

Assessment and Evaluation in EFL Classrooms: A Narrative Literature Review of Ethical Assessment, Value-Based Learning, SDG Integration, and Washback Effects

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Abstract

Assessment and evaluation have shifted from traditional measurement-oriented practices toward more authentic, ethical, and transformative approaches in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. This narrative literature review synthesizes studies on ethical and fair assessment, authentic assessment for value-based learning, character and collaboration assessment, performance-based assessment integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and washback effects of value-integrated assessment. Drawing upon recent empirical and conceptual literature, this review explores how contemporary assessment practices contribute not only to language proficiency but also to students' moral development, critical thinking, and global awareness. The review indicates that ethical and performance-oriented assessments promote holistic learning by linking linguistic competence with character education, sustainability values, and social responsibility. Furthermore, integrating SDG themes into assessment tasks generates positive washback effects by encouraging meaningful pedagogy and student engagement. The review highlights gaps in empirical evidence regarding longitudinal washback, contextual implementation in Islamic EFL settings, and assessment rubric development for value integration. It concludes that value-integrated assessment provides a promising framework for rethinking EFL evaluation beyond conventional testing paradigms.

Keywords: assessment and evaluation, performance-based assessment, value-integrated assessment, SDGs, washback, EFL

1. Introduction

Assessment and evaluation constitute fundamental components of the teaching and learning process, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Traditionally, assessment has been associated with measuring learners' mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and receptive skills through standardized testing. However, contemporary perspectives in language education increasingly emphasize that assessment should serve broader educational purposes, including guiding instruction, improving learning processes, and fostering students' cognitive, social, and ethical development.

Recent developments in language pedagogy have contributed to a shift from product-oriented testing toward authentic and learner-centered forms of assessment. Scholars have argued that assessment should reflect communicative competence and learners' ability to apply language meaningfully in real-life contexts rather than merely demonstrate discrete linguistic knowledge (Cheng, 2005; Al-Kuwari et al., 2022). This shift has encouraged the adoption of alternative approaches such as authentic assessment, performance-based assessment, portfolio evaluation, and collaborative assessment.

Alongside these pedagogical changes, assessment practices are increasingly expected to integrate ethical values, character development, and global citizenship. This expectation is reinforced by international educational agendas, particularly the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize education's role in promoting sustainability, social justice, and responsible citizenship. In response, EFL educators have begun embedding value-oriented and sustainability themes into assessment tasks to make learning more meaningful and socially relevant.

Despite growing interest in these approaches, the literature remains fragmented across themes such as ethical assessment, character evaluation, SDG-integrated performance assessment, and washback effects. A comprehensive synthesis is therefore needed. This article reviews existing scholarship on these areas and examines how assessment and evaluation can function as transformative instruments in EFL education.

2. Method of Review

This study employs a narrative literature review approach to synthesize and critically discuss scholarly work related to assessment and evaluation in EFL contexts. Narrative reviews are suitable for mapping conceptual developments, identifying patterns across studies, and providing interpretive insights into broad educational themes.

The literature reviewed in this article was selected based on relevance to five thematic areas:

1. Ethical and fair assessment practices
2. Authentic assessment for value-based learning
3. Assessment of character and collaboration
4. Performance-based assessment incorporating SDG themes
5. Washback effects of value-integrated EFL assessment

Sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, conceptual papers, and empirical studies published primarily between 2020–2026, with several foundational works included for theoretical grounding. Studies were analyzed through thematic categorization to identify recurring concepts, major findings, and research gaps.

3. Thematic Review and Discussion

3.1 Ethical and Fair Assessment Practices in EFL

Ethical assessment has emerged as a critical dimension of quality language education. Fairness, transparency, and accountability are considered essential principles in ensuring that assessment accurately reflects learners' abilities without bias or unequal treatment (Tofighi & Safa, 2023). Research consistently suggests that students' perceptions of fairness influence motivation, trust, and engagement in the learning process.

Another recurring theme concerns transparency in scoring procedures and feedback practices. Studies indicate that clear rubrics, explicit criteria, and constructive feedback contribute to students' understanding of expectations and improve formative learning opportunities (Azizi & Ismail, 2023; Hosseinnia & Kafi, 2024).

From Islamic educational perspectives, ethical assessment is further connected to justice (*adl*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and moral responsibility. This perspective expands conventional assessment discourse by positioning evaluation not only as a technical procedure but also as an ethical act embedded in moral accountability (Rahman, 2025; Hasibuan et al., 2025). Such views suggest that fair assessment should support both academic achievement and ethical formation.

Overall, the literature indicates that ethical assessment integrates professional standards with moral principles, creating a more holistic model of evaluation.

3.2 Authentic Assessment for Value-Based EFL Learning

Authentic assessment has been widely recognized as an alternative to traditional testing due to its emphasis on meaningful tasks and real-world application. Through projects, portfolios, presentations, and reflective tasks, students demonstrate language competence in contexts that resemble actual communication (Briggs & Kim, 2020).

Within value-based education, authentic assessment serves broader purposes than measuring linguistic performance alone. It allows evaluation of responsibility, cooperation, and ethical

engagement, linking language learning with character development (Hendrawati, 2026; Tikader & Mandal, 2025).

Portfolio assessment and reflective journals have been particularly highlighted as tools for supporting learner autonomy and holistic evaluation. Studies suggest that these instruments capture dimensions often neglected in standardized tests, including critical thinking, creativity, and social awareness (Neina & Qomariyah, 2021).

The literature therefore positions authentic assessment as both a measurement tool and a pedagogical strategy that promotes meaningful learning and ethical awareness.

3.3 Assessing Character and Collaboration in EFL Classrooms

Increasingly, scholars argue that EFL assessment should capture social and interpersonal dimensions of learning. Character-based assessment includes evaluating responsibility, honesty, empathy, and respect, while collaborative assessment focuses on teamwork, peer interaction, and shared problem-solving (Akbar, 2025; Sukarno & Riyadini, 2024).

Performance-based methods such as peer assessment, group presentations, and project evaluation have been found effective in assessing collaborative competencies. These methods enable teachers to observe how learners negotiate meaning, share responsibilities, and contribute to group goals (Keo et al., 2025).

Moreover, reflective journals and observation-based assessment have been used to assess character development. Findings suggest that these approaches help students develop self-awareness while enabling teachers to monitor changes in attitudes and behavior (Yang & Nie, 2026).

Collectively, the literature indicates that character and collaboration assessment broadens evaluation beyond individual cognitive outcomes toward more comprehensive learning development.

3.4 Performance-Based Assessment Incorporating SDG Themes

Performance-based assessment has gained prominence due to its alignment with communicative competence and higher-order thinking. Unlike conventional testing, it requires students to apply language skills through authentic performances such as projects, debates, and problem-solving tasks (Al-Kuwari et al., 2022). Recent literature extends this model by integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) themes into assessment tasks. Topics such as climate action, equality, and sustainability provide meaningful contexts for language use while fostering global awareness (Batubara et al., 2025).

Studies suggest that SDG-integrated assessment contributes to multiple outcomes: improved language proficiency, stronger critical thinking, and greater social responsibility. Rubrics in such assessments often include indicators beyond linguistic accuracy, such as creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration.

This body of literature positions SDG-based performance assessment as a promising intersection between language education and education for sustainable development.

3.5 Washback Effects of Value-Integrated EFL Assessment

Washback refers to the influence of assessment on teaching and learning. Traditional test-driven systems often generate negative washback by narrowing instruction toward test preparation (Cheng, 2005). By contrast, value-integrated assessments appear to generate positive washback. Studies show that when assessment includes ethical reflection, social issues, or sustainability themes, teachers tend to adopt more meaningful instructional practices, and students become more engaged in learning (Lumintang & Kuswando, 2025).

Positive washback is also reflected in students' attitudes. Learners exposed to value-oriented tasks reportedly develop stronger awareness of social issues, global citizenship, and intercultural understanding.

Thus, the literature suggests that value-integrated assessment influences not only what students learn, but how teaching and learning are organized.

4. Research Gaps

Despite growing scholarship, several gaps remain. First, empirical studies examining long-term washback effects remain limited. Most existing research focuses on short-term classroom outcomes.

Second, there is insufficient research on how Islamic ethical principles can be operationalized into concrete assessment rubrics.

Third, studies on SDG-integrated performance assessment often emphasize implementation but rarely address reliability and validity issues.

Fourth, limited research explores how character, collaboration, and language proficiency can be assessed simultaneously through integrated frameworks.

Future studies should therefore investigate longitudinal impacts, contextual adaptations, and rubric design models for value-integrated assessment.

5. Conclusion

The literature reviewed indicates that assessment and evaluation in EFL classrooms should extend beyond measuring linguistic competence to support ethical, social, and intellectual development. Ethical assessment, authentic evaluation, character and collaboration assessment, performance-based tasks, and SDG-integrated assessment collectively represent a shift toward more holistic and meaningful educational practices.

The evidence also suggests that value-integrated assessment produces positive washback effects by encouraging transformative teaching practices and deeper student engagement. By linking language learning with sustainability, ethics, and character formation, assessment becomes not merely a measurement tool but a process of learning itself.

Therefore, value-integrated assessment offers a promising framework for reimagining EFL evaluation in ways that support communicative competence, critical awareness, and responsible global citizenship.

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