tests (Defianty, 2018).

The practical angle of alternative assessment is shown in statement 17, "Alternative assessment is easy to

apply" ($M = 4.29$). It was noted that Statement 17 concurred with Hamayan's (1995) opinion, which entrenched the possibility of applying alternative assessment techniques in the study environment. Unlike standardized testing, which usually produces a score that may not be meaningful by itself, and usually, information from alternative assessment is easy to interpret and understand." However, other studies found different results. To elaborate, the results of Abbas's (2012) study indicated that Iraqi instructors of English encounter challenges in using techniques of alternative assessment in educational settings.

The study findings, in view of instructors' beliefs, assumed that EFL learners had no difficulties with alternative assessment, as shown in Statement 18, "Students do not encounter difficulties during alternative assessment" ($M = 3.89$). This result is supported by another study which clarified that the learners did not have any obstacles during implementing self-assessment activities, which may be due to the feature of the self-assessment technique and activities used and the adequate training and guidance that the EFL learners received (Moqbel, 2018).

Statement 19, "There is a need to use alternate evaluation tools and strategies in evaluating student performance" ($M = 3.74$) emphasizes instructors' beliefs about the use of different evaluation assessment tools. Jabbarifar's (2009) study about the importance of classroom assessment and evaluation in the educational system indicates that alternative methods in EFL are the various tools available in classrooms for teachers to collect essential information of language learning process and the factors related to the students which impact the process of language learning and teaching. While Forutan's (2014) study, which was conducted to evaluate students' performance and their attitudes regarding assessment procedures in writing, demonstrated that in alternative assessment there was students' improvement in terms of content, organization and style in comparison to traditional assessment and students also expressed positive attitudes towards teacher and peer comments. Contrary to the above mentioned studies, Lio's (2020) study results indicated that Vietnamese EFL teachers expressed a weak belief in the importance of alternative assessment methods to students' development of proficiency.

In Statement 20, "Alternative assessment reduces the fear and anxiety that accompany pupils while taking

tests” ($M = 3.84$), instructors believe that alternative assessment can reduce students’ fear and anxiety when dealing with untraditional tests. This finding concurred with Serrano’s (2017) results which indicated that students hold optimistic views concerning applying alternative assessment in English classrooms in terms of lowering students’ anxiety, encouraging awareness and reflection, students’ centeredness, integrating different areas of learning and providing prompt and meaningful feedback. In their investigation about the influence of portfolios on EFL learners’ writing anxiety Ozturk and Cecean (2007) found that portfolios help reduce learners’ anxiety and enhance their motivation to write. To conclude, it was noted that the overall mean of the items of scale attitudes was high, and this was a strong indicator that the instructors had positive attitudes towards alternative assessment. In this respect, the re-

searcher stated that the current study gave heavy concentration to the affective variable, namely, attitudes, because of its importance in modifying the learning styles. Not only this but also the multiple effects of attitudes on learners’ motivation and the overall learning process. This view supported Barnyak and Paquette’s (2010) study which stated that there is a great impact of attitudes on the instructors’ teaching style, their selection of instructional materials and fostering a humanistic atmosphere for learning.

7.3. Answer to Third Question

The third question attempted to detect if there are significant differences in Saudi university instructors’ alternative assessment awareness level attributed to their experiences. To answer the third question, the following tables and comments clarify the results:

Table 6.
ANOVA: Test for EFL instructors’ awareness of knowledge and skills in alternative assessment with regard to teaching experience

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Instructors’ Knowledge and Skills	Between Groups	351.052	3	117.017	11.743	.000
	Within Groups	1415.030	142	9.965		
	Total	1766.082	145			

As shown in table 6, there were statistically significant differences between at least two groups according to experience,

and to find out these differences, Scheffé test for Post Hoc Comparisons, and the results are shown in the Table 7 below.

Table 7.
Instructors’ awareness of knowledge and skills regarding teaching experience

Dependent Variable		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	
Instructors’ awareness of Knowledge and Skills	1-5 years	6-10 years	3.00000*	1.05225	.047
		11-15 years	-1.50000	1.06856	.580
		16- 40 years	.78788	.99066	.889
	6-10 years	11-15 years	-4.50000**	.76695	.000
		16- 40 years	-2.21212*	.65406	.012
	11-15 years	16- 40 years	2.28788*	.67999	.012

According to the table above, there are differences at the level of 0.05 between 1-5 years of experience and 6- 10 years' experience in favor of 1-5 years. However, there are no significant differences at the level of 0.05 between 1-5 years of experience and 11-15 years of experience. At the same time, there are no significant differences at the level of 0.05 between 1-5 years of experience and 16- 40 years' experience. Furthermore, there are differences at the level of (0.05) between 6-10 years of experiences and 11-15 years of experience in favor of 11-15 years. There are differences at the level of 0.05 between 6-10 years of experience and between

16- 40 years' experience in favor of 16-40 years. There are differences at the level of 0.05 between experiences 11-15 years and between experiences 16-40 years in favor of 11-15 years.

7.4. Answer to Fourth Question

The fourth question attempted to detect if there are significant differences in Saudi university instructors' attitudes towards EFL alternative assessment attributed to their experiences. To answer the fourth question, the following tables and comments elaborate the results.

Table 8.
ANOVA test for EFL instructors' attitudes towards alternative assessment with respect to teaching experience

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Instructors' attitudes towards alternative assessment	Between Groups	520.299	3	173.433	4.760	.003
	Within Groups	5173.455	142	36.433		
	Total	5693.753	45			

As shown in Table 8, there are differences between at least two groups according to experience, and to find out

these differences, Scheffé test for Post Hoc Comparif sons, and the results are shown in the following table:

Table 9.
Instructors' attitudes towards alternative assessment Experience

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Instructors' attitudes towards alternative assessment	1-5 years	6-10 years	6.66667*	2.01199	.014
		11-15 years	2.50000	2.04318	.684
		16- 40 years	3.90909	1.89422	.240
	6-10 years	11-15 years	-4.16667*	1.46647	.049
		16- 40 years	-2.75758	1.25061	.187
	11-15 years	16- 40 years	1.40909	1.30021	.759

As shown in Table 9, there are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between 1-5 years of experience and 6-10 years of experience in favor of 1-5 years. There are differences at the level of 0.05 between 6-10 years of experience and 11-15 years of experience in favor of 11-15 years. There are differences at the level of 0.05 between 6-10 years of experience and between 16- 40 years of experience in favor of 16-40 years. On the contrary, there are no significant differences at the level of 0.05 between 1-5 years of experience and 11-15 years of experience. There are no significant differences at the level of 0.05 between 1-5 years of experience and between 16- 40 years of experience. There are no differences at the level of 0.05 between 11-15 years and 16-40 years of experience.

7.5. Answer to the Fifth Question

Results of the interview attempted to answer three questions. Among these questions is the fifth question in the current study, namely, "What is the role of alternative assessment in achieving Saudi vision 2030?" When the interviewees were asked this question, their answers were in the following details. Most instructors (90%) were satisfied that alternative assessment is better than the traditional one. They indicated that alternative tools, especially the portfolio, help assess students' activities. Some instructors reported that their students showed great progress, as there is a strong relationship between the application of alternative assessment and students' achievement. One of the instructors stated that "When there is an application of alternative assessment techniques and strategies in real Saudi context, this, in turn, prepares the learners for multiple roles in the future". Thus, this contributes to achieve Saudi Vision 2030. Another instructor reports that alternative assessment in English as a foreign language creates and enhances many skills. Among these skills are independent learning, global thinking, digital transformation and critical literacy skills. Consequently, all these skills represent a substantial role in achieving the vision, particularly in the field of education. Willis and Willis (1996) pointed out that there are many factors that gave superiority to alternative assessment than the regular method in the teaching process. Among these factors are process-oriented method and authentic activities. It seems that younger instructors are more enthusiastic to use alternative assessments. TEFL literature ensures that alternative assessment can strengthen learners' beliefs

about learning and communication patterns and can enhance the students' linguistic self-confidence (Nunan, 1989).

Contrary to the results mentioned above, Al-Atabi's (2020) study about assessing Iraqi EFL teachers' alert and practice of traditional and alternative assessments found that EFL teachers were not acquainted with the latest techniques of assessments; they depended on the traditional types since they are easy to set and mark, and they used to have one format of assessments.

The second question findings, "What are the constraints that instructors encounter when using alternative assessment?"

There is an agreement among EFL instructors (80%), that there is a necessity to use some alternative assessment strategies such as observation, interview, presentation, etc., as alternative assessment techniques in the classroom. Such techniques help students to learn properly and follow up well during the sessions. They can also judge the extent of their learning better because this type of assessment can reveal the extent of the students' ability to learn. The instructor can figure out the students' needs and what they are lacking. Some instructors pointed out that diversity in the use of assessment strategies helps to better assess students' learning.

Among the disadvantages of alternative assessment, as reported by the interviewees, is that it requires more time and effort to accurately explore students' progress. Their views in this respect agree with Hughes's (2003) views that supposed "measuring accurate oral abilities is not easy. It is time and effort consuming, including training to get valid and reliable results" (p.134).

Other studies reported that alternative assessment is time-consuming and costly for teachers to have a thoughtful analysis of the tests to provide accurate feedback to the learners (Brindley, 2001). Such views also agree with Ghaicha and Omarkaly (2018) who studied assessment in the Moroccan EFL classrooms teachers' conceptions and practices and reported that teachers' main concerns were time constraints, class size, and lack of training.

Results of the third question, "What do you suggest to improve instructors' use of alternative assessment?" Some instructors (70%), especially those with more than five years of experience, suggested holding training sessions to inform instructors, as well as students, about alternative assessment techniques. In addition,

the literature reported the importance of ongoing assessment in the learning and teaching process (Brown, 1995; Graves, 2000).

8. Conclusion

This study focused on exploring Saudi university instructors' awareness level in EFL alternative assessment. In the light of the findings, the following points should be reconsidered:

- Instructors reported that traditional assessment methods in language learning are not satisfying and adequate to the recent trends in Saudi environment.
- Alternative assessment tools are crucial to enhance Saudi EFL learners' proficiency, creativity and lifelong learning skills, particularly, after the spread of artificial intelligence.
- Alternative assessment plays an important role in enhancing personalized learning and metacognition.

The study results indicated that EFL university instructors do support and value alternative assessment and enthusiastically adopt such practices in their teaching context. This is consistent partially with other studies that focused on attitudes and perceptions of Saudi EFL teachers in implementing Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which suggests that it is vital for students to learn foreign languages, particularly English, to carry out successful communication where the modernization and enhancement in the educational environment of Saudi Arabia's government schools are associated with development of English language teachings (Al-Zahrani et al., 2017).

9. Recommendations and suggestions

In light of the study results, the researcher proposes the following recommendations and suggestions:

- Incorporating technology in alternative assessment.
- The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has to provide the requirements for using alternative assessment.
- Holding training courses for instructors and educational supervisors on alternative assessment.
- Studying the best programs, practices and experiences in other universities to make use of them during the application of alternative assessment.
- More attention should be paid to studying the ob-

stacles that face using alternative assessment, and exerting effort to remove the causes of such obstacles.

- Alternative assessment should occur in the teaching context and not as a separate process.
- Colleges of education have to include alternative assessment methods in their curricula and the teacher preparation programs.
- Promoting the idea of e-assessment to increase reliability and validity.
- There is a need for more studies on alternative assessment in different stages of education and highlighting the positive aspects of using it in the educational process, especially in teaching English as a foreign language.
- More studies should be conducted to reveal the relationship between the instructors' knowledge of alternative assessment and the extent of its implementation in EFL classroom.

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