

Investigating the Status Quo of Writing Assessment Literacy among Moroccan EFL University Teachers: Perceptions and Practices

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<p>Keywords: assessment practices, teacher training, teachers' writing assessment literacy, writing assessment, writing assessment literacy</p> <p>DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v10i2.2028</p> <p>How to cite: Boumehdi, A., & Laabidi, H. (2025). Investigating the Status Quo of Writing Assessment Literacy among Moroccan EFL University Teachers: Perceptions and Practices. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 10(2), 251-267</p>	<p>Assessing students' writing skills is at the heart of teachers' work in the English department studies of Moroccan universities. However, research has predominantly focused on student outcomes instead of paying close attention to investigate, assess, and quantify teachers' writing assessment literacy. Against this background, the purpose of this descriptive quantitative study is to investigate the status quo of writing assessment literacy among Moroccan EFL university teachers in an attempt to draw a general picture about their writing assessment perceptions, and practices. To achieve this goal, an adapted version of Crusan et al.'s (2016) WAL questionnaire was administered to a convenient sample of 54 teachers from various Moroccan universities. The results unveil significant insights into the levels of teachers' writing assessment literacy levels. In fact, the study reveals that teachers are favorably disposed towards writing assessment literacy. Yet, teachers' level of assessment literacy was not fully mirrored in their practice given a plethora of challenges issued by the participants. The results further uncover that teachers have primarily developed their assessment literacy through on-the-job learning. The study's findings have several pedagogical implications for training writing teachers and the enhancement of EFL writing assessment practices. Additionally, these findings are supposed to serve as a roadmap for future researchers to explore the topic from various perspectives.</p>

1. Introduction

Assessment has always been a fundamental pillar in education that connects teaching and learning. Recently, the focus on assessment and its role in monitoring and supporting both teaching and learning have resulted in a paradigm shift that advocates for considering assessment as part and parcel of teaching and learning (Giraldo et al., 2023). This integration cannot take place unless teachers have sufficient background or training in assessment (DeLuca et al., 2018), which has brought the teacher back in as a central figure of assessment, putting him or her under scrutiny. Many teachers, however, issue their unpreparedness to take charge over and effectively handle, and leverage the daily demands of formative and summative assessments (Kremmel & Harding, 2020).

In the field of EFL education, the importance of teacher AL enjoys growing recognition, which has spurred increased attention towards investigating different aspects of language teachers' AL (Giraldo, 2021). This momentum has led to the emergence of Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) as a vibrant sub-field. This realization and awareness of AL's significance has been a recurrent theme in language assessment research, underlying the complexity of language learning and the need for specific assessment literacies (Coombe et al., 2020; Harding & Kremmel, 2016). Nevertheless, the field of LAL is fraught with challenges; the most significant of which is the lack of delineation of subject-specific features, particularly how English language instructors' AL varies from AL in broader contexts.

The challenges associated with LAL become more evident when they are discussed within the realm of a particular language skill and context (Weng & Shen, 2022). This throws light on the domain of WAL in EFL contexts, especially in higher education settings where writing serves as the primary tool for students to fully engage and showcase their learning outcomes in different modules, as is the case in Morocco. Indeed, writing holds a significant importance in the day-to-day activities of EFL university students, which results in an expanded role for teachers in assessing and providing feedback to students' compositions, such as reading reports, summaries, essay reflections, research projects, not to mention mid- and end-of terms papers and exams. According to Dong et al. (2024), a significant portion of teachers' responsibilities involves assessing students' written work.

Teachers of English have a pivotal role in assisting and guiding students to develop their writing skills; a role that is highly pronounced in teachers' assessment practices, including feedback. It is indeed through assessment, in its diverse realizations within and outside the classroom, that a written product can be improved (Kong et al., 2022). This alluded to the fact that assessment can have detrimental ramifications for student learning. To put it differently, the arduous nature of composing tasks necessitates a rigorous assessment system that equips students with the skills and strategies needed for effective writing. To ensure this process of learning, teachers must possess a deep understanding of the challenges and problems students encounter in writing, as it is instrumental in modifying and improving instruction (Crusan et al., 2016). Consequently, teacher AL plays a pivotal role in improving student learning, highlighting the dire need for today's teachers to be assessment literate.

In the Moroccan context of EFL higher education, concerns have been raised about the status of both the learning and teaching of writing skills, underlying their unsystematic and unproductive nature. Furthermore, studies depicting Moroccan universities' assessment principles and practices for assessing students' writing skills are scarce and lack consensus

(Bouziane, 2017). In essence, the current state of writing assessment, coupled with the reported weak levels of student writing proficiency (Ahmed, 2018), is likely to persist because ineffective writing assessment strategies are inherently associated with the ineffective learning of composing skills among students (Abouabdelkader, 2018). According to Ahmad (2021), this can be ascribed to the lack of adequate training for teachers in the components of assessment and writing skills. This oversight is further exemplified by the limited attention accorded to teachers' WAL (Sohrabi et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020), regardless of the growing interest in teacher LAL.

This state of affairs requires an in-depth investigation to find out the source of the problem, which in this study is hypothesized to stem from teachers' assessment practices of writing assessment. In fact, there is overwhelming evidence that the majority of EFL teachers are not adequately prepared to benefit students and perform constructive assessment (Tayyebi et al., 2022). This deficit in AL among teachers raises concerns about its repercussions on students' writing achievements. In response to this, this study aims to address this gap and provide possible interpretation to the above-mentioned problems in writing assessment and learning by focusing on teacher WAL, a crucial yet often overlooked aspect in the Moroccan context. The study, therefore, seeks to delve into teachers' beliefs, and self-reported practices regarding writing assessment, with the hope that the findings will guide professional development initiatives for EFL higher education teachers, and ultimately improve the quality of writing assessment practices and outcomes for EFL university students. Accordingly, the present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do Moroccan EFL university teachers perceive writing assessment?
2. What are the assessment writing practices of Moroccan EFL university teachers?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Assessment Literacy

A meticulous scrutiny of the literature lays down the multifaceted trajectories the conception of AL has experienced, embracing a comprehensive approach that integrates both measurement and assessment for learning paradigms (Deneen & Brown, 2016). According to Massey et al. (2020), there is a shift from 'testing culture' and summative assessment towards 'assessment culture' and formative assessment. As a result, teachers often find themselves struggling to keep up with the many demands of assessment brought by educational reforms. Correspondingly, DeLuca et al. (2019) and Xu (2019) highlighted that over the past two decades, there have been notable accountability mandates and standards-based curricula worldwide, leading to a proliferation of assessment practices in schools. This shift of attention towards assessment has called upon teachers to be armed with a variety of techniques and capabilities that allow them to communicate students' learning outcomes to various stakeholders. Such growth in assessment practices was accompanied by the burgeoning power of classroom assessment and the role of formative feedback in informing instruction and learning, adding a further component to the basket of AL and teachers' knowledge base. It is compulsory then to define AL from the eye of the beholder. Simply put, AL is described differently according to the various specificities that characterize a certain educational and assessment context (Brookhart, 2011). Likewise, Willis et al. (2013) regarded AL as "a dynamic context-dependent social practice that involves teachers articulating and negotiating classroom and cultural knowledge with one another and with learners, in the initiation,

development and practice of assessment to achieve the learning goals of students" (p. 242). As such, AL should be discussed within a standards-based framework of education in which assessment practices, theories, and philosophies are used to uplift teaching and learning (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013). Therefore, recognizing the fundamental role of context in developing and enacting assessment knowledge and skills is paramount.

2.2 Language Assessment Literacy (LAL)

Pill and Harding (2013) defined LAL as a "repertoire of competences that enable an individual to understand, evaluate and, in some cases, create language tests and analyze test data" (p. 381). This definition underscores the predominant role of tests as a primary assessment tool, reflecting rather a traditional view of assessment, where it was considered distinct from teaching. In line with the focus on creating assessments, selecting them, and analyzing data, Malone (2013) emphasized teachers' responsibility and suggested that LAL "refers to language instructors' familiarity with testing definitions and the application of this knowledge to classroom practices in general and specifically to issues related to assessing language" (p. 329). In an attempt to go beyond viewing LAL as solely knowledge and skills to testing, later definitions of LAL geared more towards adding an understanding of the impact that assessment can have on individuals and society at large. As a case in point, Inbar-Lourie (2008), in her definition of LAL, accentuated the importance of "having the capacity to ask and answer critical questions about the purpose for assessment, about the fitness of the tool being used, about testing conditions, and about what is going to happen on the basis of the test results" (p. 389). This critical view is in accordance with O'Loughlin's (2013) definition of LAL, wherein it is construed as the culmination of skills that enable teachers to design tests, score them, and critically interpret the resulting data in a manner that reflects the broader societal roles and functions of assessment. The shift in understanding LAL can be attributed to the sociocultural learning theories that have influenced the field of language assessment, evolving testing into a broader concept of assessment (Hidri, 2021; Inbar-Lourie, 2017). This involves not only measuring learners' language proficiency as in testing but also overseeing and enhancing their advancement in the target language (Csépes, 2014).

2.3 Teachers' Writing Assessment Literacy

Admittedly, assessing L2 students' writing skills plays a significant role in the academic development of both teachers and students within the writing classroom (Acar, 2023). To this, it is axiomatic that assessment literacy and writing instruction are inextricably intertwined, owing the fact that they both celebrate the development of students' proficiency as their ultimate goal (Acar, 2023). Accordingly, it is apparent then that adequately assessing writing calls for a mosaic combination of writing conventions and the principles underlying assessment literacy, especially given the complex nature of writing, and the multifaceted structure of its dynamic process (Hartwell & Aull, 2023). In this sense, Rad and Alipour (2024) claimed that "practitioners engaged in evaluating writing must possess a profound awareness of the intricate dynamics present in writing processes and the essential components of AL" (p. 3). That is, a sound piece of knowledge about best practices in each area, namely techniques for assessing writing fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and overall coherence (Crusan et al., 2016).

Likewise, L2 writing teachers need to have at least a clear picture and reasonable understanding of writing assessment principles: grading, scoring, making informed

judgments or decisions about students, and providing feedback. In so doing, teachers are required to, according to Weigle (2007), demonstrate expertise in designing, administering, and scoring writing tasks. She also emphasized the importance of teachers being cognizant of the potential applications and constraints of writing assessment outcomes, recognizing the hallmarks of effective assessment and the elements of exemplary written work, comprehending the distinctions between formative and summative evaluation, appreciating the contextual nuances of good writing, and developing proficiency in interpreting data gleaned from externally mandated assessments. The same criteria and prerequisites for teachers involved in writing assessment were echoed by Crusan (2010), adding the ability to create writing prompts that yield pertinent data for various purposes. Furthermore, Crusan et al. (2016) believed that "assessment literacy is not just about content or delivery but how this content is enmeshed with teachers' knowledge, belief, and practices" (p. 45). Therefore, such literacy must be translated in accordance with idiosyncratic features of particular teaching and learning contexts. Ferris and Hedgcock (2014, p. 203) pointed out that "informative writing assessment practices take into account students' needs and competencies, social and institutional expectations regarding writing performance, target genres, the teacher's readiness to deploy assessment tools, and the quality of the assessment instruments themselves."

AL is part and parcel of teaching and learning; the day-to-day instructional activities necessitate the provision of effective feedback to improve student learning, which is known as feedback literacy. This latter is considered a key component of a teacher's WAL. According to Watling and Ginsburg (2019), the relationship between feedback and assessment works as an alchemy of learning. Parallely, to help students level up their writing, Weng et al. (2023) assured that assessment feedback should encapsulate "the structure, style, coherence, cohesion, organization, spelling, and punctuations of the writing" (p. 3). In fact, Carless and Winstone (2020) stated that not only do feedback-literate teachers provide efficient feedback to students, but they also engage them in the process of classroom feedback through peer feedback and the integration of technology. They further claimed that feedback-literate teachers are aware of the importance of adding a formative sense to summative assessment by offering feedback before final grades (Carless & Winstone, 2020). In essence, teachers who are feedback-literate manage the feedback workload, take into consideration students' feelings, use multiple tools and techniques to leverage feedback, and, most importantly, know when the provision of feedback is indispensable (Lee, 2021). With respect to that, Lee (2017) maintained that "although feedback literacy is still a nascent concept in the L2 writing literature, it has a vital role to play in helping teachers deliver useful feedback and in enabling students to utilize feedback productively" (p. 150).

2.4 Writing Assessment in the Moroccan Higher Education

While Moroccan literature on writing is not lacking in quantity, much of it focuses on investigating this topic from the perspective of learners. Specifically, there is a growing body of research examining teachers' feedback and its impact on the development of students' writing skills (Bouziane & Zyad, 2018). However, it is noteworthy that apart from Bouziane's (2017) groundbreaking chapter on the assessment of EFL writing in Morocco, no other published article, book, or proceeding chapter mentions the term 'assessment literacy' either in secondary education or in higher education institutions. This dearth of research is often associated with the challenges of EFL writing assessment that are nothing but manifestations

of broader issues within the Moroccan university system. Even up to the present time, no official guidelines outline assessment practices for each module in the departments of English studies. Ahmad (2021) also lamented the scarcity and quality of pre-service and in-service training in language assessment, noting that their theoretical underpinning is not adequately honed for practical teaching and assessment contexts.

Ahmed (2018) further asserted that the Moroccan educational system is deficient in fostering an effective evaluation culture that is perceived as fair and acceptable by educators and students alike. Other contributing factors include the nonexistence of a systematic frame of EFL writing assessment in particular (Bouziane, 2017). This state of affairs is particularly perilous, given that university teachers shoulder a significant responsibility in managing all facets of assessment, encompassing the administration and grading of various assessment components. These latter include, among others, quizzes, in-class assignments, portfolio management, as well as mid-term and final examinations (Ahmad, 2021). Additionally, Khtou (2020) pinpointed the need for the English studies departments in Morocco to prioritize professional development and implement an effective system of assessment, particularly focusing on formative assessment. He expressed concerns that many teachers begin their careers without appropriate pedagogical training and proposed solutions to enhance the assessment system, such as reducing the number of students per group to streamline testing and grading processes. This argument parallels Abouabdelkader's (2018) view, which states that assessing university students' writing ability has become increasingly challenging due to the skyrocketing number of students enrolled in the English studies departments, rendering the task of scoring their compositions a daunting experience.

When limited to writing, Bouziane (2017) argued that "no news is good news" (p. 309), with numerous voices expressing dissatisfaction concerning testing and advocating a fresh perspective on the matter. As a matter of fact, assessment in Morocco at the tertiary level is not regulated by common standards, and thus the approach to students' writing assessment is often intuitive. Concerning this, a systematic review carried out by Ahmed (2018) highlighted that assessment in the MENA region is characterized by inconsistency and often fails to align with international standards of writing assessment. Furthermore, there exists a paucity in terms of employing rubrics, whether analytical or holistic, for assessing students' EFL writing. The review also sheds light on the deficiency in teachers' assessment literacy, asserting that educators who are proficient in assessment practices are rather elusive in Arab university contexts. In the same context, Gebril and Hozayin (2011) confidently claimed that a significant majority of educators lack the technical knowledge required to design and translate educational assessment policies into assessment practices. This deficiency underlines the critical need for assessment training in writing assessment.

In an insightful study aimed at raising awareness of assessment design practices in higher education in Morocco, El Kasri et al. (2023) conducted an examination of the design of assessment practices within three Moroccan faculties of letters and humanities across three state Moroccan universities: Moulay Ismail University, Meknes; Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra; and Hassan II University in Ain Chock, Casablanca, utilizing document analysis. The findings revealed that assessment design warrants greater attention, as many test designers exhibit weaknesses in assessment design techniques that often lead students to rely on rote learning and guessing. In so far as the techniques they use foster rote learning, memorization and guessing. In addition to that, there is a lack of consistency among professors in terms of test

design for their students, not to mention that most examined tests lack key principles of assessment design, specifically validity and authenticity.

2.5 Previous Studies

Numerous researchers have delved into WAL. These studies offer valuable insights into this multifaceted domain and shed light on its complexities in different contexts. A landmark article authored by Crusan et al. (2016) was a guiding force for many subsequent articles. The study surveyed 702 second-language writing instructors from tertiary institutions to determine their levels of WAL. In terms of beliefs about writing assessment, teachers maintained a positive attitude towards the usefulness of out-of-class writing assignments, portfolios, as well as timed in-class assignments. More than half of the instructors found writing assessment to be interesting but challenging, while only a small portion of the sample had a negative attitude towards writing assessment. Regarding practices, the vast majority of teachers asserted that they incorporate multiple drafts in their writing classes, utilize rubrics, and share criteria with their students. The respondents also emphasized their encouragement of self-assessment adoption, integration of technology, and implementation of integrated writing assessment. The results also identified a notable variation in confidence levels regarding assessment knowledge and practices among teachers with different levels of teaching experience.

Likewise, Lam (2019) investigated the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of Hong Kong secondary school teachers concerning classroom-based writing assessment, following Xu and Brown's (2016) framework. The study involved the use of questionnaires, telephone interviews, and classroom observations to survey 66 teachers. The findings divulged that the majority of respondents possessed remarkable assessment knowledge and held positive conceptions about alternative writing assessments. Regarding beliefs, most teachers perceived classroom-based writing assessment as high-stakes, exam-focused, and standardized. A representative number of interviewees also expressed a preference for alternative writing assessment approaches, albeit with some skepticism about students' ability to engage in such assessments effectively. In addition, the majority of respondents considered writing assessment as a tool to inform the learning process and develop students' writing skills. In terms of practices, the combination of in-class essay writing and take-home exams was a common strategy among the majority of respondents. Furthermore, a good number of interviewees asserted that they adopted process writing, rubric-based marking, and peer assessment, although they encountered challenges related to time constraints and students' lack of autonomy.

Sohrabi et al. (2022) replicated the employment of the questionnaire developed by Crusan et al. (2016) to explore university teachers' perceptions of WAL in Iran. The adapted version of the questionnaire was completed by 118 participants. According to the findings, teachers appeared to be knowledgeable in various aspects of writing assessment, such as portfolios, integrated writing activities, and rubric creation and employment. As for their beliefs, the quantitative data seemed to draw a positive image about writing assessment, with the exception of its subjective nature and reliability of self-assessment. Overall, although a more positive trend for the writing assessment was reported by the participants as part of their knowledge and belief systems, their perceived WAL level in these two constructs mismatched their assessment practices in composing to some extent, especially with regard to rubrics.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the majority of teachers stated they had received training on assessment as part of a course during their education, their responses showed that they lacked sufficient knowledge about writing assessment.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used a descriptive quantitative design because it offers a landscape to understand the notion of WAL. The reason behind opting for such a design stems primarily from the study's objectives, which necessitate understanding the current status of teachers' WAL in Moroccan EFL higher education. Descriptive studies are often utilized to identify trends and patterns and thus directing future research and academics to explore underlying reasons behind these patterns (Loeb et al., 2017). In alignment with descriptive studies, the study opted for a descriptive survey manifested in self-completion questionnaire given its capacity to offer an illuminating description. Self-completion questionnaires were chosen as the sole tool for data collection in order to avoid issues such as interviewer bias or variability in question delivery. Moreover, they are convenient for respondents, allowing them to complete the questionnaire at their own pace and convenience.

3.2 Participants

The present study focused on Moroccan EFL university teachers. Writing assessment is at the heart of daily activities of both students and professors who are responsible for guiding and assessing various forms of students' writing. Furthermore, at the tertiary level, especially within the departments of English studies, the majority of mid- and end-of-term exams are writing-based and assess both the language and content components. Therefore, it was logical to target university teachers as the study's population rather than high school teachers. This choice was informed by the understanding that while writing skills are present in secondary education, they may not be as fully developed or sophisticated enough to warrant the same level of emphasis of writing assessment as observed in the related literature. The respondents were selected on the basis of their accessibility and willingness to take part of the study. The study sample comprised of 54 EFL Moroccan university teachers (n=54). Data was collected by means of online and in-person delivery of questionnaires during the spring semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The questionnaire was distributed to a considerable number of professors, affiliated with several higher education institutions of English via various channels, namely their academic email addresses, Facebook Messenger, and LinkedIn. Additionally, hard copies of the questionnaire were provided to professors teaching at the School of Arts and Humanities and the Ecole Normale Supérieure belonging to Moulay Ismail University in Meknes.

3.3 Instruments

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from Crusan, Plakans, and Gebriel's (2016) teachers' writing assessment literacy (WAL) questionnaire. The scale was adapted and modified specifically for the purposes of this study. The questionnaire is structured into five major sections composed mostly of closed-ended questions, in which only three of them will be discussed in this study: demographic information, perceptions of WAL and reported practices.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, descriptive statistics were used, beginning with a preliminary examination of the respondents' demographic characteristics. The primary aim was to summarize, categorize, and describe the fundamental attributes of the data using two main ways. First, measures of central tendency were utilized to provide insights into the typical or representative value of the data. This involved calculating the mean of the respondents' data. Second, measures of variability were employed to understand the range and distribution of the data. This was achieved by reporting the standard deviation of the participants' scores across different constructs in the research. These statistical measures allowed the researcher to effectively summarize the various tendencies present in the data (Creswell, 2012).

4. Results

According to the results in Table 1, the overwhelming majority (85.2%) of the participants perceived assessment as a backbone for writing classes, receiving one of the highest mean scores ($M = 4.11$, $Std. D = .691$). Hence, it was not surprising that almost all participants (92.6%) either strongly agreed (42.6%) or agreed (50%) that mastering assessment of writing is a prerequisite for teachers. Such positive perceptions were further echoed in the sixth statement, where a significant portion (70.4%) of the participants averred their agreement with the fact that writing exams reflect writing ability. By the same token, 85.2% ($SA = 29.6\%$ & $A = 55.6\%$) of the instructors revealed that writing assessment is an invaluable source for feedback for instruction. As for the difficulties associated with writing assessment, 40.7% of the participants believed that writing assessment is time consuming, while half of the participants considered correcting papers a daunting task, with almost the same percentage (53.7%) of the sample expressing their disappointment regarding their inability to correct all students' written products. Despite finding writing assessment interesting, 48.2% of the participants claimed that writing assessment is indeed difficult. In relation to that, the claim that training is not helpful for teachers received one of the lowest mean scores ($M = 2.30$), reflecting teachers' disagreement with the statement ($D = 40.4\%$ & $SD = 24.1\%$). With regard to the last statement, 74.1% of the participants are confident in their abilities to assess writing well.

Table 1: *Teachers' Perceptions of Writing Assessment*

Statements/ Items	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	M	Std. D
Writing exams provide a good estimate of writing ability.	71.4	70.4	7.4	14.8	-	3.70	.816
Writing assessment provides good feedback for writing instruction.	29.6	55.6	11.1	1.9	1.9	4.09	.807
Training is not helpful for teachers to assess writing.	-	18.5	16.7	40.4	24.1	2.30	1.039
Assessment of writing is an important capability that teachers should master.	42.6	50	7.4	-	-	4.35	.619
Writing assessment is time consuming.	20.4	40.7	16.7	16.7	5.6	3.54	1.161
It is difficult to work with other colleagues during scoring of writing exams.	13	33.3	33.3	20.4	-	3.39	.960
I love teaching writing, but I find correcting papers a daunting task.	18.5	50	20.4	5.6	5.6	3.70	1.021
I feel disappointed when I cannot correct all students' written products.	25.9	53.7	11.1	7.4	1.9	3.94	.920
I am not confident in my ability to assess well.	-	9.3	16.7	46.3	27.8	2.07	.908

Teachers were also requested to highlight the frequency of using a set of techniques and strategies when assessing writing through a five-point Liker scale (1= Always, 2= Often, 3= sometimes, 4= Rarely, 5= never). As can be exhibited in Table 2, correcting both timed in-class writing and out of class essay assignments as well as adjusting instruction based on assessment results were reported to be the most frequently used strategies by teachers, with 75,9 % of the respondents claiming they have engaged in such practices, either 'always' or 'often.' Moreover, using scoring rubrics to grade essays was frequently pinpointed by a significant majority (61.1%) of the participants followed by the practice of integrating writing exams with other skills which was fairly frequently used by approximately half of the sample (48. 2%), who stated they employed such strategies 'always' or 'often,' and 'sometimes' by 40.7% of them. Similarly, the multiple-draft approach seemed to be employed frequently by 40.8% of the teachers, with 40.8% indicating they used it always or often. Portfolios, on the other hand, were less likely to be used by teachers as nearly one-third of them claimed they only resorted to them occasionally, while 46.3% rarely or never did so. Similarly, multiple-draft approach seemed to be employed frequently by 40.8% of the teachers, who claimed they have used it always or often.

Table 2: Teachers Writing Assessment Practices

Statements	Always	Often	Some- times	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std. D
	%	%	%	%	%		
I use scoring rubrics when grading essays.	29.6	31.5	25.9	7.4	5.6	2.28	1.140
I use portfolios in my writing classes.	5.6	18.5	29.6	22.2	24.1	3.41	1.206
I integrate writing with other skills when I design writing exams.	20.4	27.8	40.7	5.6	5.6	2.48	1.059
I utilize a multiple-draft approach in which students receive feedback and revise one or more times before a paper is graded	16.7	24.1	29.6	14.8	14.8	2.87	1.289
I adjust my instruction based on assessment results.	37	38.9	16.7	7.4	-	1.94	.920
I correct both timed in-class writing (quizzes/ final exams) and out of class essay assignments (e.g. reports and essays)	33.3	42.6	18.5	5.6	-	1.96	.868

All statements featured in Table 3 indicated mean scores below $M = 2.44$, suggesting that teachers often utilize the strategies mentioned, which are characterized by the involvement of students in the process of writing assessment. Case in point, stating the purpose for writing assessment appeared to be at the heart of teachers' practices since the overwhelming majority of them (81.4%) reported always or often communicating the purpose of writing to student. The same held true for providing feedback on students' performance in that 77.7% of the participants claimed embracing such practice quite frequently. Additionally, approximately two-thirds of the participants divulged involving students in the assessment process by incorporating self-assessment and peer-assessment fairly frequently; 57.7% and 66.6%, respectively, indicated doing this always or often. As for the last two statement, around half of the respondents 55.6%, averred frequently providing students with a set of criteria for which they will be held accountable.

Table 3: Teachers' Writing Assessment Practices with a Focus on Students' Involvement

Statements	Always	Often	Some-times	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std. D
	%	%	%	%	%		
I ask students to do self-assessment in writing classes.	20.4	37	31.5	3.7	7.4	2.41	1.091
I involve students in the assessment process by encouraging them to correct and provide feedback on each other's work.	25.9	40.7	24.1	9.3	-	2.17	.927
I provide feedback on students' writing performance.	44.4	33.3	14.8	5.6	1.9	1.87	.991
I clearly identify and state the purpose for writing assessment.	40.7	40.7	9.3	7.4	1.9	1.89	.984
I provide students with a rubric or a list of criteria for which they will be held accountable on the writing assignment.	24.1	31.5	25.9	13	5.6	2.44	1.160

5. Discussion

Intriguingly, the overwhelming majority of teachers acknowledge the prominence of assessment in writing classes given the fact that it informs instruction and mirrors students' ability. Such a tendency reveals that teachers are aware of the benefits of classroom-based assessment. Thus, teachers' perceptions are in congruence with the literature that advocates the essential role of writing assessment in bridging the gap between teaching and learning (e.g., DeLuca et al., 2019). This positive attitude towards assessment is a good sign that teachers are likely to implement assessment to bring about changes in their instruction according to their students' performance. Undoubtedly, the more importance and attention are given to writing assessment, the more teachers will strive to be armed with the necessary tools to conduct writing assessment. Notwithstanding this positive picture, teachers did not deny the difficulty of writing assessment. This may be attributed to the time-consuming nature of this construct as well as to the burden of correction or scoring, where disappointment looms over teachers when they cannot cover all students' papers in correction. In fact, the results from this study provide support for other empirical studies in different contexts. Case in point, the international study of Crusan et al. (2016) unraveled that teachers consider writing assessment interesting but at the same time challenging and that it is a good reflection of students' writing ability. The latter is also found as a result in Lam's (2019) study and Sohrabi et al. (2022) in China.

The second research question (What are the assessment writing practices adopted by Moroccan EFL university teachers?) aimed at identifying the writing assessment practices employed by Moroccan EFL university teachers. Accordingly, the findings unveil significant patterns that call for nuanced interpretation. Broadly construed, teachers' reported practices demonstrate a diverse spectrum, drawing from the conceptual framework of writing assessment elucidated in the literature. However, a discernable inconsistency has been noticed between some of these practices and teachers' perceptions and understanding of writing assessment, which underlines the complexity of translating theoretical knowledge into instructional practices. These findings corroborate the results of Tayyebi et al. (2022) and

Weng (2023). The preponderance of participants used a wide array of activities spanning traditional and alternative assessment paradigms, yet the frequency of utilization varies across different aspects. For example, the use of scoring rubrics and the adjustment of instruction based on the assessment outcomes are frequently and occasionally practiced. Conversely, portfolios are hardly used along with the integration of technology in writing assessment (see Table 2). This observation, according to the findings, can be linked the challenges that hinder the successful implementation of certain practices. Factors such as time constraints, lack of training in utilizing performance-based assessment, and concerns regarding the management and assessment of student work within an alternative framework pose substantial hurdles as was mentioned by the participants and reiterated in the review of the literature (e.g., Lee, 2017).

Importantly, the results have also accentuated teachers' focus on involving students in the writing assessment process (Table 3). The self-reported data suggest that teachers lean more towards practices that facilitate students' grasp of why, what, and how of writing assessment. For instance, a large part of the respondents encouraged students to provide feedback on each other's work, identify the purpose of writing assessment, and explain the criteria for which students will be held accountable for the writing tasks. As a matter of fact, the most mentioned activities by teachers regarding alternative assessment were self- and peer-assessment. On the one hand, this focus may reflect a pedagogical inclination towards fostering student autonomy and active learning; where the ultimate objective of writing assessment is of utmost importance to the development of students' writing according to Carless and Winstone (2020). Equipping students with the necessary tools to monitor their own learning. On the other hand, it may be nothing but teachers' adeptness in navigating the complexities of writing assessment. Instead of relying solely on the teacher's feedback, which is difficult to implement in large classes, teachers leverage self- and peer-assessment, benefiting students from multiple perspectives and providing more comprehensive insights to develop students' writing skills.

6. Conclusion

The findings have indicated that attitudes towards writing assessment are positive, even though it can be quite challenging and complex. Teachers acknowledge the significance of such construct as well as the usefulness of using scoring rubrics alongside the adoption of more innovative and alternative ways of assessment. The respondents are highly confident in their ability to assess students' writing skills accurately. However, they regard writing assessment as time-consuming and demanding owing to its multifaceted aspects. In terms of writing assessment practices and techniques, the study unraveled interesting findings. Despite their positive attitudes and knowledge of the mosaic landscape of writing assessment methods and approaches, teachers tend to focus heavily on specific methods. Specifically, teachers' self-reported data revealed an excessive emphasis on timed in-class exams, often at the expense of providing specific feedback needed for writing development. To compensate, teachers equip students with the necessary tools to embark on self- and peer-assessment, in an attempt to develop students' autonomy and responsibility in higher education, while mitigating the constraints created by the administrative and practical aspects of the context as well as the difficult nature of writing assessment. By and large, the findings of the study have implied that Moroccan EFL University teachers possess high levels

of writing assessment literacy and that they have adapted their writing assessment practices to suit their teaching context.

The study also touches upon the dire need to reconsider and enhance teacher education and training programs. Robust professional development is essential to equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and principles to implement effective writing assessment practices. This cannot be achieved without a dedicated focus on writing assessment within the curriculum that captures the nuances of both the theoretical and practical aspects. Teachers also should upgrade an action-research mindset to professional development, focusing on theory and practice. In so doing, involving various stakeholders responsible for education, such as decision makers and teachers in the development of training courses can foster a collaborative and informed approach to assessing writing in higher education. These programs should also consider the realities and constraints impacting the teachers' writing assessment practices. Accordingly, policymakers should provide infrastructure and frameworks to support research and improve assessment practices among teachers. For example, establishing support systems to assist teachers in managing writing assessments can address challenges such as large class sizes and administrative issues. This holistic approach will guarantee that teachers are better equipped to perform assessments effectively.

In short, the answers to the study's research questions have implied further inquiries and areas worthy of exploration. Accordingly, it is advised that future research should be oriented towards considering several recommendations stemming from the present undertaking study could have been more comprehensive and interesting if the population had been extended to include students. Thus, getting their perspectives on their teachers' assessment practices as well as investigating the impact of these practices on their learning is crucial for understanding the effectiveness of these practices. Lastly, future researchers are also advised to replicate this study to validate the findings using larger samples, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the results.

7. Limitations of the Study

There is no such thing as a study without restrictions and shortcomings, and this one, as the majority of studies, is subjected to several potential limitations. First, the study opted for a quantitative descriptive design, which is quite effective in painting a general picture of the topic and identifying prevalent trends and patterns among the target sample. However, it lacks the depth and understanding that qualitative methods could offer to the study. Moreover, interviews and classroom observations, as effective data collection instruments, could have further enriched the interpretation and explanation of the quantitative results. Second, the methodology implemented in this research study has limitations resulting from the innate nature of the data collection instrument. The reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires introduces the possibility of response bias, as teachers may provide socially desirable answers that are in tandem with what the literature suggests about appropriate writing assessment and good teaching practices, rather than accurate reflections of their practices and beliefs. Third, the sample size of this study was relatively small, with most of the study's respondents belonging to Moulay Ismail University, which limits the generalizability of the findings. However, any findings from any research are generalizable only within that situation and within the context of the work. In summary, while this study

provides important insights into the writing assessment literacy of Moroccan EFL university teachers, the above-mentioned limitations can be regarded as a call for more future research and caution in generalizing the findings beyond the specific context studied

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