



UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Teachers' and Students' Views towards the Impact of Assessment Practices on
the Teaching and Learning of EFL in the Libyan Higher Education Sector

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By

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ABSTRACT

This study has been conducted with the aim of investigating teachers' and students' views towards the impact of the assessment practices on the teaching and learning of English as foreign language (EFL) in the higher education sector in Libya. It also highlights the importance of language assessment practices to the process of teaching and learning EFL in Libyan universities. It investigates the positive and negative effects of the assessment methods employed in Libyan EFL Education and the problems encountered by university teachers, students and other stakeholders involved in the educational process.

To achieve this aim, the research methods of questionnaire questions for teachers, face to face semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group interviews with students were conducted. Teachers and students from English departments in three Libyan universities were participants in this study.

The findings show that high-stakes summative assessment practices are largely dominant in the field of EFL education in Libya. Summative assessment displaces the use of other alternative assessment practices such as peer assessment, self-assessment and other formative assessment practices that can be utilised to improve EFL education. It also negatively influences the objectives of the teaching and learning process. Hence, assessment, teaching and learning practices are mainly oriented towards grading, classification and certification purposes rather than improving students' linguistic competence.

Recommendations are made concerning the changes in assessment practices that might be introduced to improve the quality of EFL education in Libya. The findings of the study helped devise a conceptual model in order to understand and explain the phenomenon of assessment impact on EFL education and to improve the teaching and learning of EFL in Libyan higher education. The model is also intended to mitigate negative impacts of assessment on teaching and learning.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	I
Acknowledgements	II
List of Tables.....	VIII
List of Figures	IX
List of Abbreviations.....	X
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Statement of the Research Problem.....	3
1.3 Main and Sub-Research Questions.....	4
1.4 Sample and Methods of Data Collection	5
1.5 Gap in Research and Importance of the Study	6
1.6 Organization of the Thesis.....	7
1.7 Summary.....	9
Chapter Two: Context of the Study.....	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 General Background of Libya	10
2.2.1 Demographic and Population Distribution in Libya.....	11
2.2.2 A Brief Historical Overview of the Libyan Educational System	12
2.2.3 Modern History of Libya and Educational Development.....	13
2.3 Teaching EFL in the Libyan Educational System	15
2.4 Challenges and Difficulties Encountered EFL Education in Libya	18
2.4.1 Large Numbers of Students and Lack of Learning Resources	18
2.4.2 Teaching and Learning Methods	20
2.4.3 The Teaching Syllabi and Training Courses.....	21
2.4.4 Termination of Specialized Secondary Schools in Libya	22
2.4.5 The Impact of the Political Context	23
2.5 The Impact of Educational Assessment System on EFL Education	24
2.6 Departments, Faculties and Universities Involved in this Study.....	26
2.7 Summary.....	28
Chapter Three: Review of Literature	30
3.1 Introduction	30
3.2 Terms and Concepts Associated with Assessment.....	30
3.2.1 Assessment.....	31
3.2.2 Evaluation	33

3.2.3 Measurement.....	34
3.2.4 Tests	36
3.2.5 Language Assessment Literacy.....	38
3.3 Quality of Assessment	41
3.3.1 The Socio-Cognitive Approach for Language Testing Validation	42
3.3.1.1 Test taker characteristics	44
3.3.1.2 Context validity	45
3.3.1.3 Cognitive Validity	47
3.3.1.4 Scoring validity	48
3.3.1.5 Consequential validity.....	49
3.3.1.6 Criterion-related validity	49
3.4 Formative Assessment and Summative Assessment.....	50
3.4.1 Formative Assessment as an Instructional Instrument.....	51
3.4.1.1 Feedback in Formative Assessment	53
3.4.1.2 Features of Effective Formative Feedback.....	55
3.4.1.3 Feedback Specificity	57
3.4.2 Effects of Summative Assessment on Teaching and Learning Practices	59
3.5 Washback Effects on Language Education	61
3.5.1 Definitions of the Term ‘Washback’	62
3.5.2 Similar Concepts to Washback	63
3.5.3 Complexity of Washback Phenomenon.....	65
3.5.4 Positive and Negative Washback Effects	67
3.5.3.1 Positive Washback	68
3.5.3.2 Negative Washback.....	70
3.6 The Impact of Assessment Practices on Teaching and Learning EFL.....	72
3.6.1 The Impact of Assessment Practices on EFL Education in Taiwan	72
3.6.2 The Impact of Assessment Practices on EFL education in South Korea.....	73
3.6.3 Impact of Assessment Practices on EFL Education in Some Arab Countries.....	74
3.7 Learning Theories and Foreign Language Education.....	76
3.7.1 Foreign Language Learning According to the Behaviourist View	77
3.7.2 Foreign Language Learning According to the Constructivist View	80
3.8 Summary.....	84
Chapter Four: Research Methodology and Design	86
4.1 Introduction	86
4.2 Components of Research Planning.....	86
4.2.1 Research Design.....	86

4.2.1.1 Research philosophy	87
4.3 Research Methodology	89
4.3.1 Rationale for using a mixed methods approach	89
4.4 Methods of Data Collection.....	91
4.4.1 Teachers' Questionnaire	93
4.4.2 Face to Face Semi-structured Interviews with Teachers	95
4.4.3 Students' Focus Group Interviews.....	97
4.4.5 Research Sample	99
4.4.6 Pilot Study.....	101
4.4.6.1 Implications of the pilot study.....	102
4.5 Methods of Data Analysis	103
4.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis	103
4.5.1.1 Questionnaire Data Analysis	103
4.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis	104
4.5.2.1 Interview Data Analysis	104
4.5.2.2 Focus Group Data Analysis.....	106
4.6 Ethical Considerations	107
Chapter Five: Quantitative Data Analysis.....	108
5.1 Introduction	108
5.2 Description of the Sample	108
5.2.1 Characteristics of the Questionnaire Sample	109
5.2.1.1 Gender Distribution.....	109
5.2.1.2 Academic Qualifications	109
5.2.1.3 Teaching Experience	110
5.2.1.4 Number of Students in the Class	111
5.3 Questionnaire Data Analysis	111
5.3.1 The Main Teaching Practices Employed by Teachers in their Classes	112
5.3.2 The Main Assessment Practices Employed by Teachers in their Classes	113
5.3.3 Teachers' Views towards the Current Teaching Practices	114
5.3.4 Factors Influencing the Current Assessment Practices.	115
5.4 Summary of the Chapter.....	116
Chapter Six: Qualitative Data Analysis	119
6.1 Introduction	119
6.1.1 Description of the Qualitative Data Sample	119
6.1.2.1 Features of the Teachers' Interviews	119
6.1.2.2 Features of Students Focus Group Interviews.....	120

6.2 Interviews Data Analysis	120
6.2.1 Teaching and Assessment Practices	122
6.2.1.1 Classroom Teaching Practices	123
6.2.1.1.1 Reasons for Employing the Current Teaching Practices	126
6.2.1.1.2 Implementation of the Current Teaching Practices	128
6.2.1.2 Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices	130
6.2.1.2.1 Reasons for Employing the Current Assessment Practices	132
6.2.1.2.2 Implementation of the Current Assessment Practices	135
6.2.2 Teachers' Views and Attitudes towards the Current Assessment Practices	137
6.2.2.1 Teachers' Rationales for their Views towards the Assessment Practices	140
6.2.2.2 Ways Followed by Teachers for Realising their Views into Practice	142
6.2.3 The Assessment Impact on the Educational Process (Washback Effects)	144
6.2.3.1 Negative Washback Effects	144
6.2.3.2 Positive Washback Effects	147
6.2.3.3 Reasons for the current assessment impact on the educational process	150
6.2.3.4 Teachers' reactions towards the assessment impact (Washback Effect)	154
6.3 Focus Group Data Analysis	156
6.3.1 Students' Views towards the Current Assessment Practices	158
6.3.2 Students' Rationales for their Views towards the Assessment Practices	160
6.3.3 Students' Reactions towards the Current Assessment Practices	161
6.4 Summary of the Chapter	163
Chapter Seven: General Discussion	166
7.1 Introduction	166
7.2 Teaching and Assessment Practices	169
7.2.1 The current teaching practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities	169
7.2.2 Assessment Practices Employed by Teachers at Libyan Universities	172
7.3 Teachers' Views and Attitudes towards the Assessment Practices	175
7.4 Assessment Impact on the Educational Process (Washback Effects)	179
7.4.1 Negative Washback Effects	180
7.4.2 Positive Washback Effects	183
7.4.3 Reasons for the Assessment Impact	186
7.5 Students' Views towards the Assessment Practices	189
7.6 Conclusion	191
Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations	193
8.1 Introduction	193
8.2 Summary of the Main Research Findings and Implications	193

8.2.1 The External Factors	196
8.2.2 Internal Factors	197
8.3 Understanding the Nature of Assessment Impact on EFL Education	202
8.4 Limitations of the Study	207
8.5 Researcher's Recommendations	208
8.5.1 Recommendations Related to Educational Resourcing Problems	209
8.5.2 Recommendations Related to the Educational Policy at Libyan Universities	211
8.5.3 Recommendations for Teachers	214
8.6 Suggestions for Further Research	217
8.7 Originality and Contribution	218
References	220
Appendices	233
Appendix 1: Teachers' Questionnaire	233
Appendix 2A: Teachers' Interviews Questions	237
Appendix 2B: Sample of Teachers' Interviews Transcript	239
Appendix 3A: Questions of the Focus Group Interviews	244
Appendix 3B: Sample of Focus Group Interviews Transcript	245
Appendix 4: Themes and Codes Used for Qualitative Data Analysis	252
Appendix 5: Formal Notification of Ethical Approval from University of Hull	253

List of Tables

Table 2. 1 Population Growth in Libya.....	11
Table 3. 1 Context Validity Aspects in the test system	46
Table 4. 1: Research Methods Employed for Answering the Research Questions.....	93
Table 5. 1: Gender Distribution.....	109
Table 5. 2: Number of students in the Class	111
Table 5. 3: The main teaching practices employed by teachers in their classes	112
Table 5. 4: The main assessment practices employed by teachers in their classes	113
Table 5. 5: Teachers' views towards the current teaching practices	115
Table 5. 6: Factors influencing the current assessment practices.	116
Table 6. 1: Features of the Teachers Interviews.....	120
Table 6. 2: Teachers' Teaching Practices.....	124
Table 6. 3: Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices	131
Table 7. 1: the main findings of quantitative and qualitative analysis	167

List of Figures

Figure 2. 1 Map of Libya	11
Figure 2. 2 Structure of Libyan Education System	17
Figure 3. 1 Assessment Process	38
Figure 3. 2 Socio-cognitive framework for test development and validation	44
Figure 3. 3 A model of washback on policies at schools	66
Figure 5. 1 Teachers' Academic Qualification	110
Figure 5. 2 Teaching Experience.....	110
Figure 6. 1 Classroom Teaching Practices	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 8. 1 Summary of the Main Research Findings.....	195
Figure 8. 2 Understanding the nature of assessment impact on EFL education	204

List of Abbreviations

AFL	Assessment For Learning
ALM	Audio Lingual Method
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English Foreign Language
ELP	English Language Proficiency
FCE	First Certificate in English
GELP	General English Language Proficiency
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
LTA	Language Testing and Assessment
MA	Master of Arts
MoE	Ministry of Education
MRQ	Main Research Question
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council
SRQ	Sub-Research Question
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TOFEL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UG	Universal Grammar
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Over the past two decades, many educators and researchers in the field of general and language education have emphasized the role of assessment and testing in the educational process (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Cheng, 2005; Shohamy, 2007; Qi, 2007). They argued that teaching and assessment practices should not be considered as separate processes. Students' achievement and progress need to be evaluated to show the learning difficulties encountered and to find effective ways to raise standards of attainment. Assessment should help teachers, students, syllabus designers and all other stakeholders to know the students' learning weaknesses and strengths as well as to identify teaching limitations. The assessment activities and outcomes are generally considered as guidelines that enable teachers to improve their teaching methods to enhance better learning. In particular, the assessment process can be beneficial to the students themselves helping them to discover their learning problems and hence avoid them in the next educational stages. In the case of language learning, Shohamy (2007: 117) states that "The past decade has witnessed a major shift in the understanding of the functions, status and roles of language tests. From tools used to measure language knowledge, they are viewed today as instruments connected and embedded in political, social and educational contexts". For this reason, all stakeholders need to have enough understanding of the role and power of assessment and testing in terms of "their impact, ethicality, fairness, values and consequences" (Shohamy, *ibid*). Teachers should also be aware of the beneficial and harmful effects that assessment practices may cause to their students' performance and achievement. This awareness helps teachers to diagnose and address their students' learning difficulties rapidly and readily.

When assessment practices are improperly prepared, designed and used by teachers and other stakeholders in the field of language education, they may have negative effects on language teaching and learning, as well as the students' achievement and motivation. Harlen and Crick (2010: 170) undertook a systematic review of research on the positive and negative impact of assessment practices on raising standards of achievement and motivation for learners. They stated that "there was concern, based on the growing international research evidence, particularly from the USA and UK, where assessment for summative purposes has burgeoned in the past decade, that the use of tests not only inhibits the practice of formative assessment but has a negative impact on motivation for learning". Harlen and Crick, (ibid) point out that the results of the high stakes summative assessment practices, which have an important influence on stakeholders' future, force teachers to pay greater attention to the test content and focus their teaching methods on enabling their students pass the test and get high scores, even if this strategy is not satisfactory for meeting some needs and interests of the students.

Based on the researcher's teaching experience as a teaching staff member in various Libyan universities, it has been noticed that the system of English as foreign language (EFL) education in the Libyan higher education sector suffers from the same problems and obstacles mentioned in Harlen and Crick's review. Most assessment practices employed at Libyan universities are based on summative assessment practices which usually have a crucial impact on the educational status of students and teachers in particular and educational institutions in general. This educational policy has given the assessment practices extra power making students less motivated in learning and more concerned with passing tests that qualify them to move to the next academic stage. All these reasons have prompted the researcher to undertake this study with the aim of exploring teachers' and students' views towards the current assessment practices and

whether these practices have any positive or negative effect on teaching and learning EFL at Libyan universities.

According to the previous literature of general and language education, the effect of assessment practices on teaching and learning is known as “backwash or washback”. For instance, Qi (2007:51) argues that “in the field of education there is general consensus that the testing process has an influence on teaching and learning. This influence is termed ‘washback’ in language education ..., and is regarded as neutral with the potentiality of becoming either positive or negative.” According to Hughes (2003) what determines whether the ‘washback’ is beneficial or harmful is the method by which the test is carried out. Therefore, it can be concluded that the way in which tests are designed and used can affect the students' achievement during the course. According to Muñoz and Álvarez (2010) many studies emphasise that areas such as course content, teachers' methodology, teachers' and students' attitudes, and learning are likely to be affected by examinations. Furthermore, a study conducted by Burrows (2004) about washback reveals that test effects vary according to the teacher's beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, if these tests have high-stakes traits and future educational impact, they may have negative influences on teachers' behaviour and teaching content (see Chapter Three, Section 3.4).

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

For the author, the idea of researching in the field of language assessment and testing started during teaching as a lecturer in many different Libyan universities since 2007. The essential observation that the researcher made during that time was that language assessment and testing methods used in Libyan universities were not based on strategies and techniques that motivate students to learn and enable them to improve their linguistic abilities and competence in English. Teachers and students are not familiar with employing strategies and techniques of alternative assessment such as peer and

self-assessments and other formative assessment practices. In other words, they do not trust results collected from such assessment practices and procedures. Consequently, they mainly depend on summative assessments, which in many instances can be described as high stakes and have crucial impact on students' and teachers' educational future, to collect information about students and make decisions on whether a group of students will pass and move to the next educational stage. All these factors have negatively reflected on the content of the syllabus taught, teaching and learning methods, as well as teachers' and students' behaviours, attitudes and perceptions towards the assessment and testing process.

This study highlights the importance of language assessment practices to the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Libyan universities. In addition to that, it investigates the effects of language assessment on the teaching and learning EFL, as well as the problems encountered by Libyan students, classroom teachers and other stakeholders involved in the educational process.

1.3 Main and Sub-Research Questions

According to Creswell (2005: 117) research questions are “specific questions that researchers seek to answer”. This study aims to answer the following main and sub-research questions:

MRQ - What are the teachers' and students' views towards the impact of the current assessment practices on their teaching and learning of EFL in the higher education sector in Libya?

SRQ 1- What are the current EFL teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do they employ these practices?

SRQ 2- What views do teachers hold towards the current assessment practices they employ at Libyan universities; why do they hold these views and how are they translated into practice?

SRQ 3- What are the main effects of the current assessment practices on the teaching and learning of EFL; why are these effects there and how do teachers deal with them?

SRQ 4- What views do students have towards the current assessment practices; why do they have these views and how do they deal with them?

1.4 Sample and Methods of Data Collection

The sample involved in this study was from teachers who teach EFL at three Libyan universities in Libya, as well as their students who study EFL as a major subject of study in the same universities. This sample consists of three groups and participants from each group were involved in three different data collection processes as explained in more details in Chapter Four, Section 4.3.4.

In the empirical part of this study, various research methods, strategies and approaches were utilized for the purpose of collecting the required data and providing a clear description of the sample selected in this study. In addition to that, the nature of the research philosophy and questions proposed in this study were compatible with a mixed research method, which includes quantitative and qualitative approaches. In this study, a questionnaire with teachers, semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group interviews with students were employed for data collection. The results obtained were used for answering the research questions defined earlier and providing evidence in relation to the influences of assessment practices on the different aspects of teaching and learning EFL at Libyan universities.

1.5 Gap in Research and Importance of the Study

Although a number of studies have already been conducted to discuss the issue of assessment impact on teaching and learning practices in different educational fields and contexts, this thesis is different as it is concerned with the same issue but in the field of EFL education in the Libyan context. In their article, 'Educational Assessment in Latin America', Swaffield and Thomas (2016) noticed that most of the published work in the field of educational assessment is in the Western world. They draw attention to the need for exploring this field in other educational contexts and national systems around the world. Libya is one of the Arab world countries and conducting this study within the Libyan higher education context will help address this gap in the literature of educational assessment that Swaffield and Thomas (ibid) have mentioned. The findings of this study will enrich international knowledge with important information about the impact of assessment on the teaching and learning of EFL not only in the Libyan context but also in the Arab world context.

This study is a pioneering study in the Libyan higher education context and in the Arab region. It is the first study that investigates teachers' and students' views towards the effects of assessment practices on teaching and learning EFL in a higher education context in which students study English as a major subject of specialization in Libya. A number of studies in the field of EFL education have discussed this issue in different contexts around the world, as will be discussed later in the literature review chapter, but none of them have tackled this issue in the field of EFL in an Arabian context. So, this research study is significant as it adds to the literature new insights about EFL teachers' and students' views towards the washback impact in an important context which has never been investigated before by other researchers and educators.

Moreover, this research study has a particular significance within the Libyan context as it can be useful for any future educational assessment reforms might be adopted by the Libyan Ministry of Education (MoE) in the higher education sector.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

The present thesis consists of eight chapters. The first chapter presents an introduction to the whole study focusing on the research issue and questions, gap in research and importance of the study in addition to a brief overview of the research methods.

Chapter Two introduces some information about the context in which this study was conducted. It describes the Libyan society in terms of language, population, culture and religion. This chapter provides a brief historical overview about the educational system in Libya and describes how EFL is taught within the Libyan education system. It also highlights the main challenges and obstacles that EFL education and assessment encounter.

Chapter Three represents the theoretical underpinning for the study, in which a theoretical presentation of previous literature is introduced. It discusses the different concepts and terms related to language assessment and testing. This chapter also raises the importance of the assessment quality in terms of the validity of language assessment and testing processes from the socio-cognitive approach perspective by Weir (2005). It also sheds light on the pedagogical implications of formative and summative assessments on the educational process, as well as reviewing the notion of washback and its positive and negative influences on teaching methods and learning strategies. The chapter also reviews the findings of other studies regarding EFL education and assessment in different contexts, with the aim of exploring the impact that different assessment practices might have on teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) at these contexts. The final section of this chapter discusses learning theories and the

essential role of the assessment process for improving the language educational practices.

Chapter Four describes the research design and methodology employed in this study and explains the research philosophy for the study. The chapter also explains the rationale for using a mixed data collection approach in this research. In this chapter, the relationship between the research questions and methods is demonstrated and details about the research sample are also given. The chapter provides an overview of the pilot study and its impact on the main data collection in later stages. Finally, it explains the methods of data analysis and discusses the ethical considerations regarding this research.

Chapter Five reports the major findings of the quantitative data collection obtained from teachers' questionnaire responses. It analyses and explains the quantitative data statistically in numbers and percentages to make explicit inferences on the studied phenomenon through the results. Chapter Six analyses the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews undertaken with teachers and focus group interviews undertaken with students. This chapter consists of two phases: the first part concerns the qualitative data analysis of the semi-structured interviews with teachers of EFL; while the second part is devoted to analysing the focus group interviews with students at the same universities. Chapter Seven is devoted to discussing the key findings that emerged from the qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The quantitative and the qualitative findings obtained from Chapters Five and Six are discussed in more details in this chapter in order to triangulate these findings and interpret them in the light of the literature review and the research questions being investigated in this study. Chapter Eight provides an overview of the research process, including the main research findings and implications, limitations of the study, contributions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

1.7 Summary

The present chapter has introduced language assessment practices as a key factor that influences the efficacy of EFL education at Libyan universities. It has highlighted the urgent need for conducting this study for developing the field of EFL education in the Libyan higher education sector. In this chapter the researcher stated the rationale that has prompted him to investigate in this area. The researcher also presented the main and sub-research questions addressed in the following chapters in this study. This chapter has acted as a guiding plan for the whole research process as well as designating the sample and research methods used in this study.

Chapter Two: Context of the Study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a general background of the Libyan educational context pertinent to this research study in order to understand the factors affecting teaching of English at the university level in Libya. It gives some information about Libyan society in terms of the language, population, culture and religion. It also provides a brief historical overview of the educational system in Libya before and after independence. To have a better understanding of the context of this study, this chapter describes how EFL is taught in various stages of the Libyan educational system and highlights the main challenges and obstacles that encounter EFL education and assessment. Finally, it gives some details about the universities and faculties in which this study was conducted and the sample involved.

2.2 General Background of Libya

Libya is one of the Arab countries and its official language is Arabic, which is the language of Holy Quran. Arabic is the language which is officially used in teaching and learning at all educational institutions in Libya and English is also taught at schools but as a foreign language from the first grade of the basic education until the postgraduate stage. Libya is an Islamic state and Islam is the main religion of the vast majority of Libyan people, who follow the Sunni doctrine. Therefore, Libyan people have a great respect for Islamic religious values, which have a significant impact on their social lives, traditions, culture and education (Sawani, 2012).



Figure 2. 1 Map of Libya (Source: Dreamstime.com)

2.2.1 Demographic and Population Distribution in Libya

Libya has a small population, as compared with other Arab and African neighbouring countries. This can be clearly seen in Table 2.1 below, which demonstrates the rate of the population growth in Libya for a period of five decades from 1954 until the year 2006 according to the Higher Committee and Census (2007). Elaokali (2012: 50) says that “To date six official censuses have been conducted in Libya. The first was in 1954 and the latest was in 2006.”

Table 2. 1 Population Growth in Libya (1954-2006)

Year Censuses	Gender		Total	Growth Rate %
	Male	Female		
1954	564.450	524.439	1.088.889	-
1964	813.386	750.983	1.564.369	3.8
1973	1.057.919	994,453	2.052.372	3.4
1984	1.651.562	1.579.497	3.231.059	4.21
1995	2.501.766	2.297.309	4.799.075	2.8
2006	2.687.513	2.610.639	5.298.152	1.83

(Source: Elaokali, 2012: 50)

Libya has a multi-ethnic society in which Arabs represent the vast majority of population, while other ethnicities such as Berber, Tuareg and Toubu represent a minority in the Libyan society. Most of the Libyan population is distributed along the southern coastal strip of the Mediterranean Sea in the north of the country, particularly in Tripolitania, the western part of Libya, and Cyrenaica, the eastern part of Libya (CountryWatch, 2018). The remaining population is a minority of some Tuareg and Toubu tribes which are distributed in the Libyan Desert, particularly in Fazzan, the southern part of the country. According to the latest statistics in 2017, the population of Libya is estimated at about 6.6 million (The World Factbook, 2018).

2.2.2 A Brief Historical Overview of the Libyan Educational System

Historically, Libya was occupied for more than four centuries (1551-1951) by foreign nations that had different cultures and languages from the Libyan people. This occupation has left many negative effects on the language, culture and education of the Libyan society. The first occupation of Libya was by the Ottomans, whose rule extended from 1551 to 1912 and was directly followed by the Italian colonization from 1912 to 1942. After the Italians were defeated in Libya during the Second World War, British military rule controlled Libya from 1942 to 1951 (Clark, 2004). During this long period of foreign occupation, education in Libya was seriously affected and the number of illiterate people dramatically increased. Most people, especially females, did not get the chance to go to school during that time. Therefore, large numbers of Libyan people, especially females, do not know how to read and write in their native language, Arabic, which was considered as basic education for people at that time. Due to the absence of the formal education during the Turkish Ottoman occupation and the lack of support for education, Libyan people depended on the local mosques to teach their children. This was considered as the cornerstone for the emergence of what is currently known as “*Kuttab*” or “*Zawya*”, in which children are just taught the basics, such as how to read

and write in Arabic. These "*Zawaya*" (plural of *Zawya*) were the only educational institutions in Libya throughout the different occupation periods: Ottoman, Italian and English. Despite the advantages of this education to Libyans, its objectives were restricted to teaching the basics of reading and writing in the Arabic language which, in turn, would enable students to memorize some verses of the Holy Quran. However, students would usually forget them as soon as they left the *Zawya* and stop learning. In addition to that, the teachers who taught in these *Zawaya* were not well trained and qualified as they had not studied in and graduated from specialized educational institutions. They had just studied at the same *Zaway* and did not have any official certification that enabled them to work in teaching.

After the Italians took control of the country, they built schools in which education was mainly based on teaching the Italian language and culture, in which most Libyans were not interested. This is one of the main factors that helped the *Kuttab* schools to remain playing their role during the Italian control of the country.

This type of education in *Zawaya* remained simple and basic until the end of the period of occupation and Libya gained its independence in the middle of the last century (1951). After independence, the education sector began to develop and there was a radical change in all other aspects of life, as well as the modern history of Libya as described in the following section below.

2.2.3 Modern History of Libya and Educational Development

Since Libya gained its independence on the 24th of December 1951, its education sector has witnessed many changes and challenges which influenced by the political and socio-economic context. As stated in the previous section, the education in Libya at that time was mostly based on the local mosques and *Kuttab* or *Zawaya*, in which students were taught reading and writing in Arabic and memorizing some verses in the Holy

Quran, as basic education. With the support of the government, most of these *Zawaya* are still doing their job alongside other formal educational institutions, and many families send their children to them to learn reading and writing based on the Holy Quran. The main aim of this informal education in these *Zawya* is to connect the new generations of the Libyan society with their Arabic culture and Islamic religion and to improve students' Arabic language skills. After independence and particularly during the time of the Monarchy (1951-1969), there was radical change in the economic context after the discovery of oil in the country, which reflected positively on the economic wealth and all other aspects of life, including the field of education. The government, through the Ministry of Education (henceforth MoE) known previously as The General Peoples' Committee of Education, gave more attention to education. New schools were built across the country and the first two universities were established in Benghazi and Tripoli. At that time, education became more formal and was no longer restricted to male students. After the end of the Monarchy by the military coup led by Gaddafi on the first of September 1969, the education sector witnessed more growth and development. For example, the numbers of schools and students increased and new universities were established.

One of the most significant developmental plans in the education sector after 1969 is that education became free and compulsory for all Libyan students from age of six years until sixteen. This decision was issued in the Constitutional Declaration by the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) in December 1969 which stated that:

“Education is a right and a duty for all Libyan citizens, it is free and compulsory until the end of the preparatory level, and the State is responsible for building and establishing schools, institutes, universities and educational and cultural foundation.”

(World Data on Education, 2007: 1)

This new policy of the MoE and investment in human resources has positively reflected on the future of the education sector and Libyan society in general. The rate of illiteracy has been reduced among Libyans and most people are educated to advanced levels. In addition to that, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the private education sector as a new concept in Libya. New private schools and universities have been established, which are run by a private administration, and students must pay tuition fees for their education at these institutions. However, the majority of Libyan students and parents still prefer the public educational institutions, as they are free. This is especially important for those families with low income and a large number of children. During the period from 1951-2019, the Libyan educational system has been supervised and managed by the MoE, which adopts a top-down policy. The MoE is responsible for all educational schemes, reforms, developments, curricula and changes. It is also in charge of funding all the public educational institutions in the country; this includes printing books, providing educational materials, building new schools and colleges as well as employing teachers.

2.3 Teaching EFL in the Libyan Educational System

The current educational system in Libya consists of five stages as shown in Figure 2.2 below and English is taught as a compulsory subject from basic education until the post graduate stage. In the first stage, children are enrolled in the nursery at the age of four or five with the aim of improving their language and communication skills before they enter school, but EFL is not taught at this stage. At the age of six, children begin the basic education stage, in which students study for nine years and they are taught a group of different subjects including EFL. In this stage, EFL was taught at the fifth grade but, during the academic year 2018/2019, it is taught from the first grade of basic education. As soon as students complete their education in the basic education stage, they move to the secondary school, in which they study various subjects, including EFL for three

years. Secondary school education witnessed some changes in the first decade of this century introduced by the MoE. As mentioned in the national report of the MoE (2008:8), there were different departments in secondary school education including EFL department. In EFL department, students study all subjects in English that will enable them learn English such as Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Grammatical Structures and other relevant skills. According to this system, students who studied EFL as a main specialization in the secondary school should complete their studies in the English department at university. The main aim behind this change in the education system at this stage is to prepare students for their higher education studies at the university level. For other departments in the secondary school education, EFL is taught as a general subject alongside the other subjects that students study as major subjects of specialization. It is worth mentioning here that, this system of education in the secondary school was changed again in 2012 by the MoE and EFL is taught now as a general subject during the three years of education in this stage and it is no longer taught as a major specialization. After secondary school comes the higher education stage, in which EFL is taught for four years as a major subject in English departments at faculties of languages, arts and education in each Libyan university. EFL is also taught at the initial levels during the higher education studies as a basic general subject at all departments and faculties as a compulsory subject. The main aim of teaching EFL as a general subject at these university levels is to make students familiar with scientific and specialized literature in their fields of study.

The higher education stage remained the top of the Libyan educational system from 1955 until the postgraduate studies were included in the Libyan educational system in the mid of 1990s. During this stage, graduate students from English departments can only complete their postgraduate studies in English at three educational institutions,

namely The Libyan Academy, University of Tripoli and University of Benghazi, after they pass the admission test at one of these institutions successfully.

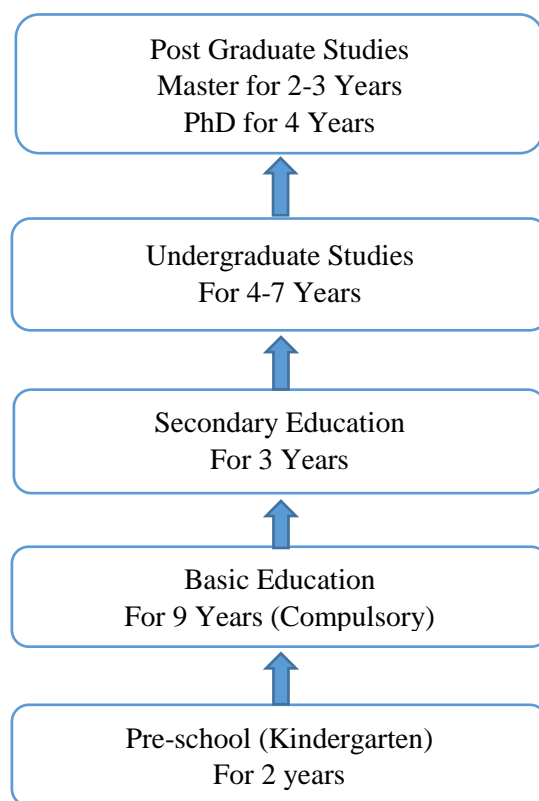


Figure 2. 2 Structure of Libyan Education System

The common teaching methods employed during these five educational stages in the Libyan education system are mainly traditional and didactic. In the classroom, teachers are considered the main source of information and knowledge and students sit in the classroom listening to their teacher's explanation and have no role unless they are asked by the teacher. In this context of education, memorization was the main learning strategy used by students for acquiring knowledge and information, even when studying subjects that are based on practice and constant interaction among teachers and students, such as English language. These methods of teaching are considered by some researchers in the Libyan context as one of the significant pedagogical problems that face any educational development in the field of EFL education and constitute a big challenge to any educational reforms in the future (Orafi & Borg, 2009; Abidin et al,

2012; Soliman, 2013). In addition to these pedagogical problems, the MoE does not provide teachers of the various educational stages with periodical training programmes, which are considered as one of the most significant factors required for any educational reform or development. Instead of that, inspectors, assigned by the MoE, are sent to basic education and secondary schools at least twice during the academic year to evaluate teachers while they are teaching their normal lessons in the classroom and in the presence of their students. Moreover, one of the concerns of these inspectors during their visits is to check whether teachers adhere to the curriculum timetable during each month of the academic year, rather than offering a detailed report and feedback on the quality of teaching methods.

2.4 Challenges and Difficulties Encountered EFL Education in Libya

The MoE has given teaching EFL special attention due to its important role as a lingua franca of the world. Therefore, Libyan students are required to study English as a compulsory subject at all stages of the Libyan educational system, namely from the basic education stage until postgraduate studies. However, the education of EFL faces many challenges and obstacles at all educational stages that negatively influence the teaching and learning process, especially in the higher education stage. These challenges and difficulties are explained in the following sub-sections to give a clear idea about the educational context of EFL and especially at the higher education sector in Libya.

2.4.1 Large Numbers of Students and Lack of Learning Resources

As mentioned in the previous section, the new policy of the Libyan government and MoE after 1969 states that all stages of education are free for all Libyan citizens as a kind of investment in human resources within the Libyan society. This policy was successful, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, in encouraging the vast majority of

students to complete higher education studies after finishing secondary school education (Tamtam et al, 2011). As cited in Tamtam et al. (2011:746), Clark (2004) estimated the number of students who studied in Libyan universities during 2004 as 200,000. This is a large number of students if compared with the number of students enrolled in other educational stages and size of the population at that time. According to Ghgam (2015:9), statistics published by the MoE in 2007/2008 showed that the number of students in higher education stage had dramatically increased if compared with the number of students at other educational stages. The statistics demonstrated that there were:

1. 939,799 students enrolled in basic education, with about 119,313 teachers.
2. 226,000 students enrolled in secondary schools and about 39,847 teachers.
3. 279, 150 students in higher education, taught by 2,770 teachers.

This increase in student numbers has had some undesirable consequences for the teaching and assessment processes, especially in EFL, as there are not enough teaching staff or educational aids and facilities available for this big number of students. Making higher education studies free for all students in Libya can have advantages for the Libyan society and all other sectors in the country, but it needs a commensurate support from the MoE in terms of the educational and research facilities in the higher education sector, training schemes and availability of teaching staff members. The lack of these facilities and support resulted in negative impact on the educational outcomes of the Libyan universities and higher education studies in general and EFL education in particular. This problem affected EFL education at Libyan universities, as most English departments are suffering from this problem. Learning English as a foreign language requires intensive practice and interaction inside the class, which might not be possible in classes with large numbers of students.

2.4.2 Teaching and Learning Methods

There are many pedagogical problems and challenges that had faced teaching and learning EFL in the Libyan context since independence in 1951. One of these main problems is related to the teaching methods employed by Libyan teachers in this field, as mentioned earlier in the previous section (see Section 2.3). The traditional teacher-centred approach is still dominant in teaching other subjects, as well as teaching EFL. The teaching methods employed at Libyan universities have been criticized by some Libyan researchers such as Orafi and Borg (2009); Abidin et al, (2012); Soliman (2013) and Abosnan (2016). In this context, Soliman (2013) conducted a study exploring teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards using authentic materials to promote learners' motivation and interest in learning EFL at the university level in the Libyan context. He found:

“There are many problems facing Libyan students in learning English language. In addition to that, the teacher is the only source of knowledge and the learner has no opportunity to participate except if she/he is asked to answer a question.” Soliman (2013:122)

The teaching methods employed at Libyan universities have encouraged students to use memorization as a main learning strategy for acquiring knowledge and information, even when studying subjects that are based on practice, such as English language. It seems that teachers and students in the higher educational stage are influenced by the teaching and assessment methods and objectives which are employed at primary and secondary schools (see sections 2.3. and 2.5). Therefore, the teaching and assessment methods which are employed in teaching EFL are mainly based on a teacher-centred approach and summative assessment practices. This issue, as discussed in previous sections, is due to some contextual factors, such as large class sizes with limited staff and resources.

2.4.3 The Teaching Syllabi and Training Courses

During the higher education stage, the curricula which students study are not prepared and designed by the MoE, as in other educational stages. The curricula are designed by the lecturers of departments at each faculty in the university (Suwaed, 2011; Elabbar, 2011, Abosnan, 2016). This system is adopted by most English departments in each university. It allows the teaching staff members in most English departments to employ the teaching and assessment methods that they think will be effective and feasible in teaching and evaluating their students according to the teachers' beliefs and experience in that subject. This issue has been mentioned by Abosnan (2016: 139) in his study at the university level in Libya. He stated that:

“After the interview, I went to the English language department to ask about the curriculum of the four academic years and I was told that they did not have formal materials to give to teachers. Each teacher had his/her own way of teaching.”

This causes some difficulties for students when they start their education at English departments, as mentioned by Suwaed (2011: 30) who claims that “university students face difficulties mainly in the first year to find materials and use references in their assignments and look for books in the library.” Another problem related to this issue is that teachers do not coordinate with each other when designing their syllabi and some of these teachers may repeat the same topics that students studied in the previous academic years. In addition to that, the syllabi employed at some English departments at Libyan universities are not compatible with the syllabi which prepared by MoE in their educational reforms in the specialized secondary school project. The topics that are taught in English departments at university level do not add new topics in English language if compared by the secondary school curriculum published by *Garnet Education*, an independent ELT publisher based in the United Kingdom (*Garnet Education*, 2019). The same topics that are taught at the secondary school stage are taught again in the university stage especially in subjects like grammar and writing.

Another significant factor which might have a great effect on the methods of teaching EFL at the higher education sector, as mentioned by Suwaed (2011), is related to the issue of training courses and teachers' education. The universities in Libya and the MoE do not provide any training courses for teachers in the higher education sector. Suwaed, (2011:11) argues that:

“The courses of teacher education in Libya depend on theory rather than practice and the Libyan national universities do not provide pre-service or in-service training for university teachers.”

As argued by Suwaed, one of the reasons for not conducting such training courses for Libyan teachers in the higher education sector is the belief by the Libyan authorities that teachers in this stage are highly qualified. All teachers hold either MA or PhD degrees, which qualify them to be professionals in their career.

2.4.4 Termination of Specialized Secondary Schools in Libya

After the Libyan revolution in 2011, there was a radical change in the education system at the Libyan secondary education stage. The old education system in the secondary school, which was known as *specialized secondary schools*, was abolished by the MoE and replaced by general secondary schools. This change had a great impact on EFL education in secondary schools, which in turn extended into teaching and learning English at the university level as well. According to the old education system, English was taught as a major specialization for four years in the secondary school and students studied all subjects in English. The syllabi were designed to improve students' learning skills in English at an early stage of education, with the aim of qualifying them to study English as a major specialization at the university level. This educational system had a positive impact on teaching and learning EFL at the higher education stage as students had spent four academic years learning English as a major subject, which helped them improving their learning skills and competence in English. However, this educational system was replaced by the general secondary schools in which students do not study

English as a major specialization. English is currently taught as a general subject for four sessions a week and 45 minutes for each session. According to this educational system, students are not exposed to English for enough time to help them develop and consolidate their skills in English before starting their studies in this field at the university level.

2.4.5 The Impact of the Political Context

Teaching EFL in Libya is not only influenced by pedagogical problems and challenges, but also by other factors, such as the political context. During the 1980s, the political situation was one of the biggest problems and challenges that had ever faced teaching EFL in Libya since independence. Due to the political tension between the Libyan leader Mummer Gaddafi and some Western countries, which resulted in an air-raid led by the USA air forces against Gaddafi's regime on the fifteenth of April 1986, the teaching of EFL was banned by the MoE as a reaction towards this tension. Mohsen (2014:59) commented on the side effects of this decision by the MoE, saying:

“The Minister of Education made the decision No. 195/1986 to stop teaching foreign languages [English Language was one of them] in Libya. The decision badly affected the future of education in Libya. Till the time of writing this material; very serious consequences relating to that decision are still active.”

This decision was not restricted to teaching EFL as a general or major subject at the university level but also it extended to the primary and secondary schools. English was not taught at any educational stage in Libya until the academic year 1993/1994. The negative consequences of this decision had an impact on other subjects at the university level especially subjects that depend on using the English language in their education, such as engineering and medicine. Students in Libya encountered a great challenge when they started their higher education studies in engineering and medicine faculties, as they did not have any background in English language during the previous

educational stages. After teaching EFL was resumed in Libya, the educational context was not conducive for this return. Teachers of English language were not ready to resume teaching again, as they had not been allowed to teach and had suffered from a long interruption for about eight years (Orafi, 2008). During this period of time, they did not receive any training courses to update their knowledge to enable them to keep pace with recent developments in the field of EFL education. Instead, they were asked to teach other subjects, which were not compatible with their original career (Suwaed, 2011). All these difficulties that negatively influenced teaching and learning EFL in Libya were result of the impact of the political situation in that era.

2.5 The Impact of Educational Assessment System on EFL Education

Summative assessment practices through formal examinations are extremely important in EFL education at Libyan public educational institutions. This fact can be clearly seen through the general goals of the educational assessment system as stated by MoE in the national report presented in the International Conference on Education in 2008 as follows:

“The examination system is a tool used by which to assess the output of the educational process and to determine whether the student is capable of apprehending the curriculum taught during the school year ...”

(MoE, 2008: 11).

EFL education in Libya follows the same educational assessment process that is applied in other subjects at all educational stages in the public schools and universities. The teaching of English is suffering from the same pedagogical problems and obstacles caused by the assessment practices in different educational stages. For example, the dominance of summative assessment practices as a main tool for assessing students' achievement and ignoring other alternative assessment practices was among the main factors that negatively influenced the teaching and learning of English (see Chapter One, Section 1.2 and Chapter Three, Sections 3.4 and 3.5). Due to the predominance of

summative assessment, most teaching and learning practices adopted by Libyan teachers and students are usually test oriented and the main concern in the educational process is passing the examinations. One of the main factors causing many difficulties to EFL education in Libya can be attributed to the educational assessment system applied at most of the educational institutions, as will be demonstrated below.

The assessment process in the different educational stages in Libya is mainly based on mid-term and final examinations to evaluate students' achievement during the academic year or semester. During the years that students spend in the basic education and secondary education stages, they have to pass two summative assessment examinations to progress into the next academic year. The academic year is divided into two terms. In the middle of each term, there is a mid-term examination and there is a final examination at the end of each term. Students must gain at least 50 percent of the total score, in each subject that they have studied, during both semesters, to pass and move to the next educational level within basic education stage. At the end of the last year of each educational stage in basic or secondary school education, all students in the country are required to sit high-stakes national public examinations, which are undertaken at the same time all over the country. These examinations are usually held under the supervision of the MoE which is responsible for issuing a unified timetable for examinations for each stage, as well as appointing the committees of invigilation and correction across the country. Students who pass the national public examinations with at least 50 percent in all subjects will be awarded the basic education certificate that qualifies them moving to secondary school education. Students, who fail to pass these examinations and get the required score, will be given a chance to repeat the examinations in the subjects in which they failed in the former examinations (Mohsen, 2014).

The assessment process in the higher education stage tends to be similar to the assessment process in the basic and secondary education stages although the former does not undergo MoE supervision. The assessment process at the university level is mainly organized by the teaching staff members in each department of the different faculties in the university. In some faculties, which follow the annual education system, there are two high-stakes examinations during the academic year. The first one is conducted in the middle of the year as a mid-year examination and the second one is conducted at the end of the year as a final examination. On the other hand, students who study in faculties with a term basis need to take two summative examinations, one in the middle of each term, as a mid-term examination and another one at the end of the term as a final examination. In both systems, forty marks are allocated for the mid-term examination and sixty marks are for the final examination. Students need to collect at least fifty marks across the two examinations in each subject to pass and go to the next academic year. Those students who study in faculties with the annual education system are given the chance to retake the final examination if they failed in the first session. In both systems, if students fail in two subjects out of all the subjects studied during the semester or the academic year, they have the right to move to the next semester or academic year and study these two subjects again.

According to the educational assessment system described above, it is apparent that high-stakes summative assessment practices have the priority in the education process over other alternative assessment practices. Various forms of formative assessment practices cannot be easily integrated in this exam-oriented context, to improve teaching and learning practices, especially in the field of EFL.

2.6 Departments, Faculties and Universities Involved in this Study

This study was conducted at three Libyan public universities, in which a range of different subjects are taught. All the public universities, including the universities

involved in this study, are funded by the annual budget of the state. All teachers and students targeted in this study either teach or learn English as a foreign language. All departments involved in this study are concerned with teaching English as a foreign language to students whose first language is Arabic and who studied English from the 5th grade of Basic Education and during their secondary school education. These departments are listed below as follows:

- 1- Department of English in the faculty of languages at Tripoli University.
- 2- Department of English at in the faculty of education at Musrata University.
- 3- Department of English in the faculty of arts at Elmerghip University.

The three departments have similar educational facilities, aids and resources. The system of study in the English departments at both Tripoli and Musrata Universities are run on a term basis. The first term, or semester, starts in September and usually finishes at the end of December, which is known as “the Fall term” while the second term starts during February and usually finishes at the end of May which is known as “the Spring term”. However, the study system in the department of English at the University of Elmerhghip is different. The study is run according to an annual system, in which the academic year starts in September and finishes in April, and students have two weeks’ holiday during the middle of the academic year.

All the three universities are located in the western region of the country on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Tripoli University is located in the capital of the country, Tripoli, and classified as the biggest university in Libya. The other two universities are Elmerhghip University, which is located in Khoms city, 120 Km from the capital Tripoli, and Musrata University, which is located in Musrata city, 200 km from Tripoli (see figure 2.1, Section 2.2).

2.7 Summary

This chapter reviewed the research context in which this study was conducted and provided some details about the current educational and assessment methods employed at different educational levels to enable readers to understand the rationale for this study. It also gave a general background about the population and history of Libya and an overview of the development of the educational system in Libya at different periods, and the impact of these developments on Libyan students and the country. It was apparent that the independence of Libya in 1951, besides discovery of oil, constitute the turning point in the modern history of Libya in general and education in particular. They had a great impact on the educational system, which resulted in establishing new schools and universities and making all educational stages free to all Libyan citizens. Education has been a priority to successive Libyan governments and considered as a great investment in Libyan human resources. Nevertheless, the educational system in Libya has suffered from several problems and challenges in terms of the pedagogical and political contexts. There was a clear impact of the banning of teaching of English because of the political tension between Gaddafi's regime and the West. This impact was not restricted to the teaching of EFL but also extended to the teaching of other subjects which are taught in English in the university level. In addition to that, employing traditional teaching and assessment methods in the early stages of the education system has negatively influenced the educational outcomes in these stages and their impact extended to higher education studies. It seems that both teachers and students at the university level tend to teach and learn by employing the same teaching and assessment methods employed in the basic education and secondary schools. The current teaching and assessment methods employed in Libyan universities seem to be based on teachers' role as the main source of knowledge and information. They do not support learner autonomy and formative assessment methods, which usually require

engaging students in the educational process. Training programmes, which are considered as one of the most significant factors that is usually required for any educational reforms and developments, are generally missed in most of the Libyan universities.

The next chapter will provide a detailed review of the theoretical background and previous studies of the assessment process and its implications on the language teaching and learning processes.

Chapter Three: Review of Literature

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the theoretical framework on which this study is based by reviewing the available literature pertaining to the subject of this study. It is divided into six main sections. The first section is concerned with explaining the overlap among the common terms and concepts in the field of assessment and language testing. It includes some definitions of these terms to demonstrate how they are interrelated. In the second section, the socio-cognitive approach by which the quality of language testing and assessment can be improved are presented, with the aim of improving the quality of language tests and avoiding any defects that may result in incorrect evaluation of students' performance. The third section discusses the importance of using formative assessment versus summative assessment by showing their functions and position in education. The fourth section concentrates on defining the term washback and explaining the complexity of this phenomenon. It also explains the positive and negative washback effects on the language educational process. The fifth section reviews the findings of a group of studies in different contexts with the aim of exploring the impact that assessment practices might have on TEFL in these contexts. In the final section, the main learning theories and their impact on foreign language education are discussed. It aims to consider how people learn, in order to use the most effective teaching and assessment methods and approaches to improve learning of EFL and obtaining a genuine learning.

3.2 Terms and Concepts Associated with Assessment

Some terms and concepts in the field of language testing and assessment are closely related and used interchangeably, and this may result in confusion among educators (Berry, 2008). Douglas (2010:5) asserts that “understanding these concepts [assessment,

test, measurement and evaluation] will help us to understand why we give language tests and how we can interpret test takers' performance in ways that are fair and appropriate." The assessment practices employed at Libyan universities indicate that teachers encounter some difficulties in understanding the concept of assessment and other related concepts. This understanding of assessment has negatively affected EFL education at the higher education stage. The assessment practices employed at Libyan universities indicate that teachers just evaluate and measure students' learning achievement and do not use assessment in its broad meaning. Therefore, teachers should understand the difference between tests, measurement, evaluation and assessment in field of education. This can be achieved by recognising the different goals and purposes of these practices. The main aim of explaining these terms in detail is to demonstrate their different functions and purposes so they can be employed them effectively by Libyan teachers and other stakeholders in the higher education sector. In the Libyan universities, teachers need to employ the assessment process to support and improve the EFL education in a proper way and not just using one aspect of the assessment process ignoring others that may be useful. The following sub-sections are devoted to explain the differences between these terms and their various functions in the educational process.

3.2.1 Assessment

There are many definitions of the term **assessment** that distinguish it from other terms and concepts related to the assessment process by describing the nature of the activities, methods and procedures. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) the term assessment represents an enormous variety of techniques, methods and plans that are continuously taking place in the pedagogical context. Assessment is also defined by Salvia and Ysseldyke (2004:4) as "a process of collecting data for the purpose of making decisions about individuals and groups". Green (2014:6) claims that "the

traditional view that separates assessment from teaching may result from the identification of the word assessment with the narrower activity of **testing**". One of the deleterious implications resulting from this view is that it led educationalists to pay less attention to other useful and effective assessment practices that can support teaching and learning. For example, one of the things that makes the assessment process more flexible and powerful than testing is that the former can be intentionally or incidentally undertaken by teachers, that is, it has no limitations. Teachers assess their students by each comment, judgement, observation or appraisal they make about the students' responses and performance. Green (2014:6) states that "assessment is distinguished from testing because it covers a much broader *cycle* of activities". He adds that assessment may encompass many activities such as *self-assessment*, which is carried by the students themselves, *peer assessment* in which students assess each other's performance as well as *portfolio assessment*, which may involve samples of both teachers and students' feedback about instructional progress and to what extent they accomplish the programme's pedagogical objectives. In this context, Cheng and Fox (2017: 3) described the assessment as an umbrella term "which includes both our daily classroom practices and large-scale testing, which is extremely designed and administered to our students". From this perspective, there is a possibility that any language programme or course that implements all these kinds of assessment activities will likely achieve the majority of its pedagogical objectives.

Assessment is broadly divided into two types: formative assessment and summative assessment, according to their different uses and purposes. The former focuses mainly on instructional improvement, which is referred to as *assessment for learning* (section 3.5.1) while the latter, focuses commonly on learning achievement, which is referred to as *assessment of learning* (McDowell & Montgomery, 2013; Stiggins, 2002; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brindley, 2001).

3.2.2 Evaluation

Evaluation is a related term that overlaps with other concepts related to assessment. In the practice of TESOL (*teaching of English to speakers of other languages*), there are different descriptions and definitions according to the purpose, function or context on which evaluation focuses. Genesee (2001) states that evaluation is the act of gathering information about a particular educational programme to make decisions about the teaching and learning process. Its function is to show how successful and effective the programme's activities and outcomes are. Genesee considers the overall aim of evaluation within the language educational programmes as a whole, whereas Douglas (2010) tries to describe evaluation more specifically in the classroom context. He points out that evaluation can be carried out by teachers without the assistance of the measurement or tests. This happens when teachers evaluate the level and performance of their students in the classroom without giving grades or numbers to their evaluation. Such evaluation techniques can be clearly seen in formative assessment practices. Alternatively, some teachers evaluate learners' progress by providing them with specific comments or precise feedback about their performance for motivational and diagnostic purposes. Thus, evaluation does not always require tests and tests are not always evaluative in their function (Bachman, 1990).

Evaluation, according to Douglas' description, is the process of collecting and analysing information to give a qualitative judgement about students' performance. Genesee (2001: 144) argues that "evaluation can focus on different aspects of teaching and learning respectively, textbooks and instructional materials, student achievement, and whole programmes of instruction". It is worth mentioning here that there are some differences between evaluation and assessment that should be considered. Evaluation can be one of the methods and procedures of the assessment process, especially when it is concerned with collecting and analysing information via language tests and other

techniques to assess students' achievement. On the other hand, evaluation makes use of all results obtained from other assessment stages such as tests and measurement processes for the purpose of making decisions about students' achievement and performance (Genesee, 2001).

3.2.3 Measurement

The term measurement is still used synonymously with the other terms or concepts related to assessment. It is the process of quantifying students' performance according to specific procedures and rules with the purpose of differentiating among the students' abilities and knowledge (Davies, et al., 1999). Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 5) make a distinction between quantitative and qualitative descriptions of students' performance. They stated that "the former involves assigning numbers (including rankings and letter grades) to observed performance whereas the latter consists of written descriptions, oral feedback, and other nonquantifiable reports". Likewise, Davies, et al. (1999) also asserted that qualitative descriptions of performance are not based on a comparison between students, in contrast to quantitative descriptions.

Researchers such as Bachman (1990), Davies, et al. (1999), Brown (2011) and Ary, et al. (2013) usually distinguish between four types or scales of measurement, which can be explained as follows:

1- ***Nominal or categorical scale*** in which no numerical values or amounts are given. They are just used as names for particular individuals or categories for identification purposes.

2- ***Ordinal scale*** in which objects or individuals are ranked on the basis of how much of an attribute or ability they own. In an ordinal scale, points or units are used for ranking purposes. The intervals between categories or units on this scale are not equal.

3- **Interval scale** is similar to the ordinal scale but the main difference between them is that in the interval scale, units or points of the measurement can be marked at equal intervals or distances. The interval scales, according to Bachman (1990: 28), has “the properties of distinctiveness, ordering, and equal intervals”.

4- **Ratio scale** is commonly used to measure physical characteristics such as weight, distance and money. The distinctive feature of the ratio scale is that it is provided with equal intervals as well as a true zero point, which is not available in the previous measurement scales. Ary, et al. (2013: 103) presented a useful example which explains the nature of the ratio scale and how it works. They stated that “a yardstick used to measure length in units of inches or feet is a ratio scale because the origin on the scale is an absolute zero corresponding to no length at all. Thus, it is possible to state that a stick 6 feet long is twice as long as a stick 3 feet long”.

Brown (2011: 10) says that “Each [scale] is useful in its own way for quantifying different aspects of language teaching and learning”. Nominal, ordinal and interval scales are commonly used in language assessment and testing for labelling, ranking and scoring purposes. A clear example of that is when a number of individuals get different scores (interval scale) in a language proficiency exam on which they are ranked into levels or groups (ordinal scale) and given names (nominal scale) such as “elementary, intermediate, or advanced proficiency groups” (Brown, *ibid*).

Bachman, (1990) says that tests are a form of measurement and for this reason they share the feature of quantifying the attributes of a student according to an explicit scale or a classification scheme. One of the benefits of measurement is that it provides grading's of the learners' language abilities or competence in order to let teachers, parents and administrators know about the students' progress. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) illustrate the distinction between measurement and evaluation by noting that the former provides scores by using diverse measuring instruments, and

whereas the latter gives values to these scores. They claim that using numbers or scores to describe students' performance and also to compare between them is one of the advantages of quantification and measurement. However, these numbers or scores cannot judge whether the student's performance is positive or negative unless we give values to these scores. For example, "if a student achieves a score of 75 percent (measurement) on a final classroom examination, he or she may be told that the score resulted in failure (evaluation) to pass the course" (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010: 5).

3.2.4 Tests

Tests are a commonly-used form of assessment and considered as one of the most important assessment forms or tools that are commonly employed at various educational levels and stages to collect data about students' performance and achievement during a particular teaching period. Tests are defined by Boyle and Fisher (2007: 11) as "a form of systematic assessment, with standardized procedures, from which numerical scores are taken". Within the context of TESOL, Davies et al. (1999) define language tests as measuring devices that are used to elicit the students' language abilities, and knowledge. As language tests are measuring devices, Bachman (1990: 20-21) suggests that one of their important qualities is that they must have clear procedures or rules that enable them to quantify learners' performance. Tests such as language tests are thought to have negative and positive effects on education which are known as "*washback effects*" (See Section 3.5). In this respect, Brooks (2002: 19) argues that:

"The deleterious effects which assessment has on curriculum and pedagogy are usually associated with high stakes assessment which invariably take the form of external tests and examinations. As far as the curriculum is concerned, they have the capacity to limit what is taught to that part of the examination syllabus on which the teacher predicts that classes will be examined. Teaching content is thus narrowed and externally prescribed."

Assessment and testing are described as *high stakes* whenever the results of the test are used to make important decisions that influence the status and future of students,

teachers and educational institutions (Harlen, 2005). Therefore, the nature of high stakes testing and examinations may lead to negative impact on students' motivation for learning, teaching methodology and the content of the syllabus (Harlen & Deakin, 2003). Zakaria et al. (2013: 46) point out that "School-leaving examinations, national-standardized school examinations, or university-entrance examinations" are examples of high-stakes tests. However, it should be noted that not all tests have high-stakes traits. Muñoz and Álvarez (2010) make a distinction between standardised testing and classroom-based assessments, categorizing the former as high-stakes tests and the latter as low-stakes tests. They argue that "high-stakes tests have more power to modify teacher and learner behaviour whereas low stakes tests, such as classroom-based assessment, are not central to decision-making and therefore have fewer consequences".

Despite some negative effects of testing on pedagogy and curriculum, Urbina (2004) mentions some positive effects of tests in comparison with other assessment activities and procedures. For instance, the testing process is less complicated than other assessment processes, such as interviewing and observation, because it is not susceptible to professional judgements. In addition to that, scores and data collected from well-constructed tests with high levels of reliability and validity are more accurate because they are highly structured, based on objective procedures and the test taker is the main source of collecting data.

In brief, the relationship between the above terms and their function in a complete assessment process can be illustrated in a simple diagram (Figure 3.1) that shows how these terms and concepts are interrelated.

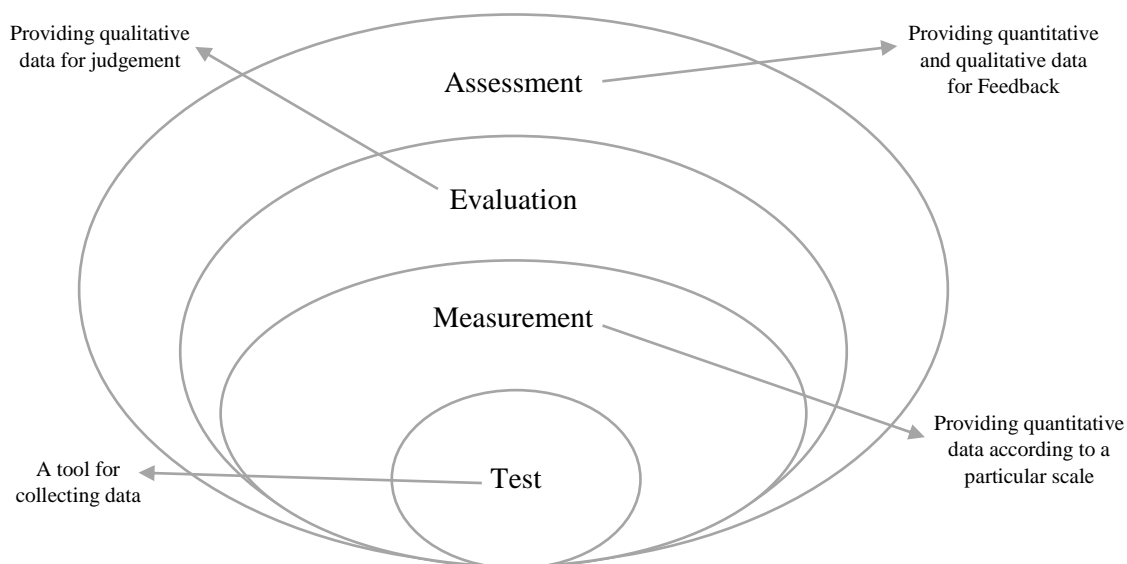


Figure 3. 1 Assessment Process

Tests are usually used as tools to collect data about students' achievement or performance, while measurement aims to provide quantitative data according to a particular scale (see Sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4). Another important stage is the evaluation process in which qualitative data is provided in order to take a decision and make a judgement about students' achievement according to particular criteria (see 3.2.2). The final stage is the assessment process in which all the outcomes of the previous stages are combined to provide the required feedback about students' achievement for the purpose of improving the teaching and learning process.

3.2.5 Language Assessment Literacy

Language assessment literacy has become one of the most important topics that is recently receiving considerable attention from many researchers in the field of language testing and assessment (Flucher, 2012; Scarino, 2013; Pill & Harding, 2013; Levi & Inbar-Lourie, 2020). It is considered as one of the major factors that can influence language assessment in particular and language education in general (Scarino, 2013). In the field of language education, where teachers should have a dual role as teachers and assessors, there has been an increasing interest in developing teachers' knowledge and

understanding of the principles and practices of assessment. The initial attempts at defining language assessment literacy for teachers, according to Flicher (2012: 115-116), focused on aspects related to "developing assessments for the classroom, administering and scoring tests, using scores to aid instructional decisions, communicating results to stakeholders." From another skill-based perspective, O'Loughlin (2013: 363) views language assessment literacy as:

"The acquisition of a range of skills related to test production, test score interpretation and use, and test evaluation in conjunction with the development of a critical understanding about the roles and functions of assessment within education and society."

However, a more comprehensive definition was presented by Flicher (2012: 125) based on the findings of his research project in which he conducted an international survey to elicit the assessment training needs of language teachers. He defined teachers' language assessment literacy as:

"The knowledge, skills and abilities required to design, develop, maintain or evaluate, large-scale standardised and/or classroom based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice. The ability to place knowledge, skills, processes, principles and concepts within wider historical, social, political and philosophical frameworks in order to understand why practices have arisen as they have, and to evaluate the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals".

According to this definition, it can be concluded that language teachers' knowledge and understanding of the assessment process is not restricted to the process of test administration, mark distribution, feedback delivery and evaluating students' achievements. Teachers need also to be aware of the consequences of the assessment practices for curriculum, teaching and learning in the classroom at the micro level as well as their impact on educational institutions and society at the macro level. Despite the important role of teachers' language assessment literacy in the field of language education, several research projects have found that many teachers did not receive

useful training to develop their assessment skills and knowledge (Stiggins, 2010; Lam, 2015). For instance, Vogt and Tsagari (2014) conducted a study in which they explored the language testing and assessment (LTA) literacy of foreign language teachers across Europe. They found that LTA literacy was not very well-developed among these teachers and most of them had received little or no training. The findings of the study also showed that those teachers, who received either pre- or in-service training, were not sufficiently prepared for their professional work as foreign language teachers and assessors. In another language educational context, Lam (2015) conducted a study in five Hong Kong teacher education institutions to explore the overall language assessment training. The findings of the study revealed that language assessment training in Hong Kong was inadequate and unable to bridge the theory-practice gap within the assessment reform context.

The influence of language assessment literacy on language education and assessment is not confined to teachers as assessors but it extends to include other stakeholders such as university admissions officers, policy makers and government departments (Taylor, 2009; O'Loughlin, 2013). For instance, Baird et al. (2017: 340) point out that "policy-makers who take decisions on the basis of educational assessment data rarely understand the content of the tests or the effects upon learning of changing them." Such stakeholders need to be aware of a range of assessment-related skills and knowledge that can enable them to interpret test score in order to make appropriate decisions related to language education and avoid any misconceptions by decision makers. In this context, Pill and Harding (2013) conducted a study in which they examined the language assessment literacy among policy-makers from the Australian House of Representatives. The data required for the study were collected from the public hearing transcripts of an Australian parliamentary inquiry into the registration processes and support for overseas trained doctors, which involved, *inter alia*, assessing the language

proficiency level of these doctors. According to the findings of the study, the policy-makers involved in the hearings showed some lack of knowledge and a degree of misconception about language assessment procedures. As Pill and Harding argue, such misconceptions may result in undesirable consequences for decision making based on test scores. Therefore, Pill and Harding (2013: 382) asserted the importance of "understanding the nature of such misconceptions in order to gain insight into those gaps in knowledge of language assessment practices which may be most usefully addressed through professional engagement." It would be useful for the different groups of non-practitioner stakeholders who use language assessment outcomes as the basis for their decisions to possess a deeper understanding of the basic terms and principles of language assessment. Taylor (2013) argues that there is a need to integrate language assessment literacy development activities within professional development programmes for the different groups of non-practitioner stakeholders, in order to familiarise them with how to use test scores in their professional contexts.

In the next section, the quality of assessment as one of the important issues in the field of foreign language education and assessment is discussed with the purpose of improving the results of the assessment process.

3.3 Quality of Assessment

Beliefs that alternative assessment practices are more effective and usually lead to better results than traditional assessment practices, or vice versa, are often based upon incomplete evidence. There are other important criteria in the field of educational assessment that educators commonly use and by which the quality of assessment is generally determined. Test validity is one of these criteria that must be considered in the process of language testing and assessment in order to obtain fair and accurate outcomes from any particular test or assessment activity (Boyle & Fisher, 2007). As mentioned in Chapter Two, in section 2.5, validity is one of the most confusing terms for Libyan

teachers when they design and implement various assessment practices for their students. Teachers do not have enough information and knowledge about this concept. Therefore, there is a need for teachers and other stakeholders at Libyan universities to consider adopting a well-known validity framework that would help to produce more valid tests with more systematic decisions. In this regard, Bannur et al. (2015: 199) argue that:

"Adopting validity frameworks guarantees more valid and reliable tests with more systematic decisions. It is insufficient considering just the test design and test setters; there is a need to consider the cognitive process that second language learners undergo to comprehend a test task".

The validation processes for most language tests nowadays are usually based on a coherent and systematic approach to help produce comprehensive evidence that demonstrates to what extent the test tasks were successful in reflecting the real language abilities and skills of the test takers. One of these approaches in the field of language testing and education, as will be explained in the following subsection, was developed by Weir (2005) and is commonly known as the socio-cognitive validation approach.

3.3.1 The Socio-Cognitive Approach for Language Testing Validation

The socio-cognitive framework was first developed by Weir (2005) in his book, *Language testing and validation: An evidence-based approach*, which was considered as the cornerstone for further research by Shaw and Weir (2007), Khalifa and Weir (2009) and O'Sullivan and Weir (2011). The main function of the socio-cognitive framework is to provide test stakeholders such as students, teachers and other test score users with clear evidence of how the various components of the validation process work together to evaluate the test taker's performance. In this context, O'Sullivan (2012: 4) stated that "the real strength of this model of validation is that it comprehensively defines each of its elements with sufficient detail as to make the model operational." Weir's framework is described as socio-cognitive as it is not only concerned with

validating the test as a measure of the linguistic competence of the test taker but it also gives a special concern to validating the test's ability to take account of both the social aspects and cognitive (mental processes) aspects of the test taker. Shaw and Weir (2007: 3) argue that "the use of language in performing tasks is viewed as a social rather than a purely linguistic phenomenon". To provide comprehensive evidence for validating different kinds of language tests, Weir (2005) suggested five major validity components or aspects in the socio-cognitive framework, as can be seen in Figure 3.2, adapted from O'Sullivan and Weir (2011). These components are interrelated and should work together, both before and after administration of the test, to help in identifying coherent evidence of different validity components supporting the interpretation of test scores. In this vein, Weir (2005: 13) commented that:

"These [validity components of the socio-cognitive framework] are not alternatives but complementary aspects of an evidential basis for test interpretation. No single validity can be considered superior to another. Deficit in any one raises questions as to the well-foundedness of any interpretation of test scores".

As can be seen from Figure 3.2 and the arrows pointing from top to bottom, the five components of the socio-cognitive approach for validation of the language test will work in two stages. *A Priori* validation stage, which starts before the test event and includes **context validity** and **cognitive validity** and *a posteriori* validation stage, which takes place after the test event and includes **scoring validity**, **consequential validity** and **criterion-related validity** (Weir, 2005). As Weir (ibid) argued, combining scoring validity with other validity aspects in the socio-cognitive framework gives an indication that the terms, reliability and validity, are no longer considered as separate entities and they should form "a unified approach to establishing the overall validity of a test".

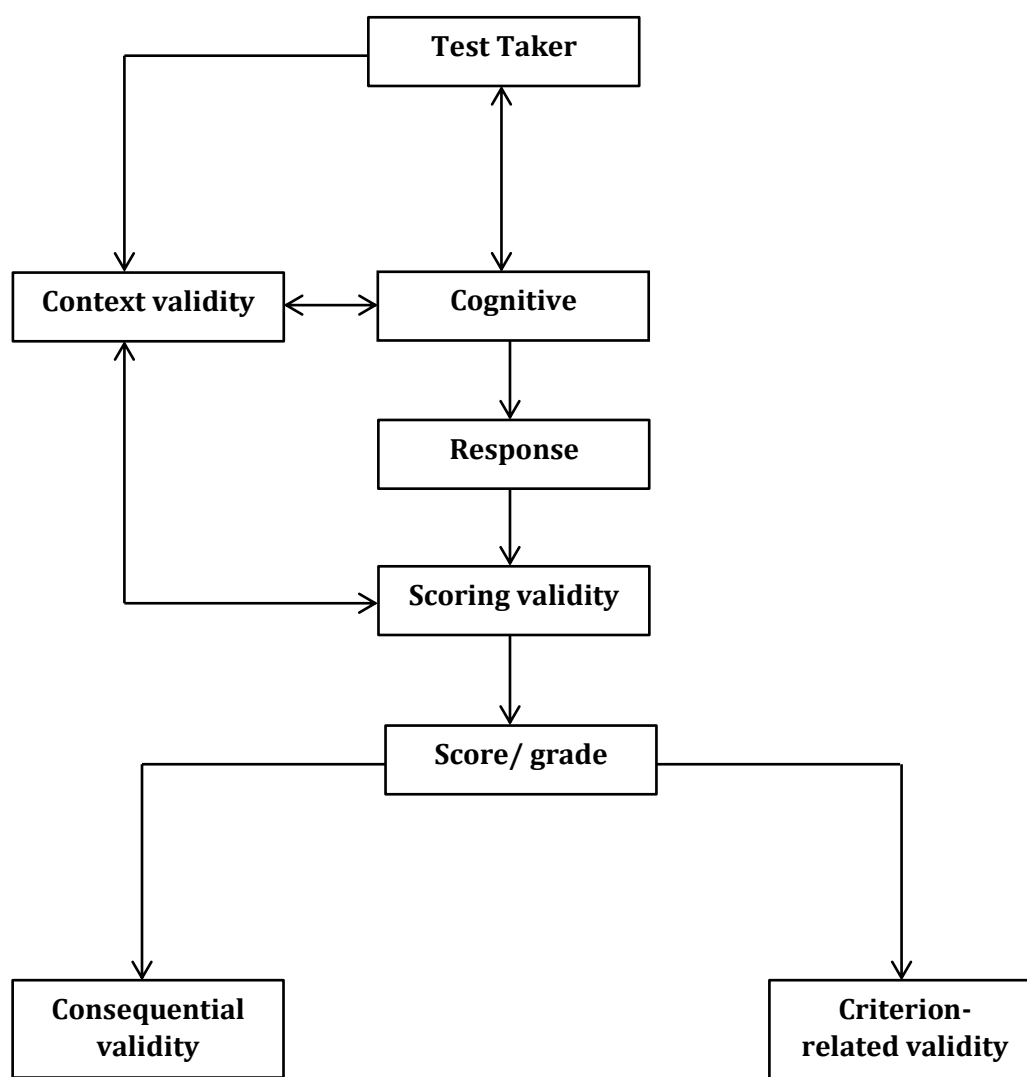


Figure 3.2 Socio-cognitive framework for test development and validation
(Adapted from O'Sullivan & Weir, 2011)

The relationships among these major validity components of the socio-cognitive framework, including the test taker's characteristics, illustrated in Figure 3.2 can be explained below in more details as follows:

3.3.1.1 Test taker characteristics

The socio-cognitive framework gives a special concern to the individual characteristics of the test-taker as a significant factor in the process of the cognitive validity. They can have a direct impact on the cognitive (mental) processes that a test-taker uses when

processing a test task within a specific context (Weir, 2005). These characteristics, according to O'Sullivan (2000) cited in Weir (2005), can be categorized within three groups to understand how they can affect test takers' performance during the test. The first group comprises physical and physiological characteristics, which may include temporary ailments such as headache or toothache experienced by the test taker on the day of the test or permanent disabilities such as dyslexia, limited hearing and visual impairment. The second group is the psychological characteristics of the test taker, which include personality, emotional state, motivation, concentration, memory and cognitive style. It is not possible to design a test which suits the personality and the cognitive style of every candidate, but the tasks of the test should be varied in a way that can accommodate most of these characteristics. For instance, some candidates have a strong memory and can get a high score in a test when most of its tasks depend on memorization, while these kinds of tasks will not be suitable for those candidates who perform better on questions that depend on comprehension and analysis rather than memorization. The third group represents experiential characteristics, which include the candidate's education, previous experience, preparedness for the examination and residence in a target language country. All these characteristics make the test takers more familiar with the test and enable them to process the test tasks more easily.

These individual characteristics should be considered by the test developers to increase the equity and fairness of the test, which will help in achieving more valid tests that reflect the real language skills and abilities of most of the candidates.

3.3.1.2 Context validity

Context validity concerns the linguistic and content demands of the test task, as well as the external social and cultural contexts under which the test tasks are performed. In other words, it addresses the particular contextual conditions of the testing system, which might have an impact on the performance of the test takers. Context validity

includes different aspects that should be considered in the test system by the test developers before administering any language test. These aspects, as described by O’Sullivan (2012: 2), can be outlined in Table 3.1 as follows:

Table 3.1 Context Validity Aspects in the test system

Test task	Performance parameters	These are parameters such as timing, preparation, score weighting, and knowledge of how performance will be scored.
	Linguistic demands	This refers to the language of the input and the expected language of the output and can also include reference to the audience or interlocutor where appropriate.
Test Administration	Security	Refers to systems that are put in place to ensure the security of the entire administrative process.
	Physical organisation	Refers to room setup etc.
	Uniformity	Systems to ensure that all administrations of the test are the same.

(Adapted from O'Sullivan, 2012: 2)

Test developers need to consider all these aspects of the context validity mentioned above in Table 3.1 in order to achieve what is called *situational authenticity*, which in turn will help achieving task authenticity. Shaw and Weir (2007: 9) described situational authenticity as "the contextual requirements of the tasks" and deemed it to be a significant part of the context validity. In this regard, Khalifa and Weir (2009: 81) argued that "the contextual parameters operationalised in a test should mirror the criterial features of the target situation activity as far as possible". This means that situational authenticity is required to ensure that the test tasks of a particular test represent the same features as the real-life tasks which people will use in a real target language context.

3.3.1.3 Cognitive Validity

This was firstly named by Weir (2005) as *theory-based validity* and renamed later by Khalifa and Weir (2009) as *cognitive validity*, the term which will be used in this study to refer to this aspect of validity evidence in the socio-cognitive framework. Weir (2005) suggested two aspects of cognitive validity. The first one helps to provide *a priori* evidence before the test event, which can be achieved through verbal reports from test-takers. The second aspect provides *a posteriori* evidence after the test event, and can be measured via statistical analysis of scores following test administration. As its name suggests, cognitive validity is concerned with understanding and measuring the underlying cognitive processes that test takers use when answering a particular test task. These cognitive processes should resemble the natural cognitive processes that are required for completion of a real-world task in the target language in order to demonstrate the cognitive validity of a particular test. In other words, a valid test should stimulate the candidates to activate and operate similar cognitive (mental) processes to those employed in a real-life task in the target language in non-test circumstances. Cognitive validity is one of the main features in the socio-cognitive approach which can enable test developers to predict the future performance of the test takers in a specific domain. Field (2013: 78) emphasizes that test scores are not enough to reflect the real language competence of test takers and he stated that:

"Cognitive validity is of particular concern in the case of tests whose scores are employed predictively to indicate the test taker's suitability for a future university place, for a job in a domain such as business, medicine, teaching or tourism or for acceptance under an immigration programme. It is not enough for such tests to demonstrate that a test taker has reached a criterial level of language knowledge; they must also be capable of demonstrating that the test taker is capable of linguistic behaviour that meets the requirements of the target context."

A valid reading task from a cognitive validity perspective, for instance, would require that task to enable candidates to be engaged in internal mental processes such as those mentioned by Weir (2005). These internal processes are classified into executive

processes and executive resources. The executive processes include goal setting, monitoring, visual recognition and pattern synthesizing, while executive resources comprise language knowledge and content knowledge. The language knowledge of a reading text represents the grammatical knowledge such as lexis and syntax, textual knowledge, such as cohesion and coherence, functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge. The content knowledge can be internal such as the test taker's prior knowledge of a particular topic (background knowledge) or external knowledge, which is task-specific knowledge.

3.3.1.4 Scoring validity

As mentioned above in Section 3.2, scoring validity is one of the components of the *a posteriori* validation stage in the socio-cognitive approach that helps to provide evidence of validity after the test event. Scoring validity is a term which is used by Weir (2005: 22) "as the superordinate for all the aspects of reliability ... [which] is a valuable part of a test's overall validity". The main function of scoring validity is to demonstrate the extent to which the test scores are consistent and stable over time and free of bias (Weir 2005). Through scoring validity, test developers can know to what extent the test scores were free from errors of measurement, which will enable them to make the right decision about the test taker's performance.

The socio-cognitive framework identifies four types of scoring validity: item analysis, internal consistency, measurement error and marker reliability (Weir 2005). Item analysis focuses on the easiness and difficulties of the test items by using statistical analysis to collect more information about the language performance and abilities of the test taker. If the test items are too easy or too difficult for the test takers, they will not give real information to identify the individual differences among the test takers' abilities. Internal consistency is a kind of scoring validity that concerns the homogeneity of the test items and employs statistics to give data about how reliable the overall test is.

Measurement Error is another form of scoring validity that shows the difference between the test score and the actual score for the candidate's language proficiency. Marker reliability has a crucial impact on the overall test reliability especially when evaluating productive skills such as speaking and writing by either one rater or two raters. Marker reliability was classified by Weir (2005: 200) into two types: ***Inter-marker reliability***, which refers to "the consistency with which two or more judges rate the work or performance of test takers" and ***Intra-marker reliability***, which refers to "the consistency of a single marker with him or herself". Therefore, the scoring validity can be affected by multiple factors such as the type of the test, number of raters and the marking method (Weir, 2005; Khalifa & Weir, 2009).

3.3.1.5 Consequential validity

The role of consequential validity comes after the test scores and results are finalized. It deals with the consequences of the testing and assessment process on the education system (learners, teachers and educational institutions) and the society in general (Khalifa & Weir, 2009; Shaw & Weir, 2007). It focuses on what effects the interpretations of the test scores and outcomes can have on the test stakeholders as well as the intended testing purposes. Testing can have a positive or negative impact on language teaching and learning methods (see section 3.6). Therefore, test developers need to consider this issue in order to establish evidence relating to consequential validity especially with high stakes tests. A language test will not reflect the real abilities of the test takers in the target language if they value success in the test more than learning. There is a possibility that some teachers and students may devote their teaching and learning objectives solely to the purpose of passing the test.

3.3.1.6 Criterion-related validity

Similar to consequential validity, criterion-related validity contributes to elicit *a posteriori* validity evidence once the scores of the test are finalized. Criterion-related

validity, as described by Hughes (2003), Weir (2005) and Khalifa and Weir (2009) demonstrates the degree to which the scores of a particular test correlate to those scores provided by another suitable external measure or assessment tool of the ability being tested. This external assessment is deemed as the criterion measure against which the test is validated. Criterion-related validity has been divided into *concurrent* and *predictive* validity. Concurrent validity as defined by Shaw and Weir (2007: 229) can be examined by "comparing scores from a given test with some other measure of the same ability of the test takers taken at the same time as the test". Predictive validity concerns the extent to which a candidate's scores on a previous test correlate with future ones. To establish criterion-related validity evidence for a language test, Weir (2005) suggested comparing the scores of the test to be validated with four external measurements. These include comparison with different versions of the same test, comparison with the same test administered on different occasions, comparison with other tests/ measurements and comparison with future performance.

3.4 Formative Assessment and Summative Assessment

The process of assessment is categorised as formative or summative according to the way in which the outcomes and information, obtained from the assessment process, are used and interpreted (So & Lee, 2011). There are several studies that distinguish between formative and summative assessment, yet their results can be interchangeably used to achieve different purposes (Bell & Cowie, 2000). Dunn and Mulvenon (2009: 2) point out that:

“Although an assessment may be designed and packaged as a formative or summative assessment, it is the actual methodology, data analysis, and use of the results that determine whether an assessment is formative or summative”.

Therefore, the results of formative assessment can be used summatively, especially when they show evidence about students' attainment, and summative assessment results

can be used formatively when they reveal real learning difficulties that need further consideration and teaching. For instance, Winingar (2005) cited in Dunn and Mulvenon (2009: 2) used “a summative assessment as a formative assessment by providing both quantitative and qualitative feedback about the results of the exam”, and he named that as “formative summative assessment”.

3.4.1 Formative Assessment as an Instructional Instrument

Formative assessment or assessment for learning (AfL) rose to prominence over the two decades after Black and Wiliam’s (1998a) comprehensive review of research on classroom formative assessment practices (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009; So & Lee, 2011; Jonsson et al. 2014). Black and Wiliam’s review of 578 publications about the role of assessment in learning contributed significantly to the understanding of AfL. The main findings of their research were that the students of those teachers, who adopted formative assessment strategies in their classes, significantly improved in comparison with those of the control groups (Black& Wiliam, 1998a). DeLuca et al. (2015: 122) state that:

“Since Black and Wiliam’s (1998) assertion that formative assessment practices can significantly increase student achievement, there has been a surge of policies, practices and research exploring the feasibility, value and impact of assessment for learning (AfL)”.

One of the outstanding features of formative assessment is the focus on the integration or alignment between assessment and instruction in the classroom to improve the process of teaching and learning (McDowell & Montgomery, 2013). Formative assessment practices, such as self and peer assessment and constructive and peer feedback, are substantially based on the active engagement of the students in the education and assessment processes to enhance the students’ experience of learning (Black et al., 2003). One example of formative assessment practices is when students are given the opportunity to manage their language assessment and learning skills under

the supervision of their teachers. Students are enabled to practise all communication skills such as speaking, listening, writing and reading in the target language without feeling anxiety, because they know that the results of assessment are mainly used in constructive feedback.

The emphasis on the use of formative assessment in promoting teaching and learning alike has catalysed many educational researchers to formulate several definitions in order to describe this term. Black and Wiliam (1998a: 7) define formative assessment as “all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged”. It is clear that Black and Wiliam’s definition is based on improving teacher-student interaction by sharing and providing non-evaluative feedback on students’ ongoing progress, to so that any required reforms can be made to raise the level of students’ learning. In his comments about Black and Wiliam’s review, Sadler (1998: 77) points out that formative assessment “refers to assessment that is specifically intended to provide feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning”. In the same vein, Shepard (2008: 281) provides the following, more general, definition: “Formative assessment is defined as assessment carried out during the instructional process for the purpose of improving teaching or learning”. He also indicates that “What makes formative assessment formative is that it is immediately used to make adjustments so as to form new learning” (Shepard, *ibid*). Wininger and Norman (2005: 25) described formative assessment as “the measurement of student progress before or during instruction for the express purpose of modifying instruction or improving student performance”. This shows that formative assessment implementation at early stages, before instruction, may help teachers be aware of the students’ needs and gives the opportunity for students to set initial learning goals before instruction. Wiliam and Leahy (2007: 31) believe that “An assessment is formative to the extent that information

from the assessment is fed back within the system and actually used to improve the performance of the system in some way”. Most definitions emphasise the importance of feedback as a major element of formative assessment practices to monitor students’ learning progression and this is what the next section focuses upon.

3.4.1.1 Feedback in Formative Assessment

Several researchers in the field of formative assessment in recent decades have discussed the importance of feedback as a key strategy to successful teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Fluckiger, et al. 2010; Swaffield, 2011; Bollag, 2006; Leahy, et al. 2005). The results of their studies indicate that formative feedback is a key element and one of the main features of formative assessment on which teachers and students need to focus in order to improve the quality of their teaching and learning. Many definitions are offered to demonstrate what is meant by formative feedback. For example, Shute (2007: 154) defines formative feedback in her review as “information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning”. In this definition, Shute concentrates on how the student will interact with the received feedback as an essential factor in this process. This allows students to be more creative and responsible in order to make decisions that support their learning and success. For this reason, the effectiveness of feedback is always concerned with how it is received, interpreted and used by the students. In this context, Fluckiger, et al. (2010: 136) argues that “Formative feedback involving students as partners is a key strategy to enhance the teaching and learning process”. Hattie and Timperley (2007: 102) define feedback as “information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent and self/experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding. It occurs typically after instruction that seeks to provide knowledge and skills or to develop particular attitudes”. Hattie and Timperley’s definition focuses on the role of the agent, which is not always

the teacher, who uses the feedback as an instrument to give clear and explicit guidance on how the work could be improved. Moreover, the agent sometimes is responsible for how feedback is received. There is a great possibility that feedback may be negatively or poorly received by students, which may impede their learning and understanding or lead to frustration (Swaffield, 2011). On the other hand, Perrenoud (1998: 86) claims that “Feedback is a simple message” which can assist the learning process. He argues that it is effective “because students take it into account and it affects their cognition”.

According to Black and Wiliam (1998b), feedback has two main functions: directive and facilitative. The directive function informs the students about what needs to be fixed or revised. It is usually more specific in comparison with the facilitative feedback, in which students are guided in their own revision and conceptualization by providing them with instructive comments and suggestions (Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Shute, 2008). Directive feedback can be clearly seen in the teacher’s comments and notes for some students who encounter real difficulties with some language aspects such as grammar rules, whereas students who suffer from language problems such as pronunciation can depend on facilitative feedback by listening to their teachers’ immediate corrections in the classroom. It can be concluded from the above definitions that the main aim of formative feedback is to develop the students’ knowledge, skills and understanding by filling the gap between the current performance and a desired goal in a particular learning stage or task. Shute (2008) suggests various types of feedback that can be used to achieve such purposes (e.g., verification of response accuracy, explanation of the correct answer, hints and worked examples). She divided effective feedback into two types. The first type is **verification feedback**, which is defined as confirming whether a certain answer is right or wrong. It provides students with the appropriate answer or to what extent their responses were correct and accurate. For example, the teacher can ask students to read a text written in English and answer the related questions to verify their

understanding of the text and provide them with the correct answer. The second type is **elaboration feedback**, which is concerned with justifying and explaining the correct answer, that is, why a particular answer is incorrect, or describing the correct answer in more details. This kind of feedback is commonly used in grammatical rules exercises, where the teacher should explain to students how to correct wrong answers.

3.4.1.2 Features of Effective Formative Feedback

There are several factors that affect the role of formative feedback in the classroom and make it more effective and powerful. Feedback should not only be delivered in an effective way but it also needs to be used by students and positively affect their performance (Jonsson, 2012). Formative feedback can have a diagnostic and supportive function. Some commentators recommend using diagnostic feedback to discover and overcome the individual differences between students in the same classroom. Shute (2008: 135) suggests that “a struggling student may require greater support and structure from a formative feedback message compared to a proficient student”. The teacher needs to communicate individually with students in order to discover low-ability students and determine their learning problems, in order to reduce the cognitive load of those students. Consequently, effective formative feedback should also be designed to have a supportive role to help those students who are experiencing high cognitive demands. This can be achieved by providing worked examples and using explanatory feedback to decrease the cognitive load (see 2.3.1.3) (Shute, 2008; Sweller et al. 1998; Moreno, 1994).

Fluckiger et al (2010: 136) conducted a study on how to engage students as partners in providing formative feedback and to support them in adjusting their thinking and behaviour to improve learning. They found that “involving students as partners is a key strategy to enhance the teaching and learning process”. They argue that teachers should be ready to use different strategies to improve their teaching through formative feedback.

This could help students to be more independent and to modify their own learning tactics to create a class atmosphere based mainly on learning more than on grading. Perrenoud (1998) indicates that students will learn better if feedback helps them to modify their thought processes. One useful strategy that teachers can adopt to achieve this purpose is not to interrupt students when they are actively engaged in a particular assignment or task on their own, because that may cause disruption and impede learning.

Feedback timing is a significant factor in the delivery of formative feedback that should be considered. For example, when students receive their feedback at the end of a particular course or module, they may encounter some difficulties in using the feedback and it will have a poor effect on their performance (Brown & Glover, 2006; Holmes & Papageorgiou, 2009; Price et al., 2010). Delayed feedback, for instance, may lead to distortion of a subsequent learning and affect the student's future performance. Selecting the time of feedback is among the most critical influences on student learning. The timing of feedback is a controversial topic and researchers have been examining whether feedback should be delivered immediately or delayed. There has been much research on the timing of feedback, which revealed inconsistent findings, particularly on the contrasting effects of immediate versus delayed feedback on learning (Shute, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Shute (2008) suggests a solution for this inconsistency by considering the positive and negative effects of immediate and delayed feedback on learning. She points out that immediate feedback prevents errors becoming rooted in the memory of the student to the extent that they cannot be cured in the future or may need a great effort from the part of the teacher to solve these learning problems. However, it may promote the students' dependence on the teacher, which may have an influence on their creativity and innovation. On the other hand, delayed feedback can enhance the students' independence and involve them in the learning process, but at the same time it

may create disruption and confusion for weak students because of lack of guidance at initial stages.

In general, it can be noticed that both types of feedback timing have benefits and drawbacks for the learner's performance. However, the impact of each type depends on the nature and individual abilities of each student. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the teacher to make appropriate judgements about when, how, and at what level to provide appropriate feedback.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) proposed a model that makes feedback more effective by identifying certain features and circumstances including feedback timing, the effects of positive and negative feedback as well as three major feedback questions. They argue that effective feedback must provide answers for three main questions frequently asked by teachers and their students: Where am I going? (Focusing on goals), How am I going? (Focusing on progress toward the goal) and Where to next? (Focusing on the remediation to make better progress). Hattie and Timperley (2007: 102) concluded that answering these questions “enhances learning when there is a discrepancy between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood. It can increase effort, motivation, or engagement to reduce this discrepancy”.

3.4.1.3 Feedback Specificity

Several commentators have discussed the nature and importance of feedback specificity. Shute (2008) highlights the role of feedback specificity and how it can improve students' comprehension of the delivered information. She states that “specific (or elaborated) feedback provides information about particular responses or behaviours beyond their accuracy and tends to be more directive than facilitative”. Feedback specificity is defined as the amount of information provided through feedback messages (Goodman et al., 2004). Feedback will be more beneficial when it provides sufficient and clear details

on how to correct the answer rather than informing the students whether their responses are correct or incorrect (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991; Pridemore & Klein, 1995). Feedback lacking in specificity may result in uncertainty and cognitive load, or even decrease the motivation of students to respond to feedback (Fedor, 1991), and learners may need greater information processing activity to understand the intended message (Shute, 2008; Davis, 2005).

Although greater feedback specificity is usually cited as a positive factor for improving performance and learning, some studies have found that this generalization is not always the case (Davis, 2005; Goodman et al., 2004). A study by Goodman et al. (2004) investigated the claim that increasing feedback specificity improves performance and learning. They concluded that there is a lack of evidence to support the argument on which this perception is based. They argue that increasing feedback specificity is useful at the initial stage of performance but it may negatively reflect on the creativity and exploration of students in later, more independent learning. The results of their study showed that:

“Increasing the specificity of feedback positively affected practice performance, but its benefits did not endure over time or modification of the task. In addition, feedback specificity negatively affected levels of exploration during practice and interacted with exploration strategies to affect learning. The results suggest that those who received feedback of varying specificity may have learned through different but equally beneficial mechanisms” (Goodman et al., 2004:248).

In summary, whereas students prefer specific, detailed, and individualized comments on their own work (Jonsson, 2012; Ball et al., 2009; Carless, 2006), other students, such as high-achieving or more motivated students, learn better from **facilitative** feedback that challenges them such as hints, cues and prompts (Vygotsky, 1987). Therefore, feedback should be presented in a balanced way to avoid complexity and lengthy feedback (Shute, 2008).

3.4.2 Effects of Summative Assessment on Teaching and Learning Practices

Most uses of summative assessment (assessment of learning) outcomes in the context of formal education are employed for recording and reporting. For instance, Bloom et al (1971:155) defined summative assessment as “the type of evaluation used at the end of a term, course, or programme for purposes of grading, certification, evaluation of progress, or research on the effectiveness of a curriculum, course of study, or educational plan”. In this definition, Bloom et al show the multiple uses or purposes of summative assessment, as it introduces important and beneficial information not only about the students, but also about teachers, school, curriculum and the educational programme in general. In EFL programmes, summative assessments usually take place at the end of the course in order to assess students’ skills and make decisions regarding whether a particular student will move from an intermediate level to an advanced one.

Harlen (2005) states that the main function of summative assessments is to collect information about students’ achievement in order to provide evidence for the purpose of making decisions about their educational level and competence. In other words, the main purpose of summative assessment is to sum up how much information and knowledge each student has grasped or learned at a particular point of time, usually at the end of the course, in order to communicate the achievement status to others (McDowell & Montgomery, 2013; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Harlen, 2005). Summative assessment practices generally take the form of final examinations or assignments in any educational programme and general proficiency exams (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).

Harlen (2005) classified the summative uses of assessment into *internal* and *external* to the community of the school. The internal uses are concerned with the normal and regular school grading for the purpose of reporting to many different interested stakeholders such as parents, other teachers of the next stage and students themselves.

The external uses are concerned with providing certification or accreditation of learning by external examining bodies to be used for vocational qualifications, selection for employment or even getting accepted to further stages of education. They are also used for monitoring teachers' and schools' performance, as they share accountability for the students' attainment.

Despite the significant role of summative assessment (assessment of learning) in the education process, it has been criticised by many researchers in the field of education (Harlen, 2005; McDowell & Montgomery, 2013; Williams, 2014). One main critique was about the high-stakes influence that it might have on teachers and students alike.

Williams (2014: 565) argues that:

“Many quality assurance systems rely on high-stakes assessment for course certification. Such methods are not as objective as they might appear; they can have detrimental effects on student motivation and may lack relevance to the needs of degree courses increasingly oriented to vocational utility”.

Williams indicates that high-stakes summative assessment (see 2.1.5), in the form of traditional tests, might have three main disadvantages. Firstly, it may have a washback impact (see 2.4) on the students' learning behaviour and strategy. The preoccupation with marks and grades by teachers and schools to maintain their professional reputation leads students to focus mainly on increasing their examination scores, rather than engaging in genuine learning. A second disadvantage is that students usually receive little and insufficient feedback about their performance, which is commonly given at the end of the educational programme. Hinet and Knight (1996: 5) argue that “summative assessment denies students qualitative feedback which is essential to individual development”. Lack of effective feedback, which has an important role in determining further learning, may lead to poor learning in terms of the desired skills and knowledge (see 2.3.1.1). A third disadvantage is that high-stakes summative assessment is more likely to adopt conventional approaches, which depend mainly on providing marks. It is

also more convenient for assessing theoretical rather than practical knowledge. Sadler (1998: 77) believes that “grades and marks do not deliver as much formative effectiveness as tailored comments, and in some situations can be counterproductive, particularly with learners of lower ability”.

3.5 Washback Effects on Language Education

This section reviews the various definitions of washback effects and distinguishes between the terms “*washback*” and “*impact*”. It also explores how washback effects from examinations can be beneficial (positive) or harmful (negative) for the teaching and learning process.

The belief that testing influences teaching and learning is very common in the fields of language education and applied linguistics and can be traced back to the middle of the 20th century (Vernon, 1956; Davies, 1968; Pearson, 1988; Hughes 2003; Alderson & Wall, 1993). This phenomenon, which is known as ‘*washback*’, has been described and defined by many educationalists and scholars from different points of view. Some researchers believe that it is associated with high-stakes examinations. For example, Adnan and Mahmood (2014: 133) pointed out that “high-stakes examination has effect on teaching and the way in which an exam affects teaching is called washback”. Washback effect received a great attention in research at the beginning of the 1990s and in what was described by Bailey (1999: 3) as “an explosion of research on washback” that resulted in “a greater understanding of this construct than was previously available”. After this period, studies in this field have continued by several researchers, including Spratt (2005); Saif (2006); Qi (2007); Scott (2007); Pan (2009) and Cheng et al. (2011) to explore the effects of washback on various aspects such as course content, teaching methods, learning strategies, classroom activities and stakeholders’ beliefs and attitudes.

3.5.1 Definitions of the Term ‘Washback’

The term ‘*washback*’ has been widely used in the field of language education and British applied linguistics to refer to the beneficial or harmful influences of various assessment practices and tests on teaching and learning practices inside the classroom (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Messick, 1996; Bailey, 1996). In the field of general education, the term ‘*backwash*’ is generally used interchangeably with ‘washback’ to refer to the same phenomenon (Hughes, 2003; Spolsky, 1994; Biggs, 1995). Although Bailey (1999) indicates that the concept of washback has been defined by many scholars who are agreed on the basic definition of washback, there is a variety of definitions indicating slight differences in meaning. She argues that these definitions range from simple and direct to very complicated ones. For instance, some definitions are restricted to test effects on teachers and students inside the classroom, while others are more general and can include the influences on the educational system as a whole or society.

One of the earliest definitions of washback is offered by Buck (1988:17 as quoted in Bailey, 1996: 257-258). He described washback as follows:

“There is a natural tendency for both teachers and students to tailor their classroom activities to the demands of the test, especially when the test is very important to the future of the students, and pass rates are used as a measure of teacher success. This influence of the test on the classroom (referred to as washback by language testers) is, of course, very important; this washback effect can be either beneficial or harmful”.

Buck’s definition came as a conclusion of his study on testing the listening comprehension of Japanese secondary school students, in which he found an obvious effect of Japanese entrance examinations on English-language learning in Japan. Buck noticed that the effect of the test on teachers and students made them modify their teaching and learning strategies according to the requirements of test. More succinctly, Hughes (2003: 1) wrote that “the effect of testing on teaching and the learning is known as backwash” which can be harmful or beneficial according to the importance of the test,

as he claimed. Washback was also described by Shohamy (1992: 513) as “the utilization of external language tests to affect and drive foreign language learning in the school context”. She argues that the main reason for this educational phenomenon is the strong authority of external testing and its major impact on the test taker’s life. Shohamy (1992: 514) cited “the introduction of new English-speaking tests in Israel” as an example of using the power of tests to change teachers’ and students’ behaviour to meet the demands of the test. Alderson and Wall (1993: 117) in their comprehensive review of the available literature on washback reported that “the term 'washback' is common in the language teaching and testing literature and tests are held to be powerful determiners of what happens in classrooms”. They see washback as a consequence of high-stakes examinations. More recently, Cheng (2005: 112) claimed that washback is “an intended or unintended direction and function of curriculum change on aspects of teaching and learning by means of a change of public examinations”. This definition shows that washback influence is not confined only to the unseen and unintended effects; it can have an intended effect that may be used to lead to a positive change on the curriculum and the teaching and learning styles.

It seems that there is a consensus among researchers that washback is described as any effects — positive or negative, intended or unintended — that tests can have on teaching and learning and all stakeholders involved in this process.

3.5.2 Similar Concepts to Washback

Some researchers have used different terms which are similar to the term washback to explain the influence of tests and examinations on education. For example, some scholars (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Wall, 1997; McNamara, 2000; Andrews, 2004) used the term *test impact* to refer to the effects and consequences of tests and examinations throughout the educational systems and society. Wall (1997: 291) argues that washback is one dimension or subset of test ‘impact’. He considered the topic in

more detail and claimed that “test impact refers to any of the effects that tests may have on individuals, policies or practices, within the classroom, the school, the educational system, or society as a whole”.

In the same way, Bachman and Palmer (1996) made a similar distinction between ‘washback’ and ‘impact’. They argued that the term *washback* is used to refer to the effect of tests on teaching and learning in the classroom at the micro level, whereas effects on society and its educational systems at the macro level are referred to as *impact*.

To facilitate understanding the concept of washback, Shohamy (1993a: 4 as quoted in Bailey, 1999: 3) explained some terms associated with the notion of washback such as ‘*washback effect*’ (Shahomy, 1992), ‘*measurement-driven instruction*’ (Popham, 1987), ‘*systemic validity*’ (Frederiksen & Collins, 1989) or ‘*curricular alignment*’ (Madaus, 1988; Smith, 1991a). She defined the above terms as follows:

- 1) *Washback effect* refers to the impact that tests have on teaching and learning.
- 2) *Measurement driven instruction* refers to the notion that tests should drive learning.
- 3) *Curriculum alignment* focuses on the connection between testing and the teaching syllabus.
- 4) *Systemic validity* implies the integration of tests into the educational system and the need to demonstrate that the introduction of a new test can improve learning.

In addition to the above terms, ‘*washback intensity*’ is a term used by Cheng (1997: 43) to refer to “the degree of washback effect in an area or a number of areas of teaching and learning affected by an examination”.

3.5.3 Complexity of Washback Phenomenon

As explained above in the previous section, the similar concepts to the terms washback and impact indicate the complexity of the washback phenomenon, which can be influenced by various factors internal and external to the educational context. For example, Watanabe (2004) indicated several social-psychological factors that could mediate washback, such as school pressure, pedagogical experiences and school culture, which influence what teachers can do in the classroom. In addition to that, there is evidence from the literature that the nature of the washback phenomenon can substantially be shaped by other external socio-political and contextual factors (Shohamy, 2007; Shih, 2010; Ali & Hamid, 2020). In this vein, Ali and Hamid (2020:129) carried out a study to investigate the factors that cause negative washback effect on English language teaching in Bangladesh and they found that:

"Language teaching may be affected not only by assessment factors but also by a complex of social psychological, political, economic, and data-driven accountability factors in which testing and teaching are embedded."

This means that all stakeholders such as teachers, policy makers and programme designers should not only consider the direct effects of the assessment practices on teaching and learning but they also need to consider the social dimension of washback effect from the wider context. They should pay attention to the external factors related to the society, including policymakers, employers, parents and other score users, to know how these factors can shape the nature of the washback effects.

Another study conducted by Shih (2010) introduced evidence that explicitly shows the complexity of the washback phenomenon. The study found that several external factors can mediate the washback effect of a newly introduced test, the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), on university policies on the graduation benchmark of English proficiency in Taiwan. To get a full picture of the washback effects, Shih (2010: 234) developed a conceptual model to understand and explain "the complexity of the

GEPT's washback on departmental and school policies". Shih's model also explained how a great number of factors, such as educational factors, school factors, and parental and student factors, could play a significant role in the washback mechanism as demonstrated in Figure 3.2 below.

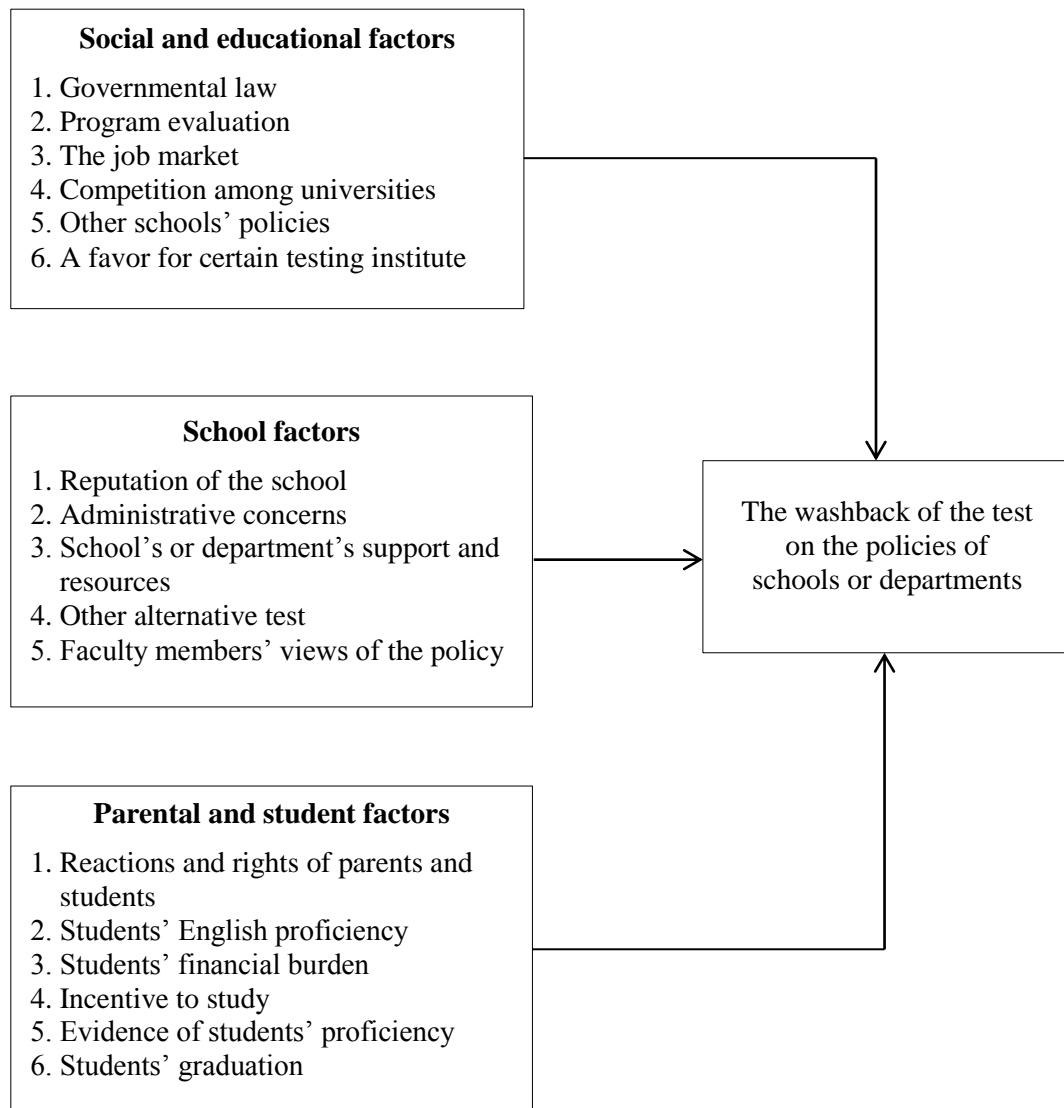


Figure 3.3: A model of washback on policies at schools
(Adapted from Shih (2010: 249))

Shih's model is comprehensive and sophisticated and it can be concluded from his model that washback is not restricted to the effect of assessment and testing on teaching and learning in its simplest form. Washback effects can go beyond that, as can be seen in Figure 3.2, to extend to other individual, psychological, social, economic, and educational factors. It is also worth mentioning here that these contextual factors can be interrelated and work simultaneously with other internal factors related to the effects of assessment on students' psychology and learning, to make the nature of the washback more complex.

3.5.4 Positive and Negative Washback Effects

Washback can act differently in different situations. Adnan and Mahmood (2014: 133) argue that “Washback can be positive or negative according to the nature and implementation of examination”. It is a neutral term that could be positive or negative according to the circumstances. The use of washback as a neutral term has been mentioned by different researchers, for example, Buck (1988), Alderson and Wall (1993), Bachman and Palmer (1996), Davies et al. (1999) and Hughes (2003). In addition, washback can be planned intentionally to induce positive effects, or unintentionally to generate either positive or negative effects (Andrews, 2004; Qi, 2005). Bailey (1996:268) points out that “Washback can be either positive or negative to the extent that it either promotes or impedes the accomplishment of educational goals held by learners and/or programme personnel”. Educators should be aware of other implied goals, such as achieving high scores rather than promoting students’ proficiency in a particular area, which may come into conflict with the main educational goals. In such a case, Bailey (1996: 269) says that “To the extent that students view the steps leading to these two goals as different, standardized exams can be seen as having negative washback to the learners”.

3.5.3.1 Positive Washback

Positive washback can be described as the positive effects of assessment and testing which promotes effective teaching and learning practices in classroom (Ahmad & Rao, 2012). Bailey (1999: 9) also supported this claim when she pointed out that “positive washback is viewed as an important criterion in the development and evaluation of language tests”. A clear example of positive washback is when “an oral proficiency test is introduced in the expectation that it will promote the teaching of speaking skills” (Tylor, 2005: 154). Exploiting tests in an appropriate way can encourage learners to learn and teachers to use effective techniques and methods of teaching, as well as paying more attention to weak students than to strong ones (Wall, 2005). Likewise, Pan (2009: 260) recommends using tests for acquiring authentic learning. He states that “tests are encouraged to promote the idea of lifelong learning and encourage people to learn English”. Pan (2009: 261) suggests that beneficial washback of tests can be summarized as below:

- a) Tests induce teachers to cover their subjects more thoroughly, making them complete their syllabi within the prescribed time limits.
- b) Tests motivate students to work harder to have a sense of accomplishment and thus enhance learning.
- c) Good tests can be utilized and designed as beneficial teaching-learning activities so as to encourage positive teaching-learning processes.

Through her review of the available literature, Bailey (1996: 268) found that a number of factors can be incorporated in the testing process to promote beneficial washback. She recommends “the incorporation of 1) language learning goals; 2) authenticity; 3) learner autonomy and self-assessment; and 4) detailed score reporting”. Bailey argues that examinations will induce positive washback when they are aimed at achieve the

learning goals that students share with their teachers, such as improving their language proficiency, rather than achieving high scores as an overall aim. For this reason, it is very important for the test to measure what the educational programme intends to teach and when it is explained to the students and teachers should be achieved at the end of the programme. Bailey also adds that “a test will promote beneficial washback to programme if it is based on clearly articulated goals and objectives” (ibid: 276).

Bachman and Palmer (1996: 33) emphasize the role of learners in all phases of test development. They assert that "One way to promote the potential for positive impact is through involving test-takers in the design and development of the test, as well as collecting information from them about their perceptions of the test and test tasks". The active engagement of students in the assessment process, as Bachman and Palmer mentioned, will enable them to take some level of responsibility to work independently without direct supervision. This strategy will encourage students in finding information and using resources without guidance, setting their learning goals and creating appropriate methods for achieving them and finally monitoring their progress and finding new alternatives if necessary. Commenting on Bachman and Palmer's view, Bailey (1999: 14) concluded that “if test-takers are involved in this way, they will perceive tests as more interactive and authentic, and will therefore be more motivated, which could lead to enhanced preparation and hence to better performance”.

An important factor for inducing positive washback suggested in an empirical study conducted by Tasgari (2011: 439) is to “familiarise students with the exam and give them a clear picture of the requirements of the exam”. Screening, revision and mock exams, and so forth, can be useful techniques for achieving this purpose. This strategy, Tasgari contends, will reduce students’ anxiety before the exam and gain satisfied results. In addition to that, the provision of informative feedback that test-takers receive about their ongoing performance in the classroom as well as the timely and detailed

provision of the test score which are easily interpretable will all contribute in fostering positive washback (Tasgari, 2011; Shohamy, 1992).

3.5.3.2 Negative Washback

Until the early 1990s, it was believed that there is a linear relationship between washback and the quality of design of the test (Tasgari, 2011). For instance, Heaton (1990, 16) stated that “If it is a good examination, it will have a useful effect on teaching; if bad, then it will have a damaging effect on teaching”. However, recent studies in the field have shown that test design is “only one of the components in a quite complicated equation” (Wall, 2000). Later studies have identified other factors that might have a strong relationship between tests and their impact. Some of these are related to classroom context at the micro level, such as teachers' and students' attitudes and behavior towards the test, teaching methodology and the content of the syllabus and curriculum taught. Other factors can be ascribed to the general social and political context at the macro level (Bailey, 1996; Wall, 1996; Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

Pan (2009: 261) summarizes some negative washback effects that tests might create as follows:

- a) Tests encourage teachers to narrow the curriculum and lose instructional time, leading to “teaching to the test.”
- b) Tests bring anxiety both to teachers and students and distort their performance.
- c) Students may not be able to learn real-life knowledge, but instead learn discrete points of knowledge that are tested.
- d) Cramming will lead students to have a negative washback toward tests and accordingly alter their learning motivation.

Tsagari, (2011) explored the intended influence of the First Certificate in English (FCE) exam on teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices. He found that teachers and students ignored subjects and activities that were not directly related to demands of the exam, and tests accordingly altered the syllabus in a negative way. Tsagari noted that the exam had detrimental effects on teachers and students. The exam influenced students' attitudes towards learning the language, which in turn generated feelings of anxiety making them feel bored and demotivated. Teachers, on the other hand, also showed a great deal of anxiety, fear and pressure due to the high-stakes nature of the exam, as they felt that their professional performance was judged by their students' test scores. All these factors influenced the type of teaching methodology taking place in FCE classes, leading to adoption of *measurement-driven instruction* (see 2.4.2). This means cramming, narrowing the curriculum and focusing more attention on those skills and activities most relevant to the exam and less attention to those irrelevant to the exam.

This section has discussed the possibility of inducing positive washback and, at the same time, minimizing negative washback effect. It was clear from the literature reviewed that creating positive washback requires a sound knowledge, on the part of teachers and students, of the objectives of the assessment and testing process in relation to course content, students' needs and teaching methods. For example, students need to be familiarized with the exam and provided with a clear picture of the exam requirements. The content of the test should measure real abilities and skills of students that reflect their authentic learning and goals of the educational programme. In addition, teaching and learning practices should depend on meaningful and informative feedback about students' performance in the exam. Students should be engaged in the assessment process through self and peer assessment for promoting productive and creative learning.

3.6 The Impact of Assessment Practices on Teaching and Learning EFL

As mentioned earlier in Chapter One and Chapter Two, Libyan education in EFL was greatly influenced by the assessment practices employed at the higher education stage. This impact that assessment practices might have on teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) has recently resulted in a greater interest by several educationalists and researchers in different educational contexts of the world. There was a growing concern regarding this issue in the literature and a lot of research has been conducted to explore if there are any negative or positive effects of the assessment practices on TEFL. This section reviews the findings of a group of studies in different contexts with the aim of exploring the impact that different assessment practices might have in TEFL in these contexts. Most reviewed studies in this section were conducted with the aim of exploring to what extent the different assessment practices and objectives may influence teaching practices and objectives of EFL education in different parts of the world. They also investigate the feasibility of using alternative assessment practices to promote better teaching practices and autonomous learning in given contexts.

3.6.1 The Impact of Assessment Practices on EFL Education in Taiwan

In Taiwan, learning EFL has become a main demand among people for the job market, particularly in this century. Therefore, as Tsai and Tsou (2009: 319) stated, “The adoption of standardised English Language Proficiency (ELP) tests as a tool for assessing students’ English competence for graduation is becoming more and more common in higher education in Taiwan”. Students at the university level in Taiwan need to achieve an intermediate level of English language proficiency as a requirement for graduation from Taiwanese universities. This policy comes as one of the educational reform plans by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan to promote the teaching of the English language at universities and colleges of technology (Pan & Newfields, 2012). As a result of this policy by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan in 2003, many Tai

universities have adopted these tests, namely, General English Language Proficiency (GELP) tests, in their educational system as a graduation benchmark. By 2008, the number of universities that employ GELP tests has increased year by year “to meet the anticipated needs of both domestic and international job markets” (Pan & Newfields, 2012: 109).

Stemming from this concern shared by the Ministry of Education and Taiwanese Universities, many research studies have been conducted to investigate the positive and negative effects of GELP tests on the teaching and learning processes. For instance, Tsai and Tsou (2009) have carried out a study in the Taiwanese higher education context to explore the effects of this ELP test as a requirement of graduation for university students. They distributed a questionnaire survey among undergraduate students to investigate their views towards using GELP as an assessment tool for graduation. The main results that Tsai and Tsou (2009: 119) obtained from their study were as follows:

“The results of this study show that standardised ELP tests are viewed as insufficient to reflect what is learnt and taught in a foreign language classroom and likely to make English instruction become test-driven.”

Further to the results mentioned above, the two researchers (ibid) argued that the adoption of such tests as an assessment tool for graduation had resulted in putting more pressure on students rather than motivating them to learn EFL. Therefore, the researchers recommended that such tests should be optional for students, as a motivational tool for better learning rather than being imposed as an essential assessment tool for graduation.

3.6.2 The Impact of Assessment Practices on EFL education in South Korea

In the far east of Asia, namely, in South Korea, the context seems to be similar to Taiwan in terms for the growing demand of learning EFL among Koreans and the need for English as one of the prerequisites in the Korean international business and

economic growth. As a consequence of this overwhelming desire for learning EFL, a variety of EFL tests have been developed to evaluate students' English proficiency in different educational stages in Korea (Choi, 2008). Therefore, the assessment impact on teaching and learning EFL was an issue of interest to Korean educationalists and researchers. There has been controversy in the Korean press and among people who took the EFL tests that the applicants' test scores did not reflect their genuine English proficiency. The main reason for this claim by the test-takers is that most teachers keep teaching them strategies to pass the test and get the high scores required for employment. In 2008, the findings of a study, which was conducted by Choi and supported by the University of Korea, were published to reveal some effects of EFL testing on EFL education in Korea. The study not only explored the impact of EFL testing in the higher education context but it also investigated this impact on other educational stages in the Korean education system. The findings of the survey which was employed in this study revealed that most participants in different educational stages in Korea had similar views towards the impact of the EFL testing on EFL education. Choi (2008: 39) found that:

“The overall findings of the survey reveal that the majority of stakeholders (i.e. test-takers and teachers) do not think favorably of the EFL tests due to negative washback effects on their EFL learning and teaching. Most respondents have negative views of the tests in terms of the mismatch between test scores and English proficiency and the failure of multiple-choice EFL test preparation to induce productive English skills.”

The findings obtained by Choi make clear that the important role of EFL tests to future life and employment in South Korea has led to negative washback effects on teaching and learning practices of EFL, instead of having positive effects.

3.6.3 Impact of Assessment Practices on EFL Education in Some Arab Countries

In the Arab countries, the need for teaching EFL has attracted the same interest as in other countries in other parts of the world. It is taught in different educational levels as a

compulsory subject and employed as a medium of instruction for some subjects in the higher education context. One of the significant reasons which increased the negative impact of the assessment practices on the teaching and learning of EFL relates to the limited role given to teachers within the assessment process, as happened in higher education institutions in Kuwait and United Arab Emirates (Troudi et al 2009). Recently, the teachers' role in the assessment process in some Arab countries such as Kuwait and United Arab Emirates was restricted to working as administrators and invigilators during the examinations in their universities. They were teaching their students during the whole academic year, but they were not involved in the process of developing and designing the mid-term and final examinations. This task was the responsibility of the "assessment committee" whose members were appointed by the administration of the department. Teachers also did not have any active role in the process of assessing and evaluating the answer sheets of their students, as this process was completely computerized. The impact of this assessment process in the higher education sector of Kuwait and United Arab Emirates on the teaching of EFL was investigated by Troudi et al (2009). The findings of the study revealed a great dissatisfaction among teaching staff members towards their limited role in the assessment process. The participants of the study claimed that they were unable to improve the teaching and learning practices, as their role in the assessment process had been ignored. One of the implications of this new assessment system on the teaching of EFL was that teachers were unable to give their students any feedback on their performance after examinations. Neither teachers nor students had any chance to access the students' answer sheets after the examinations. Teachers claimed that they could not find out their students' mistakes in order to discuss them with their students and prevent them from committing the same mistakes in the future.

Overall, it seems that the importance of teaching and learning EFL has become one of the priorities of most people of non-English speaking countries in the globe. The importance of learning EFL for the future life and education of most candidates has resulted in more concentration on achieving high scores rather than acquiring authentic learning. There is a possibility that the teaching methods and learning strategies could be test-oriented and completely or partially directed towards achieving high scores rather than improving real skills and abilities in the target language. For this reason, much research has been undertaken in the field of language education to reduce this negative impact and find some pedagogical remedies by suggesting other alternative assessment methods for teaching and learning EFL.

3.7 Learning Theories and Foreign Language Education

As mentioned in other sections of this chapter, the assessment process can play an essential role to enhance learning. Therefore, it would be useful in this study to understand how assessment is associated with learning and how this relationship can be utilised to improve learning practices and strategies. To achieve this goal, it is important to be aware of the main learning theories, the role of assessment in each and their impact on the field of language education. In the field of foreign language education, it is essential to know how people learn in order to use the most effective teaching and assessment methods and approaches to improve learning in the target language and obtain genuine learning. How people learn is a question that has concerned a lot of specialists in different fields such as education, psychology and philosophy. To answer this question, many learning theories have emerged over time, to explain how learning occurs. However, the main focus in this study is on two main contrasting learning views, namely, behaviourism and constructivism, as they are the most common and dominant approaches in Libya and more widely. In addition to that, assessment practices

employed today in the field of foreign language education are usually dominated by these two learning views, as will be discussed below.

3.7.1 Foreign Language Learning According to the Behaviourist View

Behaviourist theories were established during the 19th century and are generally associated with researchers like Pavlov, Watson, Skinner and Thorndike, and were dominant at that time (James, 2015). The process of learning, according to behaviourists, is based on the principle of stimulus, response and instant reinforcement with the aim of establishing new sets of habits or changes in behaviour (Berry, 2008; James, 2013). This means that learning occurs according to conditioned responses to external stimuli, which are usually followed by reinforcement. According to the behaviourist view, there are two different kinds of reinforcement, either positive ‘reward’ or negative ‘punishment’ (Berry, 2008). Positive reinforcement is presented to increase a required response or behaviour to particular stimuli. On the other hand, negative reinforcement can also be used to strengthen a response or behaviour through forbidding or withholding rewards. Using this learning strategy in the classroom, teachers can control positive or negative reinforcement in order to motivate students for learning. For example, when a student shows good performance in the classroom, the teacher rewards that student with something that he/she like, such as praise, a smile or a good mark. This strategy will make students more confident and motivated in the classroom and encourage them towards more learning in the future. Therefore, students try to avoid punishment and never lose marks or miss praise and keep working hard, which in turn will contribute to increase learning.

According to the behaviourist view, the process of foreign language learning is considered as a habit which is based on imitation and repetition. This means that students are asked to imitate and repeat the words and sounds that they hear from their teacher in the target language until they become able to use them in their speech. In this

vein, Moeller and Catalano (2015: 327) stated that “Traditionally, learning a foreign language was thought to be a ‘mimetic’ activity, a process that involved students repeating or imitating new information.” These views, which stemmed from the behaviourist theories and claim that learning a language is a system of habits reinforced by repetition and memorization, influenced the field of foreign language learning as well (Griffiths & Parr, 2001). As a consequence of these views, a new teaching approach in the field of foreign language education emerged during the 1950s under the name of the “Audio Lingual Method” (ALM). This method emphasised the same learning principles as the behaviourists and considered repetition and practice as the main requirements for learning a foreign language (Moeller & Catalano, 2015). Richards (2002: 20) explained how ALM was associated with behaviourism and pointed out that:

“Audiolingualism was derived from research on learning associated with behaviourist psychology.... Translated into a teaching method, this led to the Audiolingual Method, in which language learning was seen as a process of habit formation and in which target language patterns were presented for memorization and learning through dialogue and drills.”

Teachers usually have a central and active role in the teaching and learning process according to the ALM and students are not encouraged to be responsible for their learning, as a strategy to avoid committing mistakes. Language is acquired through static and repetitive drills in which students are taught grammatical structures and other language aspects directly in the target language through practice and memorization and without using students’ native language (Wang, 2009). The students’ role in an ALM classroom is only learning information and knowledge in the target language, which is provided by their teachers. The main aim of using the target language for all teaching and learning activities in ALM classroom is to avoid any interference from the students’ native language that may affect learning of the target language.

Teaching and learning EFL in Libyan higher education is vastly influenced by behaviourist views and the ALM approach. Teachers work as information and knowledge providers and students sit in the classroom as passive and receptive learners who learn just what their teachers decide. This learning approach can be simply noticed through the teaching and assessment system employed at Libyan universities (see section 1.2 in Chapter One and sections 2.4.2 and 2.5 in Chapter Two). Some Libyan researchers such as Elabbar (2011) and Suwaed (2011), have described the system of foreign language education at Libyan universities in a similar way to behaviourist views. For example, Suwaed (2011: 21) stated that “the traditional methods of teaching, which depend on memorisation and recitation, are still widely used in Libya.” In the same vein, Elabbar (2011: 49) has also indicated that the teaching of EFL in the Libyan context is influenced by behaviourist learning views and the ALM approach, which is generally based on “drilling, memorising and repeating activities.”

The behaviourist view about foreign language learning remained dominant for several decades until it was challenged by other learning theories such as the ‘*Universal Grammar*’ (UG) theory by Chomsky in 1959. According to the UG theory, language learning is not a process of habit formation (imitation and repetition). Chomsky argues that language learning is based on innate abstract knowledge that exists inside human brains as underlying rules of the language system. This innate ability that exists in the brains of all people is called ‘Language Acquisition Device’ and plays a very important role in language learning for all individuals. This was the main criticism of the behaviourists’ view, which neglects the role of cognitive skills and internal mental processes in language learning and just emphasised the outward behavioural aspects. Moreover, the teaching and learning approaches that were established in line with the behaviourist view were also criticised by educators and linguists, as these approaches such as ALM ignored the students’ initiatives in the educational process (Wang, 2009).

As a consequence of this criticism, a new trend that emphasises the role of the mental processes and active engagement of the learner in the learning process has emerged (James, 2015).

3.7.2 Foreign Language Learning According to the Constructivist View

Constructivism is a theory which claims that people construct their knowledge and understanding through their prior learning experiences (Berry, 2008). According to Boghossian (2006), this theory places a great emphasis on the role of the learners as an essential factor in the learning process. Learners actively interact with the surrounding environment to find meaning in their experiences, and this in turn enables them to construct and acquire knowledge. In other words, the learning process goes through multiple stages in which current knowledge is “subject to refinement, change, rejection and replacement” until new knowledge is constructed (Little, 2007: 19). Little (2007: 18) says that:

“There are many varieties of constructivism, but all make the same basic claim: that we construct our knowledge by bringing what we already know into interaction with the new information, ideas and experiences we encounter.”

The views of constructivists towards knowledge acquisition have widely influenced educational practices in different fields, including foreign language education, and are considered by many educators and linguists as a starting point for many educational reforms. The pedagogical approaches that adopt the constructivist teaching techniques in the classroom nowadays are “currently discussed in many schools as the best method for teaching and learning” (Kalina & Powell, 2009: 241). Most educational practices applied in the classroom today according to the constructivist approach are generally associated with ‘*cognitive constructivism*’ by Jean Piaget or ‘*social constructivism*’ by Lev Vygotsky. Kalina and Powell (2009: 241) described both views, saying, “In cognitive constructivism, ideas are constructed in individuals through a personal process,

as opposed to social constructivism where ideas are constructed through interaction with the teacher and other students.” This means that the learning process, according to both views, is based on two main principles, namely ‘*self-innovation*’ and ‘*social interaction*’.

These views of cognitive and social constructivism have influenced the field of foreign language education and as a result, two common pedagogical approaches emerged based on these learning views. The first one is known as the cognitive approach, which was established as an alternative to the ALM after its decline in the 1960s because of the criticism directed to audiolingualism (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Wang, 2009). According to the cognitive approach, language learning is viewed as a creative and self-generative process in which learners are urged to have a more active role to discover new language aspects deductively by using problem-solving strategies (Celce-Murcia, 2001). The second pedagogical approach, which is closely related to social constructivism is known as ‘*communicative language teaching*’ or the ‘*communicative approach*’. According to this approach language learning is mainly based on interaction and collaboration inside the classroom among students themselves and with their teachers. As the name of this approach suggests, most learning activities in the classroom are advocated to develop students’ communicative competence in the target language through pair or group tasks that require negotiation and cooperation among learners (Wang, 2009).

Both the above-mentioned approaches seem to be similar to some extent in that they place a great emphasis on the role of the learner as an essential factor in the language learning process. The role of the teacher is just to facilitate the learning process through observing and guiding students’ performance in the classroom, with the aim of offering the required feedback whenever it is needed. From a constructivist perspective, students are no longer viewed as a passive audience who come to the classroom and just learn what is determined by their teachers and textbooks. As a consequence of these new

views, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as a pedagogical approach has been developed and expanded since the 1970s to become one of the predominant foreign language teaching approaches, especially in most European countries. In this respect, Criado and Sánchez (2009: 3) pointed out that:

“The CLT, sponsored by the Council of Europe, entered the official syllabi of most European countries in the last quarter of the 20th century; several other European organisations and initiatives joined the new approach. Research at the university and many scholars advocated rather unanimously the ‘communicative’ teaching and learning of foreign languages.”

Language is mainly used for communication among people and the best way for learning a new foreign language, according to the CLT approach, is through developing the communicative competence of the language learner. This aim for learning a foreign language can be, to a great extent, achieved with the help of ongoing formative assessment practices that enhance the active role of the learner based on interactive and collaborative activities in the classroom.

James (2015: 9) says that “this perspective [constructivism] on learning has received extensive recent attention for its implications for teaching and assessment.” Therefore, incorporating formative assessment practices as alternative assessments in the process of foreign language education has also received extensive attention because they echo these views, which emphasise the active role of the learner. Some formative assessment practices, such as peer assessment, self-assessment, questioning and assessment portfolios, are considered as significant tools for involving students in the educational process, to make them more responsible for their learning in an interactive and collaborative way. Berry (2008: 10) argues that the assessment associated with constructivist views of learning is usually known as assessment for learning (formative assessment) while assessment associated with behaviourist views of learning is usually known as assessment of learning (summative assessment). In this vein, Berry explains that:

“Assessment associated with behaviourist views of learning aims to check whether the learners have met the requirements as set... [while] assessment associated with constructivism views of learning aims to understand how the learner learns, what the learner can do or cannot do and makes some deliberations and decisions on how to help the learner learn.”

As mentioned above in Section 3.5.1, formative assessment practices are considered as beneficial educational and assessment techniques that can be exploited to improve learning and teaching. The formative assessment approach can also be exploited to support Jean Piaget’s views of cognitive constructivism and Vygotsky’s views of social constructivism. Both views claim that learning a second or foreign language is based on personal and internal mental processes of the learner as well as the active interaction within the social community of the target language. In this respect, Bennett (2011: 9) argues that “Sharing expectations, questioning, feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment are intended to, among other things, help students develop internal standards for their work, reflect upon it, and take ownership of learning”.

In addition to that, language education is influenced by the views of ‘Sociocultural Theory’ proposed by Vygotsky (1978). According to this theory, learning is mainly viewed as a dynamic social activity. The proponents of sociocultural theory claim that human cognition is a social faculty which is developed through active engagement and participation within cultural communities (Johnson, 2006; Moeller& Catalano, 2015). This means that “both participation and context are critical to human cognition” (Johnson 2006: 238). Therefore, teaching and learning a foreign language, to some extent, can be influenced by the sociocultural factors of the society in which the target language is taught. This can be clearly seen when teaching and learning EFL within the Libyan context. For instance, it is widely recognized that learning a new or foreign language requires active interaction among teachers and students inside the class. However, this is not usually applied in the Libyan educational context (see Chapter Two, Section 3.2 and 2.4.2). In this vein, Orafi (2008: 4) indicates that:

“Libyan students often assume that their role in the classroom is to sit quietly and to memorize the information imparted by the teacher. It is considered rude and impolite to interrupt the teacher or argue with the teacher. Students try to be quiet as much as possible to show respect to their teacher”

These beliefs of Libyan students can have a negative impact on their learning of English. They will not have enough chance to practise some useful formative assessment practices that are based on interaction in the class.

Using these views of cognitive and social constructivism to enhance teaching and learning EFL in the Libyan higher education sector are among the research objectives that this study endeavours to accomplish. Therefore, this study emphasises the role of the ongoing formative assessment to support students’ learning skills and strategies through communicative and self-generated assessment practices such as sharing the learning objectives, questioning, feedback, peer-assessment and self-assessment.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter, the importance of assessment and testing processes for the educational process was highlighted, with a discussion of how the assessment process can be used as a supporting tool for teaching and learning. A variety of studies have been reviewed for the purpose of understanding the role of other procedures and activities of the assessment process. The misunderstanding of these concepts and terms by language teachers may negatively affect assessment practices in the classroom which in turn may influence on the teaching and learning process. The chapter also described the various types of testing that serve different purposes in order to collect various information about students in a different period of time during a particular educational programme. Studies on formative and summative assessments show that there is a need to balance between both types to have secure outcomes for the assessment and educational process. In terms of washback effects on assessment and education, studies indicated that tests can have positive or negative impact on teaching and learning according to the way in

which the assessment practices are employed. In addition, the impact of the assessment practices on teaching and learning EFL has been reviewed in different contexts, with the aim of exploring to what extent the different assessment practices and objectives may influence the teaching practices and objectives of EFL. Finally, the main learning theories that have influenced the learning and teaching of foreign languages over time were reviewed. The current studies have shown that there is a big shift from behaviourist learning and teaching approaches towards constructivist ones that gives more attention to the learners as an essential factor in the assessment and educational process.

The next chapter introduces the research methodology adopted in the present study by describing the research design, approach and the choice of the survey methods. There are selected to collect data from the sample of the research to obtain a comprehensive understanding about the research issue and provide answers to the questions of this research.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology and Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methodology employed in this study and explains the research philosophy for this study. The chapter also explains the rationale for using a mixed data collection approach in this research. In this chapter, the relationship between the research questions and methods is demonstrated and details about the research sample are also given. The chapter provides an overview of the pilot study and its impact on the main data collection in later stages. Finally, it explains the methods of data analysis and discusses the ethical considerations regarding this research.

4.2 Components of Research Planning

Research design, philosophy, and methodology are important components that need to be discussed within any research. These components are discussed in this research as follows:

4.2.1 Research Design

A research design is generally based on the way of thinking that researchers embrace in their research projects and it demonstrates how these researchers interpret their thoughts into actions. A research design is described by Creswell (2009: 5) as “the plan or proposal to conduct a research”. According to Yin (2014: 26), "a research design is the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of a study". It enables the researcher to obtain the evidence for answering the initial research questions as explicitly as possible (De Vaus, 2001). Creswell (2009: 20) says that the choice of a particular research design is influenced by various issues such as the “research problem or issue being studied, the personal experiences of the researcher, and the audience for whom the researcher writes”. Creswell (ibid) argues that the choice of a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods design is mainly based on

the researchers' worldview or assumptions they make about research, their specific strategies and research methods. Therefore, the research design adopted in this study "involves the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry and specific methods" in order to unambiguously answer the research questions defined earlier, in Chapter One (Creswell, 2009: 5).

4.2.1.1 Research philosophy

Before embarking on the research process, it is important for researchers to discuss the philosophical stance that they adopt in their research studies as this issue may have an influence on the practices of the research (Creswell, 2009). Saunders et al. (2009: 108) commented on this issue saying that:

"The research philosophy you adopt contains important assumptions about the way in which you view the world. These assumptions will underpin your research strategy and the methods you choose as part of that strategy."

This means that when researchers adopt a particular philosophical stance, which is based on clear epistemological and ontological perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), they will be able to explain their choice of a particular research strategy or approach, such as qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods, to collect the required data for their research (Creswell, 2009). The research philosophy that a researcher adopts usually stems from "a set of assumptions about how the issue of concern to the research should be studied" (Henn et al., 2006: 10). These assumptions have been called by different names in the field of social research. For example, they are called *paradigms* by Guba, (1990: 17) who defined them as "a basic set of beliefs that guide actions". Other scholars have called them *epistemologies* and *ontologies* (Crotty, 1998), *research methodologies* (Neuman, 2000), or *worldview* (Creswell, 2009).

As mentioned by Saunders et al. (2009: 109), the research philosophy is usually based on "two major ways of thinking", namely, *ontology* and *epistemology*. Saunders, et al. (ibid) argues that both ways of thinking or perspectives can play an essential role in how

researchers think and how their views will shape their approach to research. They stated that “each [ontological or epistemological perspectives] contains important differences which will influence the way in which you think about the research process”. Both perspectives and their association to the philosophy of research can be clarified as follows:

- **Ontology** is concerned with ideas about whether things around us actually exist independently of us or not. In other words, it inquiries into the nature and the existence of the phenomenon under study. Gray (2004: 16) describes ontology as “the study of being, that is, the nature of existence.” Researchers who adopt the ontological perspective usually endeavour to answer questions about the existence of a particular phenomenon and usually use questions that start with “what”.
- **Epistemology** is a branch of philosophy concerned with interpreting and understanding knowledge or in other words it is the study of knowledge. Crotty (1998: 8) defines epistemology as “how we know what we know”. According to the epistemological perspective, researchers usually inquire about the nature and scope (limitations) of the phenomenon under study.

This study has been conducted with the aim of investigating teachers' and students' views towards the impact of the assessment practices on teaching and learning EFL in the higher education sector in Libya. The researcher thinks that the current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities influence teaching and learning EFL and as a result of this belief he endeavours to understand and explain the nature of this impact. In other words, the researcher wants to know what causes this impact and whether it has positive or negative effects on EFL education at Libyan universities. To achieve this aim, the researcher needs to employ a suitable research strategy and methods that fit with answering the research questions and the philosophical stance adopted in this study.

4.3 Research Methodology

Research methodology is generally defined as a general research strategy for how a particular research study will be conducted (Howell, 2013). It usually includes the choice of the research type and methods to be employed in the research process (Henn et al., 2006). Clough and Nutbrown (2002: 27) stated that “one of the tasks for a methodology is to explain and justify the particular methods used in a given study”. In the same vein, Sikes (2004: 16) describes research methodology and distinguishes it from research methods. He says that “methodology is concerned with the description and analysis of research methods rather than with the actual, practical use of those methods. Methodological work is, therefore, philosophical, thinking work.” It can be concluded from the previous description that research methodology is different from the research methods. The former is concerned with justifying the choice of using particular research methods while the latter is concerned with the practical use of certain tools to find answers for the research questions. In other words, research methodology is the process that leads to the choice of the appropriate methods of data collection required for answering the research questions.

Creswell et al. (2003: 212) defined a mixed method approach as “the collecting or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially.” Thus, a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach has been adopted in this study, to collect the numerical and non-numerical data that is potentially available. Furthermore, the choice of employing a mixed methods approach will have several advantages, which will be discussed with more details in the following sub-section below.

4.3.1 Rationale for using a mixed methods approach

Employing more than one research method has been widespread in the social research as this strategy can help “the various strengths to be capitalized upon and the

weaknesses offset somewhat” (Bryman, 2012: 628). In the same vein, Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) argue that employing a mixed-methods approach in one research can have several advantages that facilitate the data analysis process and produce more valid and reliable findings. They (ibid) stated that:

- 1- A mixed-method approach enables researchers to clarify and describe the relationships between variables.
- 2- It can help researchers to explore the relationships between variables in depth.
- 3- It allows us to confirm or cross-validate relationships found between variables, for example, when comparing qualitative and quantitative methods to see if they converge on a single interpretation of phenomena.

A mixed methods approach is also applicable when different approaches are used in answering different research questions (Bryman, 2006), as in this study (see Chapter One, Section 1.3). The main purpose of using a quantitative approach in this study was to provide a sufficient amount of data about the current EFL teaching and assessment practices employed at Libyan universities to enable generalization, as required by the first sub-research question (see Chapter One, Section 1.3). This, in turn, paved the way for answering other research questions, especially those based on “why” and “how” inquiry, through using the qualitative approach with the aim of understanding the phenomenon under study in more depth. This enabled the research questions to be addressed more adequately, avoiding any limitations that might occur from employing quantitative or qualitative data alone. The use of mixed quantitative and qualitative approaches in educational research is considered by several researchers to have advantages outcomes in terms of the validity, reliability, representativeness and generalizability of the data collected (Cohen & Manion, 2007; Yin, 2009; Denscombe, 2010). Bryman (2006: 105-107) has pointed out that researchers usually employ mixed

quantitative and qualitative approaches in their research for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons which are applicable to this study can be outlined as follows:

- a) Triangulation, which helps in increasing validity of the data collected. This can be achieved by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods together to triangulate findings so they are mutually corroborated.
- b) Increasing the strengths and avoiding the weaknesses of both quantitative and the qualitative methods when they are employed together in the same research.
- c) A mixed methods approach can help in achieving more comprehensive data which are required for answering the research questions.
- d) The quantitative and the qualitative approaches are also beneficial to answer different research questions within one research.
- e) A mixed methods approach is also employed when the results obtained by the quantitative approach are employed in explaining the results achieved from the qualitative approach, or vice versa.

In this research, the reasons mentioned above contributed to the decision to adopt a mixed approach to data collection.

4.4 Methods of Data Collection

In this study, different types of research methods have been employed to collect the required data that help in answering the research questions and providing a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under study. The main research methods used in this study were as follows:

- 1- A questionnaire for teachers.
- 2- Face to face semi-structured interviews with teachers.
- 3- Focus group interviews with students.

The main reason for employing the research methods mentioned above was to address the main research question and other sub-research questions stated below:

MRQ - What are the teachers' and students' views towards the impact of the current assessment practices on their teaching and learning of EFL in the higher education sector in Libya?

SRQ 1- What are the current EFL teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do they employ these practices?

SRQ 2- What views do teachers hold towards the current assessment practices they employ at Libyan universities; why do they hold these views and how are they translated into practice?

SRQ 3- What are the main effects of the current assessment practices on the teaching and learning of EFL; why are these effects there and how do teachers deal with them?

SRQ 4- What views do students have towards the current assessment practices; why do they have these views and how do they deal with them?

Table 4.1 below shows how each research method adopted in this study was used to collect the required data for answering each research question. As can be seen in the table below, both quantitative and qualitative methods adopted in this study were used to collect the required data for answering the main research question of the study. Both the teachers' questionnaire and teachers' semi-structured interviews contributed in collecting the required data for answering the first sub-research question, while only the semi-structured interviews with teachers were employed to answer the second sub-research question. To answer the third sub-research question, both qualitative research methods, namely teachers' semi-structured interviews and students' focus group interviews, were utilized, while students' focus group interviews alone were used to answer the fourth sub-research question.

Table 4. 1: Research Methods Employed for Answering the Research Questions

<div style="text-align: center;"> RMs RQs </div>	Quantitative Approach	Qualitative Approach	
	Teachers' Questionnaire	Teachers' Semi-structured Interviews	Students' Focus Group Interviews
MRQ	MRQ	MRQ	MRQ
1st SRQ	1 st SRQ	1 st SRQ	
2nd SRQ		2 nd SRQ	
3rd SRQ		3 rd SRQ	3 rd SRQ
4th SRQ			4 th SRQ

The research methods, mentioned in Table 4.1 above, were conducted sequentially to facilitate the process of data collection, as explained in more details in the sub-sections below.

4.4.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

Cohen et al. (2011: 256) argue that questionnaire research is “the most commonly used descriptive method in educational research”. Gillham (2008: 4-5) distinguishes two main type of questionnaire questions, namely, “open and closed questions”. In open questions, respondents are given the chance to answer the questions in their own words while in closed questions, respondents should select just one answer from a list of provided answers that most suits their opinion. Gillham, (2008) have mentioned several advantages for conducting a questionnaire in a research and how it can help the process of data collection. Among these advantages as stated by Gillham (2008: 5-6) are the following:

- 1. Low cost in time and money.*
- 2. Easy to get information from a lot of people very quickly.*
- 3. Respondents can complete the questionnaire when is suits them.*
- 4. Analysis of answers to closed questions is relatively straightforward.*

5. *Less pressure for an immediate response*

6. *Respondents' anonymity.*

7. *Lack of interviewer bias.*

The main reason for employing the questionnaire was to collect the data required for answering the main research question and first sub-research question for this study, as stated in Table 4.1 above. The researcher was able to collect a large quantity of responses and information regarding different issues, such as:

- The main teaching practices teachers said they employed in their classes;
- The main assessment practices teachers said they employed to evaluate their students;
- Teachers' views towards the current teaching practices employed at the Libyan universities;
- Factors that might influence the assessment practices.

Another advantage of using a questionnaire in educational research is that it facilitates the process of data analysis, as the researcher can use useful statistical software such as SPSS and Excel (Connolly, 2007). All the above advantages, which were mentioned above by Gillham (2008) encouraged the researcher to adopt a questionnaire for teachers as one of the research tools for collecting data in this study. A further advantage of employing a questionnaire for teachers in this study was to have a general idea about the context in which the data were collected. In this study, the data collected from the questionnaire generally provided important information about the number of students in the classrooms, the educational aids and facilities available for teaching EFL at Libyan universities and the number of lectures that teachers taught per week. Moreover, the data collected from the questionnaire responses helped to a great extent in the process of qualitative data analysis. In addition to that, adopting a sequential

design in this study was useful to the qualitative data collection, as the researcher could generate new questions to be posed during the interview sessions, to get more clarification of the responses that participants provided in the questionnaire.

The first stage of the data collection process in this study was using the questionnaire, which was distributed among teachers working in three Libyan universities in the second term of the academic year 2015/2016, during March, 2016. The researcher decided to include the questionnaire as research tool in this study to survey a large sample in order to answer the research questions. The questionnaire questions were classified into five sections. Each section consisted of questions which were developed to explore particular information that helped in understanding the research context and the issue under study. To facilitate the task of participants in answering the questions of the questionnaire, the researcher utilized a five-point Likert scale, in which five options were given to facilitate answering each item more easily and accurately (see Appendix 1). The Likert scale is usually composed of five-point choices for each item to represent participants' responses, and is widely used in educational research as it gives the participants the freedom to select among the five ratings.

4.4.2 Face to Face Semi-structured Interviews with Teachers

Semi-structured interviews with teachers were employed as one of the main sources of data collection in this study. The main purpose of the interviews with teachers was to collect the data required for answering the main research question, first sub-research question, second sub-research question and third sub-research question, as stated in Table 4.1 above. The researcher was able to obtain in-depth responses and information regarding a variety of issues, such as:

- The current EFL teaching and assessment practices teachers said they employed at Libyan universities.

- The main reasons claimed by teachers for employing these practices.
- Means and mechanisms used by teachers for employing these practices.
- Teachers' views towards the impact of the assessment practices on their teaching.
- Teachers' rationale and motives for holding these views.
- Ways and procedures used by teachers for translating these views into practice.
- Main reasons that might influence the assessment practices at Libyan universities (washback effects).
- Reasons for these effects (washback effects).
- Teachers' reaction towards these effects (washback effects).
- Clarification of the responses that participants provided in the questionnaire.

Another advantage of conducting the interviews with teachers is that “the richness of interview data leads to more possibilities in terms of exploring the issues involved” (Brown, 2001: 78). As Denscombe (2003) claims that interview data can complement questionnaire data, the interviews were used in this study to mitigate the drawbacks of the questionnaire and to triangulate the data collected by other research instruments.

The interviews with teachers in the present study were held directly after collecting the required data from the teachers’ questionnaire in the second term of the academic year 2015/2016, during March and April, 2016. All participants in these interviews were teachers who had answered the questionnaire and agreed to participate in face to face interviews as volunteers. The interview questions were developed to help in understanding the phenomenon under study in more depth, as well as to find the required answers to other research questions, which were not answered by teachers’ responses of the questionnaire questions (see Table 1.4 in Section 4.3.). The interviews

were conducted between the researcher and the participants one-to-one and face-to-face. The participants were given the chance to speak in the language which they preferred and in which they felt able to express their thoughts more clearly. Just four participants preferred to speak in English, out of fourteen who took part in these interviews. The researcher asked each interviewee fourteen questions that aimed to collect more information and details about the role of assessment practices in teaching and learning EFL at Libyan universities (see appendix Two). Each oral interview was converted into a written transcript in English to be analysed later. Interviews that were conducted in Arabic were translated into English by the researcher and checked by a translator as a first procedure. In the second stage, the researcher checked the translated transcripts with a colleague from the English department at University of Elmerghip for credibility and reliability reasons. In the final stage of this process, the written transcripts of the oral interviews were sent to participants via their personal emails in order to be verified by the participants themselves to confirm that the written transcripts corresponded to the answers that they provided during the interviews.

4.4.3 Students' Focus Group Interviews

This kind of interviews is mainly based on the interaction between participants in discussing a topic which is provided by the researcher, as was the case in this study. Methodologically, a focus group interview has been defined by Liamputtong (2011: 3) as:

"Focus group interviews involve a group of 6–8 people who come from similar social and cultural backgrounds or who have similar experiences or concerns. They gather together to discuss a specific issue with the help of a moderator in a particular setting where participants feel comfortable enough to engage in a dynamic discussion for one or two hours".

Liamputtong (2011: 4-5) outlined several important advantages of the focus group interviews that the researcher found useful to collect the required data for the present research.

- They enable in-depth discussions and involve a relatively small number of people.
- They are focused on a specific area of interest that allows participants to discuss the topic in greater detail.
- Interaction is a unique feature of the focus group interview. It is based on the idea that group processes assist people to explore and clarify their points of view.

The main reason for conducting focus group interviews with students was to collect more information and details from students' perspective about the role of the current assessment practices in learning EFL at Libyan universities. The collected information helped to answer the fourth sub-research question for this study and the researcher was able to obtain a deep understanding regarding various issues, such as:

- Students' views towards the current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities.
- The main rationales for students to hold these views towards the current assessment practices.
- Students' reactions towards the current assessment practices.

One of the advantages of focus group interviews for this study was that the researcher obtained more information and details about the research issue within a short time and from a large number of participants. This stage of data collection was conducted directly after finishing the interviews with teachers, in the same universities involved in the previous stages of data collection, in the second term of the academic year 2015/2016 during April in 2016. The interviews with students were conducted in Arabic and then

translated into English in order to be ready for analysis in later stages of the data analysis process. The aim of conducting the focus group interviews with students in Arabic was that students could express their thoughts about the issues of discussion more clearly and easily, Arabic being their first language. Another reason for this procedure is that the students who took part in these interviews were from various educational levels; some of them were still in the first academic year and their English language was not completely fluent. Each oral focus group interview with students was translated by the researcher into an English written transcript and the translation from English into Arabic verified by a translator. The transcripts were also given to the same colleague who checked the transcripts of teachers' interviews, in order to verify whether the translated transcripts for the focus group interviews corresponded to the answers provided by students during the interviews. The data collected from the focus group interviews greatly contributed in answering the fourth sub-research question of this study, and to some extent in addressing the third sub-research question.

4.4.5 Research Sample

The participants who constituted the research sample of this study were selected from three Libyan public universities: University of Tripoli, University of Musrata and University of Elmerghip (see Chapter Two, Section 2.7). Teachers and students from these three universities were chosen by the researcher as participants for the present research. Therefore, the sample of this research could be considered as a convenience sample, since access to the participants from these universities was easier than it would have been for other Libyan universities, for a variety of reasons (see Chapter Eight, Section 8.4). The sample of this study consisted of three groups of participants who were involved in the three different research methods of the data collection process. These groups were as follows:

Group One

The total number of participants in this group was fifty-two female and male teachers who contributed in answering the questionnaire distributed by the researcher (for more details, see Chapter Five, Section 5.2.1). All participants of this group were holders of PhD or Master Degrees and worked as permanent teachers in departments of English and taught EFL to university students. This sample consisted of twenty teachers from each university. In Tripoli University, teachers taught EFL in the department of English, faculty of Languages, according to a teaching system run on a term basis. In Musrata University, teachers taught EFL in the department of English, faculty of Education, according to a teaching system which is run on a term basis. In Elmerghip University, teachers taught EFL in the department of English, faculty of Arts according to a teaching system which is run on an annual basis.

Group Two

All participants of this group participated in answering the questionnaire and were willing to take part as volunteers in the interviews (see Chapter Six, Section 6.1.2.1). The total number of participants in this group was intended to be fifteen male and female teachers from the three universities involved in this study, five teachers from each university. This number of participants was achieved from two universities, namely, Tripoli and Elmerghip universities but, unfortunately, just four teachers took part in the interview sessions from the University of Musrata, as one of participants withdrew before the interview for personal reasons.

Group Three

All participants of this group were male and female students from the same three universities mentioned above (see Chapter Six, Section 6.1.1). They were selected from different years (1 to 4) and their ages ranged from nineteen to twenty-two. All interviewed students studied EFL as a major subject in departments of English. The

total number of students who participated in three separate focus group interviews was twenty-four, divided into three groups of eight male and female students, with two students from each educational level. All participants in the first group were from the University of Tripoli, faculty of languages, English department. The second group was from the University of Musrata, faculty of Education, English department and the third group was from the University of Elmerghip, faculty of Arts, English department.

4.4.6 Pilot Study

It is usually recommended to conduct a pilot study before the main data collection takes place to test and refine the research tools. Bell (2014: 84) claimed that “All data-gathering should be piloted to check that all questions and instructions are clear and to enable you to remove any items which don't yield usable data”. All data-gathering instruments employed in this study were piloted before conducting the main data collection process. Piloting the research methods usually helps researchers to know how long the main data collection process will take and whether the instructions or the items are clear to the participants (Bell, 2014). These were among the purposes of the pilot study in this research, as well as to ensure that appropriate time was allocated to each semi-structured and focused group interview. A further aim of the pilot study was to ensure that questions were comprehensive and led to adequate responses. The pilot study was conducted a few days before the main study took place. All participants, teachers and students, selected for the pilot study were from the University of Elmerghip, faculty of Arts, and Department of English. Ten teachers took part in the piloting of the questionnaire and just five participants participated in the semi-structured interview sessions. For the focus group interview with students, twelve students from the department of English, faculty of arts participated as volunteers in the pilot study. These participants were from four different educational levels, namely, from year one to year four.

4.4.6.1 Implications of the pilot study

The results of the pilot study helped the researcher to make some modifications to the data collection methods to be employed later in the main study. The main modifications made were related to the semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group interviews with students. The interviews with teachers in the pilot study were conducted in English and Arabic. Three interviews were conducted in English and two interviews were conducted in Arabic and the same questions were used in both versions. After comparing the information and data collected from both versions, the researcher found that the responses of the interviews conducted in Arabic gave more details and information about the questions asked by the researcher during the interview. Therefore, the researcher decided to give all participants, who would participate in the main study, the opportunity to choose the language which they preferred to speak during the interview instead of imposing English as the only language for communication for all interviews. The same strategy was followed with focus group interviews and the researcher found that students could express their thoughts in Arabic more easily and clearly. A further modification was related to the number of participants included in the focus group interviews. In the pilot study, three students from each educational year were involved in the interview. The researcher found that this number would not be convenient for the main study interviews, as it would be time consuming and participants would not have the enough time to express their thoughts during the interviews. For this reason, the researcher decided to reduce the number of participants in the main study focus group interviews into eight students as a total number with just two from each educational level.

4.5 Methods of Data Analysis

After the data was collected, the researcher started the process of data analysis. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed and interpreted by different means, which are explained in the following sub-sections.

4.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data analysis helped to a great extent answer the research questions of this study and informed understanding of the trends and relationships among variables.

4.5.1.1 Questionnaire Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire were analysed to validate and support the findings of the qualitative data analysis gained from the interviews with teachers, and the focus group interviews with students. Excel and SPSS software were employed to help in analysing the quantitative data. The main reason for using the Microsoft Excel program was its simplicity and usefulness for creating tables, graphs and diagrams required for data analysis, while SPSS was very helpful for the researcher in the process of counting the frequencies and calculating percentages and means.

A descriptive statistical analysis was applied to the data collected from the questionnaire and raw data were entered manually into Excel and SPSS in order to obtain frequencies, percentage, means and other statistical figures and diagrams. The analysis of the questionnaire items (quantitative analysis) is presented in four main themes, derived from the research questions:

- The main teaching practices employed by teachers in their classes;
- The main assessment practices employed by teachers to evaluate their students;
- Teachers' views towards the current teaching practices employed at the Libyan universities;
- Factors that influence the assessment practices.

4.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis consists of two parts. The first part contains the interview data, while the second part deals with the focus group data. As a first step, both oral semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group interviews with students, which were recorded on an audio recording device, were converted into written transcripts to be ready for the process of analysis.

4.5.2.1 Interview Data Analysis

It is worth mentioning here that the semi-structured interviews with teachers were conducted in English and Arabic (see Sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.3). The interviews conducted in Arabic were translated into English to be ready for the analysis process. Cohen et al. (2007: 461) argue that “There is no one single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data; how one does it should abide by the issue of *fitness for purpose*”. For this reason, the researcher was keen on using a method of data analysis that would help in answering the research questions of this study. One of the most suitable ways for achieving this goal was using a thematic analysis approach, which is considered as one of “the most common and simplest form of analysis in qualitative research” (Javadi & Zarea, 2016: 39). Thematic analysis is defined as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). It is a process in which a researcher identifies a number of themes which are deemed to be important for understanding and describing a particular phenomenon. A theme is defined according to Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 3356) as “a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question.” Thematic analysis is also considered as a flexible and useful method of qualitative data analysis as it can be conducted in several ways (Javadi & Zarea, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2006). For instance, Braun and Clarke (2006) mentioned two different ways in which thematic analysis can be carried out. The first one is known as the bottom-up or

inductive approach, in which themes and codes are derived from the content of the data itself. The second way, on the other hand, is known as the top-down or deductive approach, in which the process of deriving themes and codes is mainly driven by the research questions or other ideas and concepts brought by the researcher.

In this research, a top-down or deductive approach was employed for analysing data. The main reason for adopting this approach for data analysis was to find answers to the research questions of this study by using a quick and easy approach. Therefore, themes and codes were derived from the research questions of this study. For example, the first sub-research question in this research was “*What are the current EFL teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do they employ these practices?*”. As it can be seen, this question consists of three parts. The first part is “*what are the current EFL teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities?*” The second part is “*why do they [teachers] employ these practices?*” The third part is “*how do they [teachers] employ these practices?*” Accordingly, the following three themes were derived, one for each part of the first sub-research question:

Theme 1: The current teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities.

Theme 2: The main reasons for employing these practices.

Theme 3: Means and mechanisms for employing these practices.

Codes were created in the same way and were derived from the themes in order to address each of the research questions (see Appendix 4). Keeping these themes and codes in mind, the researcher started the process of data analysis by reading the transcripts of the interviews several times with the aim of finding relevant information related to each theme that could help in answering each part of the first sub-research question. As a next step, all information that was found relevant to each theme was

grouped and analysed in a way that led to answering the first sub-research question. The same steps were employed for other research questions, which were addressed via the semi-structured and focus group interviews (see Chapter Six, Sections 6.2 and 6.3).

4.5.2.2 Focus Group Data Analysis

Focus group interviews with students were also analysed by using a thematic analysis approach, as explained in the previous section (see Section 4.5.2.1). All focus group interviews with students were conducted in Arabic and then translated into English to be ready for the analysis process. In the next step, both themes and codes were created according to the top-down or deductive approach, in which themes and codes were pre-set in a way that helped address the fourth sub-research question (see Appendix 4). The same steps that were followed in analysing semi-structured interviews with teachers, mentioned in the previous section, were employed again to analyse the focus group with students. The data analysis process was started by reading the transcripts of the interviews many times with the aim of finding relevant information related to each theme that could help in answering each part of the fourth sub-research question. As a next step, all information that was found relevant to each theme was grouped and analysed in a way that helped answer the fourth sub-research question. It is also worth mentioning here that students' names in this analysis were treated with complete confidentiality, as the participants were promised before they agreed to take part in the interview. Numbers were used as symbols to refer to the student's university and the academic year in which he/she was studying, instead of using students' names. For example, the first number refers to the university to which that student belonged, while the second number indicates the level (year) of the interviewed student. For example, 1.1.A indicates that the student belongs to University of Tripoli and studies in the first year and the letter 'A' indicates that this student is one of two from the first year students who took part in the interview.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

In educational research, researchers usually need to deal with people as volunteers to be used as a sample of their research and, therefore, consent should be provided to gain access to these participants. For this purpose, the educational institutions or authorities to which these participants belong should be contacted before the study takes place, regarding this matter. The main reason for this procedure is to protect the researcher and the participants who will be involved in the study against any psychological, emotional and physical consequences or side effects that may be caused by their participation in the study (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Silverman, 2010).

Before commencing the data collection for this study, ethical approval was granted to the researcher by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee in the University of Hull as a first step in the process of data collection. After this stage, a copy of this ethical approval was sent to the Department of the Cultural Attaché in the Libyan Embassy in order to contact the educational authorities in Libya with the aim of facilitating access to the research sample and all other required procedures for conducting the intended study at Libyan universities.

The researcher was also concerned with the issue of confidentiality during all stages of data collection and analysis, to maintain participants' personal information. To achieve this goal, the following precautions were adopted. All participants were informed that their personal information and identities would not be shared or disclosed to another party and all information which they provided would be used only by the researcher, to serve the research aims. The participants were also informed of the right to stop or withdraw their participation in the study. All these details regarding confidentiality were explained to participants orally and in written format prior to the data collection process.

Chapter Five: Quantitative Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the main findings obtained from the questionnaire analysis. The questionnaire was used as a means of data collection to elicit teachers' views regarding the teaching and assessment practices employed in their classes. It consisted of closed response items that required teachers to indicate the extent of their agreement with particular statements. The first section of the questionnaire helped to gain a general understanding about the context by collecting some information about the participants and the teaching environment in which they taught (see 5.2.1). The other sections of the questionnaire were concerned with collecting information about the main teaching and assessment practices as well as the factors that influence their application (see appendix One).

The main purpose of the quantitative data analysis is to answer the research questions of this study and to help determine the trends and relationships among variables. In addition to that, the data collected from the questionnaire were analysed to validate and support the findings of the qualitative data analysis gained from the interviews with teachers, as well as focus group interviews with students (see Chapter Six). Excel and SPSS software were adopted as main tools to help in analysing the quantitative data in this chapter. The main reason for using the Microsoft Excel program was its simplicity and usefulness for creating tables, graphs and diagrams required for data analysis, while SPSS was very helpful for the researcher in the process of counting the frequencies and calculating percentages and means.

5.2 Description of the Sample

The main purpose of this section is to describe the major features of the whole sample. This description includes important information about the sample such as participants'

gender, qualification, teaching experience and number of students. Such details were used in the later stages of the data analysis to explore the impact of these factors in relation to other dependent variables in this study. This, in turn, may provide an insight into the most important factors that influence, positively or negatively, the teaching and learning process as well as the assessment process in Libyan universities.

5.2.1 Characteristics of the Questionnaire Sample

This part of the section sheds light on the major characteristics of the teaching staff members, from three Libyan universities, who participated in answering the questionnaire questions. A descriptive statistical analysis was applied to the data collected from the questionnaire and raw data was entered manually into Excel in order to obtain frequencies and percentages.

5.2.1.1 Gender Distribution

As can be clearly seen in Table 5.1 below, the total number of the participants who took part in answering the questionnaire items was 52, 36 male and 16 female teachers 69% and 31% respectively.

Table 5. 1: Gender Distribution

Gender	Count	Percentage %
Male	36	69.23
Female	16	30.77
Total	52	100%

5.2.1.2 Academic Qualifications

The Figure 1.4 below shows that 45 male and female teachers held an MA degree representing 87% of the total sample while only 7 male teachers had a PhD degree representing 13% of the total sample. Participants who took part in answering the questionnaire were at least MA holders because it is an essential degree for teachers in order to be eligible to teach at Libyan universities.

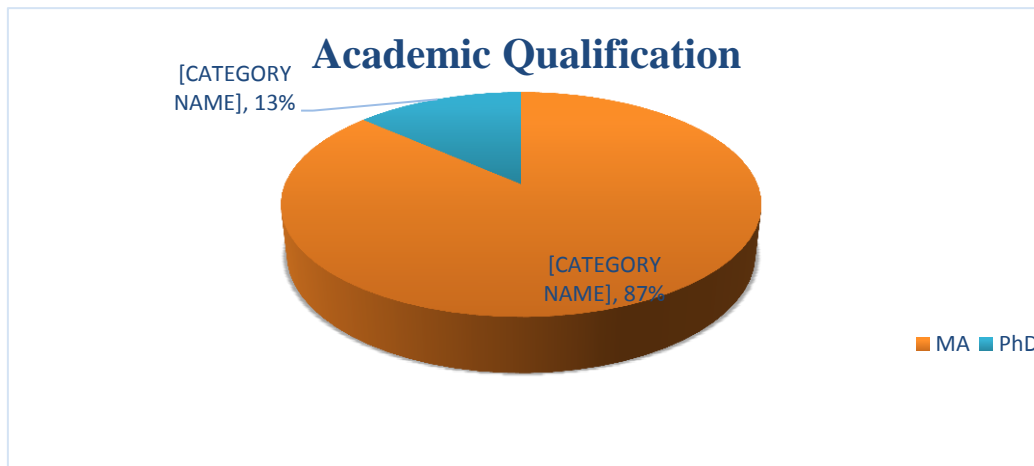


Figure 5. 1 Teachers' Academic Qualification

5.2.1.3 Teaching Experience

Teachers who answered in the questionnaire had different teaching experiences, which could play a significant role in teaching English as a foreign language as well as the assessment and teaching methods that they employed in their classes. It appears from Figure 5.2 below that 22 (42%) of the respondents had from 1 to 5 years of teaching experience, 13 (25%) had teaching experience ranging between 6 and 10 years, only 3 teachers (6%) had been teaching for 11 to 15 years and 14 teachers (27%) had been teaching over 15 years.

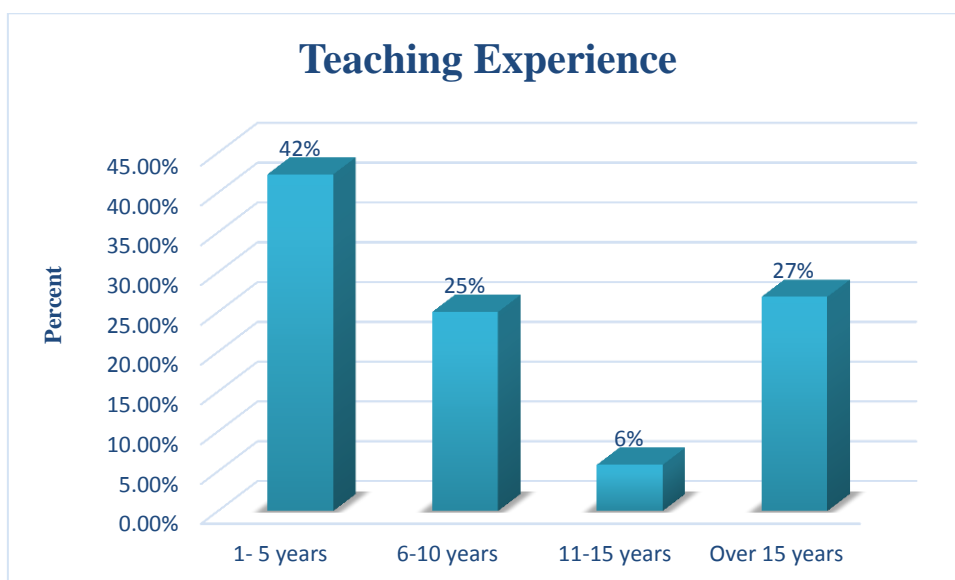


Figure 5. 2 Teaching Experience

5.2.1.4 Number of Students in the Class

Teachers who responded to the questionnaire had varying numbers of students in their classes, which influenced their strategies and techniques of teaching and assessment as will be clearly demonstrated in later sections of this chapter. Table 5.2 illustrates the frequency and percentage distribution of class size. It is clear that largest group of teachers in the sample, 26 (50%) had more than 40 students in their classes, while 2 teachers (4%) had from 10 to 19 students in their classes (see Table 5.2 for other details).

Table 5. 2: Number of students in the Class

Number of Students	Count	Percentage %
From 10 to 19	2	4%
From 20 to 29	10	19%
From 30 to 39	14	27%
40 or above	26	50%
Total	52	100%

5.3 Questionnaire Data Analysis

A descriptive statistical analysis was applied to the data collected from the questionnaire and raw data were entered manually into Excel and SPSS in order to obtain frequencies, percentage, mean and other statistical figures and diagrams. According to the research questions being investigated, the analysis of the questionnaire items (quantitative analysis) is briefly presented in four main themes which stemmed from the research questions of this study:

- The main teaching practices employed by teachers in their classes;
- The main assessment practices employed by teachers to evaluate their students;
- Teachers' views towards the current teaching practices employed at the Libyan universities;
- Factors that influence the assessment practices.

5.3.1 The Main Teaching Practices Employed by Teachers in their Classes

Table 5.3 presents twelve statements to explore the main teaching practices and activities used by Libyan teachers who participated in the survey and shows the common methods employed in teaching English as a foreign language. In addition to that, the findings obtained in this section will be triangulated with the findings of the qualitative analysis in section 6.2.1.1, Chapter Six.

Table 5. 3: The main teaching practices employed by teachers in their classes

No	Variables	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly	Always	Mean
1	Giving the opportunity to all students to ask questions.	0	1	4	12	35	4.55
		0%	2%	8%	23%	67%	
2	Creating regular opportunities for all students to participate in the classroom activities.	0	1	6	29	16	4.15
		0%	2%	11%	56%	31%	
3	Creating equal opportunities for all students to increase motivation for learning.	0	2	9	24	17	4.07
		0%	4%	17%	46%	33%	
4	Employing classroom discussion (e.g. teacher/student and student/student) as a teaching instrument to increase students' knowledge and improve their understanding.	0	2	10	27	13	3.98
		0%	4%	19%	52%	25%	
5	Introducing the educational goals before each course and lesson that you teach.	1	6	13	13	19	3.82
		2%	12%	25%	25%	36%	
6	Providing students with written or oral feedback after each task, exercise or assignment.	1	5	11	21	14	3.80
		2%	10%	21%	40%	27%	
7	Providing opportunities, (such as group or individual discussions), for students to reflect on feedback provided and act on advice given.	2	4	19	21	6	3.48
		4%	8%	36%	40%	12%	
8	Motivating students to set their learning goals (e.g. determine what they need to learn) before and during the course.	1	7	20	19	5	3.38
		2%	14%	38%	36%	10%	
9	Tracking students' progress to make changes on teaching (through individual feedback or interviews).	1	9	21	13	8	3.34
		2%	17%	40%	25%	15%	
10	Involving students in managing and planning for their learning.	1	11	16	20	4	3.28
		2%	21%	31%	38%	8%	
11	Motivating students to evaluate their own work.	1	14	12	23	2	3.21
		2%	27%	23%	44%	4%	
12	Asking students to give constructive feedback to their peers.	2	7	27	12	4	3.17
		4%	13%	52%	23%	8%	

It is clear from the Table 5.3 above, and the mean's scores calculated, that the most common teaching practices that teachers employed in their classes were centred on giving the opportunity to all students to ask questions and creating regular opportunities for all students to participate in the classroom activities. They similarly paid more attention to creating equal opportunities for all students to increase motivation for learning and employing classroom discussion as a teaching instrument to increase students' knowledge and improve their understanding. On the other hand, asking students to give constructive feedback to their peers, motivating students to evaluate their own work, involving students in managing and planning for their learning and tracking students' progress to make changes in teaching have received less attention by teachers in the class.

5.3.2 The Main Assessment Practices Employed by Teachers in their Classes

Table 5.4 shows the participants' answers about some assessment practices proposed by the researcher, in order to have a clear idea of the common assessment practices employed by teachers to evaluate their students' performance and progress during the academic year or semester.

Table 5. 4: The main assessment practices employed by teachers in their classes

No	Variables	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly	Always	Mean
1	The assessment results are returned immediately after any quiz or examination to students to learn from their mistakes.	1	3	7	14	27	4.21
		2%	6%	13%	27%	52%	
2	Providing students with clear evaluation criteria that will be used in the assessment process.	0	2	15	17	18	3.98
		0%	4%	29%	33%	34%	
3	Using ongoing assessment activities throughout the course to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses.	0	9	14	21	8	3.53
		0%	17%	27%	41%	15%	
4	Providing each student with a continual feedback about his performance.	3	8	14	20	7	3.38
		6%	15%	27%	39%	13%	
5	Employing frequent assessment activities to track each student's educational achievement.	3	7	18	16	8	3.36
		6%	13%	35%	31%	15%	
6	Encouraging self-assessment in my classes and using the outcomes to motivate learning.	5	8	13	20	6	3.26
		10%	15%	25%	39%	11%	

7	Supporting peer-assessment as an assessment tool to consolidate learning and evaluate students' performance.	4	10	18	17	3	3.09
		8%	19%	34%	33%	6%	
8	Assessing students' educational skills at the beginning of the teaching course.	5	10	20	11	6	3.05
		10%	19%	39%	21%	11%	
9	Using portfolios for monitoring and assessing students' educational progress.	13	8	17	12	2	2.65
		25%	15%	33%	23%	4%	

Table 5.4 shown above gives a detailed description, according to teachers' responses, of what happens inside the classroom in relation to the assessment practices employed by teachers. The frequencies, percentages and mean scores calculated in Table 5.4 indicate that teachers who participated in this study gave more attention to some assessment practices and less to others. For example, most teachers, who participated in the study, exploited the results of examinations and quizzes as pedagogical remedies to help students discover their mistakes, so they could avoid them in the future and to consolidate learning. In addition to that, providing students with clear evaluation criteria and using ongoing assessment activities throughout the course were among the most frequent assessment practices that took place during the course. On the other hand, other assessment practices such as portfolios, peer and self-assessments were less employed by teachers during the course, as shown in the Table above.

5.3.3 Teachers' Views towards the Current Teaching Practices

A separate section in the questionnaire given to teachers was designed to explore teachers' views towards the current teaching practices. Table 5.5 gives some information about teachers' views, which answers the first sub-research question; "What are the current teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do they employ these practices?"

Table 5. 5: Teachers' views towards the current teaching practices

No	Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
1	The teacher is the only source for information and knowledge required for learning.	4	8	7	21	12	3.55
		8%	15%	14%	40%	23%	
2	Most students are more concerned with achieving knowledge and improving their language competence rather than achieving higher marks.	2	10	10	20	10	3.50
		4%	19%	19%	39%	19%	
3	Most technological facilities needed to promote teaching and learning (e.g. computers, data show, labs and internet access) are available in my class.	11	8	7	13	13	3.17
		21%	15%	14%	25%	25%	
4	Most students have the same chance to participate in the class.	18	17	7	6	4	2.25
		35%	33%	13%	11%	8%	
5	The teaching methods used in the class make students active rather than passive in the class.	20	17	8	5	2	2.07
		38%	33%	15%	10%	4%	

By looking at the figures presented in Table 5.5 above, it is clear that most teachers who responded to the questionnaire from the three Libyan universities did not consider the teacher as the only source of information and knowledge required for learning. They also believe that most students are concerned with achieving high scores rather than knowledge. In relation to the availability of the technological facilities, most answers of participants indicated the lack of such facilities as teaching tools. On the other hand, teachers shared the same views in relation to their teaching methods and students' interaction in the class. They deemed that the teaching methods they employed made their students active rather than passive in the class and that most students had the same chance to participate in the class.

5.3.4 Factors Influencing the Current Assessment Practices.

There are several factors that influenced the implementation of the assessment practices within the Libyan educational context in which teachers taught their students. The main aim in exploring these factors in this section is to find out a sufficient answer to the second sub-research question; "What views do teachers hold towards the current assessment practices they employ at Libyan universities; why do they hold these views

and how are these views translated into practice?” Table 5.6 makes clear how these factors affected the educational process in general.

Table 5. 6: Factors influencing the current assessment practices.

No	Variables	Strongly Negative	Negative	No Effect	Positive	Strongly Positive	Mean
1	Employing high-stakes examinations that have crucial impact on students' future education and career.	4	2	10	28	8	3.65
		8%	4%	19%	54%	15%	
2	Employing students' peer-assessment in the evaluation process.	3	3	14	27	5	3.53
		6%	6%	27%	52%	9%	
3	Using students' self-assessment as assessment tool to measure students learning and attainment.	3	9	11	25	4	3.34
		6%	17%	21%	48%	8%	
4	Insufficient teaching time.	10	30	8	3	1	2.13
		19%	58%	15%	6%	2%	
5	Lack of technological facilities in the department.	19	24	6	1	2	1.90
		36%	46%	12%	2%	4%	
6	The large number of students in the class.	26	19	3	2	2	1.75
		50%	36%	6%	4%	4%	

The data obtained from Table 5.6 revealed that most participants of the sample thought that employing high-stakes examinations has a positive effect on the assessment process, even if they have crucial impact on students' future education and career. The answers also show that employing peer and self-assessment as tools for evaluation were also thought to have positive effects on the assessment process to some extent as well. However, insufficient teaching time, lack of technological facilities and large numbers of students in the class were considered to have negative effects on the assessment process, as the answers of teachers show.

5.4 Summary of the Chapter

This section presents the findings of this chapter obtained from the quantitative data analysis to the answers of 52 teachers who responded to the questionnaire. The findings discussed in this chapter are based on addressing the research questions of this study stated in chapter one. The statistical analysis of the collected data has revealed several findings in relation to the main teaching and assessment practices, teachers' views

towards the current teaching practices and factors that influenced the assessment practices. The first three sections of this chapter have focused on answering the first sub-research questions while the fourth section has concentrated on answering the second sub-research question.

It was evident from the findings reported in section 5.3.1 of this chapter that the most frequent teaching practices claimed to be employed by teachers who participated in the questionnaire centred on the students' interaction in the class. Therefore, teachers gave priority to answering their students' questions, creating regular opportunities for participation, discussion and motivation in the class. The statistical analysis in Table 5.3 also showed that most teachers who participated in the questionnaire claimed they concentrated on providing their students with the educational goals before each course or lecture, as well as providing written and oral feedback after each assessment activity. However, other teaching practices such as asking students to give constructive feedback to their peers, motivating students to evaluate their own work, involving students in managing and planning for their learning and tracking students' progress to make changes on teaching, received less attention by teachers in the class.

The findings have also revealed that teachers claimed to have employed several assessment practices. For example, most teachers who participated in the study said they exploited the results of examinations and quizzes as pedagogical remedies to help students discover their mistakes in order to avoid them in the future and to consolidate learning. In addition to that, providing students with clear evaluation criteria and using ongoing assessment activities throughout the course are among the most frequent assessment practices that teachers said they employed. On the other hand, other assessment practices such as portfolios, peer and self-assessments were less employed by teachers during the course.

In regarding teachers' views towards the current teaching practices, the obtained data indicates that teachers did not consider that the teacher is the only source of information and knowledge required for learning. They also believed that most students are concerned with achieving high scores rather than knowledge. In relation to the availability of the technological facilities, most answers of participants indicated that they perceived a lack of such facilities as teaching tools. On the other hand, teachers have shared the same views in relation to their teaching methods and students' interaction in the class. They thought that the teaching methods they employed made their students active rather than passive in the class and that most students had the same chance to participate in the class.

Finally, the analysis of the quantitative data in section 5.3.4 revealed that some factors related to the context of the educational process have some positive and negative effects on the implementation of the assessment process, as demonstrated in Table 5.6. Most participants of this study thought that employing high-stakes examinations have positive effects on the assessment process, even if they have a crucial impact on students' future education and career. The answers also indicated that employing peer and self-assessment as tools for evaluation can to some extent have positive effects on the assessment process as well. Conversely, insufficient teaching time, lack of technological facilities and large numbers of students in the class can have negative effects on the assessment process.

Chapter Six: Qualitative Data Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and examines the analysis of data derived from fourteen semi-structured interviews undertaken with fourteen Libyan teachers, teaching EFL in three Libyan universities, and three focus group interviews with students. The process of the qualitative data analysis in this chapter intends to investigate and address the main and sub-research questions to achieve the main objectives of the current study (see section 1.3). Moreover, the qualitative data analysis can also be useful in triangulating the findings obtained in this chapter with those gained from the quantitative data analysis in the previous chapter. This chapter consists of two parts: the first part concerns the qualitative data analysis of the semi-structured interviews with teachers of EFL; while the second part is devoted to analysing three focus group interviews with students at the same universities.

6.1.1 Description of the Qualitative Data Sample

The qualitative data was collected by conducting fourteen semi-structured interviews with teachers from three Libyan Universities and three focus group interviews with students who are studying in the same universities. These interviews were employed to investigate teachers' and students' views on teaching and assessment practices in tertiary education.

6.1.2.1 Features of the Teachers' Interviews

All teachers who participated in these interviews were volunteers from the questionnaire sample (see Section 4.4.5). Table (6.1) reports the main demographic features of the participants in these interviews.

Table 6. 1: Features of the Teachers Interviews

University	Gender	Academic Qualification	Teaching Experience	Subjects Taught	Class Size
Tripoli	Male	PhD	26 years	Semantics/ Syntax	Over 40
Tripoli	Male	MA	5 years	Conversation	Over 40
Tripoli	Male	MA	3 years	Translation	30 – 39
Tripoli	Female	MA	2 years	Linguistics/ Grammar	Over 40
Tripoli	Female	MA	7 years	Reading/ Writing	30 - 39
Musrata	Male	PhD	6 years	SLA	20 – 29
Musrata	Male	MA	10 years	Literature	20 – 29
Musrata	Male	PhD	8 years	Teaching Methodology	20 – 29
Musrata	Male	MA	3 years	Translation	20 – 29
Elmergib	Male	MA	15 years	Drams/Novel/ Poetry	Over 40
Elmergib	Male	MA	2 years	Phonetics/ Speaking	30 – 39
Elmergib	Male	MA	3 years	Linguistics	Over 40
Elmergib	Male	MA	5 years	Speaking	20 – 29
Elmergib	Female	MA	7 years	Varieties of English	Over 40

6.1.2.2 Features of Students Focus Group Interviews

The students who took part in these interviews were volunteers who agreed to take part in this study (see Section 4.4.5). The ages of the interviewed students ranged from nineteen to twenty-two years old and they were from different academic levels. The total number of students who participated in this study was twenty-four, eight students from each university. From each level, the first, second, third and fourth, there were two students who took part in the interview. The students were native speakers of Arabic who were studying EFL as a major subject of specialization in the department of English during 2015/2016 academic year.

6.2 Interviews Data Analysis

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the qualitative data obtained from interviews with teachers of EFL from different Libyan universities was used to address the research questions stated in this study (see section 1.3). Therefore, one of the most suitable ways for achieving this goal was using a thematic analysis approach (see Chapter Four, Section 4.3.5). Thematic analysis is also considered as a flexible and

useful method of qualitative data analysis as it can be conducted in several ways (Javadi and Zarea, 2016 and Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research, a top-down or deductive approach was employed for analysing data. Therefore, themes and codes were created from the research questions of this study. In addition to that, some findings of the analysed data in this chapter will be presented in tables as Newby (2014: 521) states that “it is inevitable that, at some point in our research, we will have to deal with numbers. Even if our research is firmly rooted in qualitative tradition, it is likely that we will need to demonstrate the significance of our study in a broader context”. In addition to that, quotations of some actual interviewees’ responses will be included to exemplify the points made. During the data analysis, all names of the interviewed teachers were treated with complete confidentiality by giving them pseudonyms (see Table 6.1) as the participants were promised before taking part in the interviews. It is also important, before reporting the qualitative data analysis, to provide some personal details about the sample of teachers interviewed, such as their educational institution, gender, academic qualification, teaching experience, subject taught and number of their students. The main purpose of providing such details is to gain an understanding of teachers’ educational background and the context in which they taught. It also gives us an insight into the answers which they presented during the interviews (see Table 5.3).

According to the research questions being investigated, the process of qualitative data analysis will be presented in three main sections which are based on the following main themes:

Theme 1: The current teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities.

Theme 2: The main reasons for employing these practices.

Theme 3: Means and mechanisms for employing these practices.

Theme 4: Teachers' views towards the current assessment practices which they employ.

Theme 5: Rationale and motives for holding these views.

Theme 6: Ways and procedures used for translating these views into practice.

Theme 7: Assessment influence on teaching and learning practices. (washback effects).

Theme 8: Reasons for these effects (washback effects).

Theme 9: Teachers' reaction towards these effects (washback effects).

The above themes were derived from the sub-research questions stated in the first chapter (see Section 1.3) with the aim of fully addressing those questions in this chapter. The first three themes were derived from the first sub-research question, while the next group of themes, from four to six, was designed to address the second sub-research question and the final group of the themes, from seven to nine, originated from the third sub-research question. For instance, the first sub-research question is ‘what are the current EFL teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do they employ these practices’. This question consists of three interrelated questions, namely what, why and how. The first theme was derived from the first part of the question ‘what are the current EFL teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities’. The second theme was derived from the second part of the question ‘why do they [teachers] employ these practices’ and the third theme was derived from the third part of the question ‘how do they [teachers] employ these practices’. The second and third groups of the themes were derived by using the same way followed in the first group of the themes.

6.2.1 Teaching and Assessment Practices

In this section the data collected are analysed with the aim of answering the first sub-research question: "What are the current teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do teachers employ these practices?" Teaching and assessment practices, in this study, are referred to as the teaching and assessment methods, techniques and activities which teachers employ in the classroom

when they teach or assess their students. The findings of teachers' interview responses in this section are reported according to two main sub-categories:

- a) Teachers' teaching practices;
- b) Teachers' classroom assessment practices.

6.2.1.1 Classroom Teaching Practices

As the same topic has been addressed in the previous chapter through quantitative data analysis (see section 5.2.1), the main aim of this section is to develop a detailed view of the teaching practices employed by teachers in their classrooms in different Libyan universities by interviewing some of the teachers who participated in the questionnaire survey. Therefore, specific questions were posed in the interview schedule (see appendix Two) that help to give a clear understanding about what was going on in the classroom. It was apparent through investigating the answers of these questions by the interviewed teachers that these teachers employed a variety of teaching practices as can be seen in Table 6.2 below. These practices, as mentioned in the participants' responses during the interviews, can be categorized into two main teaching approaches or methods as shown in Figure 7.1.

Teachers said that some conditions such as the subject taught, technological facilities, students' previous education and number of students in the classroom were important factors that influenced their teaching practices (see section 6.2.2). Table 6.1 below shows the number of interviewed teachers claimed to adopt various teaching practices along with various variables that might affect their teaching practices inside the classroom to support the teaching and learning process.

Table 6. 2: Teachers' Teaching Practices

Teacher	Gender	Academic Qualification	Teaching Experience	Subjects Taught	Student Number	Teachers' Teaching Practices
Shareef	Male	PhD	26 years	Semantics/ Syntax	Over 40	Teacher-centred, Student-centred
Mohand	Male	MA	5 years	Conversation	Over 40	Teacher-centred, Student-cantered
Rasheed	Male	MA	3 years	Translation	30 -39	Teacher-centred, Student-centred
Rahaf	Female	MA	2 years	Linguistics/ Grammar	Over 40	Teacher-centred, Student-centred
Nora	Female	MA	7 years	Reading/ Writing	30 -39	Teacher-centred, Student-centred
Saleem	Male	PhD	6 years	SLA	20 - 29	Student-centred
Rudy	Male	MA	10 years	Literature	20 - 29	Teacher-centred, Student-centred
Moneer	Male	PhD	8 years	Language Testing/Teaching Methodology	20 - 29	Teacher-centred, Student-centred
Khaled	Male	MA	3 years	Translation	20 - 29	Teacher-centred, Student-centred
Fathi	Male	MA	15 years	Drama/Novel/ Poetry	Over 40	Teacher-centred
Basem	Male	MA	2 years	Phonetics/ Speaking	30 - 39	Teacher-centred, Student-centred
Rafeeq	Male	MA	3 years	Linguistics	Over 40	Teacher-centred, Student-centred
Hosam	Male	MA	5 years	Speaking	20 - 29	Student-centred
Seham	Female	MA	7 years	Varieties of English	Over 40	Teacher-centred a

It can be noted from the table above that 10 of the interviewed teachers (71%) claimed to employ both teacher-centred and student-centred approaches in their classrooms, to various degrees. They also reported different reasons for using these approaches together as a teaching method during the course. Some teachers, like Basem, explained their deliberate employment of a teacher-centred approach at the beginning of the course to fill the information gap that their students suffered from at this stage. Their choice to progress to a student-centred approach in the middle of the course represented a strategy to meet the students' proficiency level. Basem said that:

“When students encounter any learning difficulties because of their lack of knowledge about a certain topic or subject, I need to work as the only source of knowledge and information to help them by filling the educational gap and that is the common method most teachers employ. For example, in the subject of speaking that I teach, I provide students with all information and knowledge at the beginning of the course because of their poor speaking

abilities and skills. When I feel that their abilities and skills have improved, I give them assignments and topics to research by themselves and to present in the class.”

On the other hand, as shown in the Table 6.2 above, four interviewed teachers (29%) adopted only one approach, either teacher-centred or student-centred, as a main method of teaching during the whole course. Those teachers who adopted a student-centred approach as the main teaching method in their classes attributed their choice of this approach to the nature of the subject which they taught. For example, Hosam, who taught the subject of speaking, said that:

“Because I teach speaking, I use a student-centred method in teaching students and I work as a guide. Students are the source of information and I do not set the syllabus because the nature of the subject is a number of presentations and conversations presented by students in the class.”

Other interviewed teachers, who adopted the teacher-centred approach as the main teaching method in their classes, indicated reasons related to students and their educational abilities. Seham, for example, explained her choice of the teacher-centred approach as the main teaching method in the following terms.

“I am the only source of information in the class and I use a teacher-centred method as my main teaching method because most of the students are shy and do not have self-confidence to participate in the class. In addition to that, their language competence is weak and this influences their interaction with the teacher.”

Overall, it can be inferred from Table 6.2 that the prevailing teaching practices claimed to be employed by teachers involved in this study were centred on both teacher-centred and student-centred approaches. It is also apparent from the table that teachers who had more than forty students in the classroom said, they predominantly adopted just a teacher-centred approach. Conversely, those teachers whose class sizes range between twenty and twenty-nine students claimed to use only a student-centred approach in their classes. However, the number of students was not the only reason for adopting the mentioned teaching practices; there were also other reasons that will be explained in more detail in the next sub-section.

6.2.1.1.1 Reasons for Employing the Current Teaching Practices

Teachers revealed various reasons that led them to employ certain teaching practices, which were mentioned in the previous sub-section (6.2.1.1). These teaching practices were used by teachers to serve multiple and varied educational purposes. Some of these purposes were related to teachers themselves and others were related to the context in which these teachers were teaching. For example, teachers had their own teaching style and objectives that made them use particular teaching methods and activities which they thought would be more useful and effective with their students. Some teachers had declared that the proficiency level of students and the subject taught can influence the teaching practices that the teacher adopts at a certain point in the course. In this respect, Moneer, with seven other interviewed teachers who represented 57% of the whole sample asserted that he adopted the teacher-centred approach when he found that his students were not familiar with the new topics being taught especially at the beginning of the course. He said that:

“I use a mixed teaching approach like teacher-centred and student-centred teaching methods which are determined by the subject taught. For example, when I teach a new subject for the students, such as language testing, I will be the main source of information because there are many topics and terms which are not familiar to students.”

In addition to that, Moneer justified using this teaching strategy in order to meet the students' learning needs and to fill the information gap that students suffer from at the beginning of the course. He claimed:

“I modify them [teaching methods] according to the students' learning needs from student-centred into teacher-centred, especially when student are not familiar with the subject, in order to fill any information gap.”

Another teacher, like Nora, indicated that motivating her students was one of the main reasons that led her to employ different teaching methods, to keep students more enthusiastic and interested in the topics taught in the class. She stated:

“For example in the subject of reading, when I feel students get bored with the lessons and texts that they are studying and notice their comprehension of the topics and information starts to decrease, I ask them to inform me of topics or texts related to the Reading Subject which they would like to learn and will be interested in. In this way, I encourage them to learn and motivate them to love the subject by changing the way of teaching and using teaching methods that suit my students’ needs.”

Nora believed that teachers' position inside the class enables them to observe and monitor their students' performance and accordingly they may employ various teaching methods that suit their students’ interests and proficiency level. Nora claimed that:

"Regarding the teaching methods, I also modify them according to what suits my students’ needs and interests. I believe that the teacher is the monitor inside the class and should modify what he or she thinks does not help students to learn."

The teaching objectives that the teacher aims to achieve can also be one of the factors that determine the adoption of particular teaching methods and practices. Salem, for example, is one of the teachers who preferred to use teaching methods and activities strongly related to a student-centered approach. The main teaching objective for Salem was to enable students to be more independent and responsible for their learning and he saw the role of the teacher just as a guide inside the class. Therefore, he argued that:

"I did my PhD research project on learner autonomy and learner independence, which concerns how to involve students in learning and depend on themselves. I try to make my students active to learn and depend on themselves and to be independent of the teacher. I adopt the role of the teacher who only guides and helps students. My teaching methods are student centered more than anything else and that is why I do not consider myself responsible if they get low marks, because students should share this responsibility."

Another interviewed teacher, Rudy, mentioned some reasons related to the culture of students which could influence his choice of teaching activities and practices. Rudy pointed out that many students will not engage in some teaching practices which are incompatible with the cultural background of the community in which they live. Rudy commented on this issue saying that:

"Actually, there are problems especially with activities related with culture. For example, if I use songs or some activities in my Drama class, some conservative students feel hesitation to participate in some activities that they are not familiar with. They will be very worried about the kind of material I am going to use, because they say it is not in our culture to do that."

Some factors which are related to the teaching resources inside the educational institution influenced the nature of teaching practices that teachers can employ. Lack of technological facilities and the religious culture of students were among the factors that forced Fathi to use very traditional ways of teaching, as he mentioned.

"The first reason is the large number of students and lack of technological facilities that support the teaching and learning process. Another reason is the cultural circumstances and traditions of the society. For example, in some academic years, I used videos to help in teaching some plays and novels and unfortunately many female students excused themselves from the lecture because there were some scenes that showed some things against their religious culture. In addition to that there is no language lab to teach the learning skills required for English, which has negative effects on the educational and assessment process."

The comments above make clear that the implementation of the teaching practices has been affected by various reasons such as students' proficiency level, the subject taught, teaching objectives, students' motivation, technological facilities and finally, students' culture. In specifically, the students' proficiency level and the subject taught were considered by most participants of the sample (57%) as the main reasons which have a great impact on the teaching practices, in comparison with the other reasons, which were perceived to varying degrees among the rest of participants of the study.

6.2.1.1.2 Implementation of the Current Teaching Practices

Teachers reported several ways and tools for the implementation of the current teaching practices. As shown in Table 6.2, most participants mentioned that they employed a communicative or student-centred approach for implementing most teaching practices and activities in the classroom. The interaction and exchange of information between the teacher and students on the one hand and among students themselves on the other

hand was the dominant teaching method in the classroom, as teachers claimed. Rahaf was one of the teachers who preferred using a communicative approach in her classroom. She said:

“I do prefer a communicative approach. From my point of view and experience, I think we need a communicative approach because we need interaction on the part of students.”

In the same way, Rasheed asserted the role of students’ and teacher’s interaction as an important factor in the teaching and learning process when he said:

“There should be interaction between students and teacher in the lecture and students should be treated as an important factor in the teaching and learning process. I encourage group discussion among students to support learning and teaching.”

Rafeeq also adopted the same technique in the classroom, as he mostly depended on communicative activities in the teaching and learning process. Rafeeq claimed that:

“I use an interactive teaching approach and a student-centered approach. However, I sometimes use a teacher-centered approach where I will be the speaker and students will be the audience. I also give opportunity for group discussion between students and sometimes between students and the teacher. I also accept students’ suggestions and involve them in setting the course objectives.”

Nevertheless, the data analysis of the semi-structured interviews with teachers also revealed that those interviewed teachers who claimed to use the communicative approach did not generally involve their students in setting the teaching objectives of the course. Hosam is one of the participants who commented on this issue, saying that:

"I use a student-centered method in teaching students and I work as a guide in the class. I do not involve students in setting the objectives of the course because they are not qualified for that and the course is new for them and they do not have enough background about the subject and I know what will be beneficial to students."

The same procedure is followed by Rasheed and Moneerm, who referred to the role of the department administration in the process of setting the objectives of the course which teachers and students should follow and reported respectively that:

"We are given the course outlines and syllabus that should be taught to students. Therefore, the objectives of the course will be built according to these outlines and students will not be involved directly in the objectives."

"I do not involve them [students] because these [teaching] objectives have already been set by teachers of the department before the course starts and all teachers should follow these objectives for every course."

As a summary, the Table 6.2 and the excerpts above make clear that 12 interviewed teachers out of 14, (86%) of participants, depended on a communicative approach (student-centred approach) either the sole or a main teaching method in the classroom. However, 10 participants also acknowledged using the teacher-centred approach when they considered it necessary. The interviewed teachers gave various reasons for using this technique or strategy as explained in the previous sub-section (see 6.2.1.1.1). It is also important to mention here that the same interviewed teachers who claimed to employ the communicative approach as a main teaching method did not involve their students in the process of setting the teaching objectives of the course. Teachers believed that this task is their main duty and responsibility and students are not qualified to share with them in this task.

6.2.1.2 Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices

With respect to the assessment practices, participants' answers to the interview questions revealed that teachers employed multiple assessment practices in the classroom. Nevertheless, most of the participants agreed that some assessment practices dominated the process of assessment and evaluation, due to certain circumstances (see section 6.2.2). For instance, all interviewed teachers acknowledged the dominance of summative assessment practices as a main tool in the assessment and evaluation process (see Table 6.3) while other assessment practices such as self-assessment did not received much interest from teachers, as can be seen in participants' comments in the next section (see 6.2.1.2.1). Table 6.3 demonstrates a number of teachers' classroom

assessment practices influenced by different variables, which are shown in the table below and discussed in participants' responses.

Table 6. 3: Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices

Teacher	Gender	Academic Qualification	Teaching Experience	Subjects Taught	Students Number	Assessment Practices
Shareef	Male	PhD	26 years	Semantics/ Syntax	Over 40	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Peer Assessment Constructive Feedback
Mohand	Male	MA	5 years	Conversation	Over 40	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Direct Observation Constructive Feedback
Rasheed	Male	MA	3 years	Translation	30 -39	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Constructive Feedback
Rahaf	Female	MA	2 years	Linguistics/ Grammar	Over 40	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Constructive Feedback
Nora	Female	MA	7 years	Reading/ Writing	30 -39	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Constructive Feedback
Salem	Male	PhD	6 years	SLA	20 - 29	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Peer Assessment Direct Observation Constructive Feedback
Rudy	Male	MA	10 years	Literature	20 - 29	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Peer Assessment Direct Observation Constructive Feedback
Moneer	Male	PhD	8 years	Teaching Methodology	20 - 29	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Peer Assessment Self-assessment Constructive Feedback
Khaled	Male	MA	3 years	Translation	20 - 29	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Constructive Feedback
Fathi	Male	MA	15 years	Drama/Novel/ Poetry	Over 40	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Peer Assessment Direct Observation Self-assessment Constructive Feedback
Basem	Male	MA	2 years	Phonetics/ Speaking	30 - 39	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Constructive Feedback
Rafeeq	Male	MA	3 years	Linguistics	Over 40	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Constructive Feedback
Hosam	Male	MA	5 years	Speaking	20 - 29	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Constructive Feedback
Seham	Female	MA	7 years	Varieties of	Over 40	Summative Assessment Formative Assessment Self-assessment

				English		Direct Observation Constructive Feedback
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Table 6.3 makes clear that all participants of this study claimed to have employed summative and formative assessment, as well as constructive feedback while just five teachers (36%) from the whole sample claimed to have employed peer assessment and direct observation. The Table also indicates that just three interviewed teachers (21%) out of 14 claimed to have employed self-assessment inside the classroom. It is also important to point out here that all these assessment practices stated in Table 6.3 appear to have been influenced by different reasons and circumstances that will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

6.2.1.2.1 Reasons for Employing the Current Assessment Practices

The employment of the assessment practices stated in the previous section was affected by a variety of reasons, related to the context of the educational process or teachers' and students' attitudes. There are several reasons which are directly related to the context of the educational process. For instance, the number of students, educational facilities available and administrative regulations all contributed in constraining particular assessment methods which are compatible with the current situation. Large numbers of students were mentioned by eight participants out of 14, who represent (57%) of the sample of this study, as a major reason that affected the assessment practices they employed in the classroom. Mohand claimed that large numbers of students in the class was one of the obstacles that prevented him from providing his students with individual feedback after each assessment practice.

“I also give individual feedback after any assessment activity for students, especially if the number of students is small. However, with a large number of students I really face difficulties in giving individual feedback. For that reason, I prefer using summative assessment, which is easier to conduct, but it will not be effective for achieving the objectives of the teaching and learning process.”

As Mohand mentioned, the influence of large numbers of students was one of the challenges he encountered when giving individual feedback to students. Consequently, he preferred to use summative assessment, which is easier for the teacher to conduct, but it is not effective, as Mohand described.

One of the main findings of the qualitative analysis of the main assessment practices inside the class is the consensus on using the summative assessment as a main evaluation tool, by all teachers who participated in this study. They indicated different reasons for using summative assessment, which are mainly associated to the teachers' views (see 6.2.2), the regulations of the educational institution and large numbers of students inside the class. Teachers justified using summative assessment because it is not time consuming and gives more credible and objective results in comparison with other assessment practices. For example, Hosam says that:

"Summative assessment is easy to be conducted and it is not time consuming. It also gives objective results about the students' achievement and the answer sheet is considered as a strong legal document and proof which demonstrates the performance of the student in the exam and he cannot claim any bias on the part of the teacher."

For Rafeeq the main reason which made him use summative assessment was the regulation of the educational institution, as he claimed:

"According to the educational institution regulations and large numbers of the students, I use summative assessment as the main tool for evaluation."

It was clear from Table 6.3 that self-assessment was not employed by most of the interviewed teachers except for three teachers who represented (21%) of the whole sample. Hosam was one of the teachers who did not rely on using self-assessment as an assessment practice to support the teaching and learning process. He believed that his students were not competent enough to practise this kind of assessment and he claimed that:

"It is simply because students will not be objective in this evaluation and they will not acknowledge their mistakes. They are not competent to

discover their mistakes and even if they discovered their mistakes, they will not say them. This will be negative motivation.”

Rafeeq and Rudy have shared Hosam’s attitude towards employing self-assessment and they justified their view by saying it is not objective. Respectively, Rafeeq and Rudy said:

“I do not use self-assessment as a tool of evaluation because it is not objective.”

“For the self-assessment, I think it is not objective and students do not have the sufficient competence for doing it.”

Hosam also did not support the idea of giving feedback after examinations as he thought. It is not always beneficial and this technique may negatively influence students’ learning. He argued:

"For examinations, not quizzes, I think that the results of the exam will have a negative effect on students when they get low marks and this will make them disappointed. For this reason, I do not support this idea especially for weak students. However, for intelligent students, they do not need encouragement because they are always active and depending on themselves."

The nature of the subject taught, as Rafeeq said, has a crucial role in the visibility of the assessment method used. Rafeeq indicated that:

"I do peer assessment but not too much because of the nature of the subject which I teach. It is a very academic subject and students cannot apply peer assessment. I do not use self-assessment as a tool of evaluation because it is not objective."

Monitoring students’ performance with the purpose of diagnosing their learning problems was one of the main reasons for some teachers to conduct some assessment practices such as weekly quizzes. Some teachers claimed that conducting weekly quizzes helped them to find radical solutions for some teaching and learning problems.

Rudy reported that:

“I do quizzes through which I check the level of students' understanding. If I discover any learning problems that students suffer from, then I need to check my teaching methods and strategies that I use. Therefore, I may modify some teaching methods and strategies that will make students more interested and improve their learning.”

In summary, the comments of the interviewed teachers above indicated that most reasons associated with the context of the educational process or even teachers and students resulted in a clear dominance of summative assessment practices.

6.2.1.2.2 Implementation of the Current Assessment Practices

Summative assessment practices in the form of mid-term and final examinations are the most common and frequently assessment and evaluation tool employed by teachers, as they stated during the interview sessions. These examinations, as described by participants, are usually formal and have the nature of high stakes assessment (see 3.1.5 p: 24). The main purpose of the mid-term and final examinations employed by teachers is to evaluate and judge students' achievement during the entire course and to decide which students are eligible to move to the next academic year. Rudy, one of the teachers interviewed, employed different forms of assessment practices but he emphasised the summative assessment in a form of mid-term and final examination as a main requirement in the process of assessment. He stated that:

"The assessment practices are conducted in different forms such as questions in the classroom, discussion, participating in answering the exercises, homework and quizzes in addition to mid-term and final examinations in a form of summative assessment, which is a main assessment requirement."

Formative assessment is one of the main assessment practices that teachers implemented in different forms, such as peer and self-assessment, observation or oral questions and feedback. Moneer, one member of the sample interviewed, said that:

"I use peer assessment to support teaching and learning process and as a motivational tool, but I do not use it as an evaluative tool. I use feedback after presentations given by students which is undertaken in groups and in which all students can share after any presentation by a particular student. I also give opportunity to all students to discuss any topics or suggestions which may help to support the teaching and learning process."

Seham mentioned other ways in which she employed formative assessment at the class, when she was asked about this point during the interview session. She reported that:

"I depend on oral questions and direct observation during the lecture to help me evaluate students' understanding. Sometimes I use self-assessment as a mock exam which makes students more familiar with the final or mid-term exam."

Most teachers said that they assessed students at the beginning of each lecture and before they started explaining the new topic. The main aim of this technique, as teachers stated, was to assess students' understanding of the previous topic, as well as motivating students to the next topic. This routine assessment took the form of an oral discussion and interaction between teachers and students. Teachers also evaluated their teaching methods and to what extent they were successful in delivering the content of the topic taught to students, as reflected in students' understanding of that topic. Basem, as an interviewee for example, said in this respect that:

"In general, I always do an oral test in the first five minutes of the lecture in which I ask the students about the previous lesson. Sometimes, I do a recap as a summary of what was said in the last lecture with the help of the PowerPoint slides, where the first slide will contain a summary of the previous lesson... I follow this technique when the lessons are related to each other and also to assess students' understanding of the previous lessons and also to motivate them."

As noted earlier in this section, it was apparent that mid-term examinations during the middle of the course and final examinations at the end of the course were the main summative assessment practices employed for evaluative purposes only. On the other hand, peer and self-assessment and direct observation were the main means of formative assessment practices that were employed to support the teaching and learning process.

According to the analysis conducted above, a thorough comparison of the main categories of teaching practices and assessment practices employed by teachers who participated in this study reveals some important findings. It was apparent that teachers claimed to have employed different teaching approaches, either teacher-centred or student-centred, but they showed a similar use of assessment practices. There was an overwhelming consensus by teachers on the use of particular assessment practices as shown in Table 6.3 (see 6.2.1.2).

6.2.2 Teachers' Views and Attitudes towards the Current Assessment Practices

Teachers' views and attitudes towards the assessment process can have some impact on the nature of the assessment practices they employ in the classrooms, as comments of the teachers interviewed in this study showed. An investigation of the data collected revealed that the interviewed teachers had varied views and attitudes towards the assessment practices they employed. The main views that participants of this study shared towards summative assessment practices were that they do not completely help to evaluate students' real skills and abilities. The main reason behind this point of view appears to be that summative assessment practices have high-stakes effects. Teachers thought that summative assessment practices led students to focus on memorization as a learning technique, which does not usually reflect real understanding of the subject taught. This technique of learning, as participants declared, does not produce deep learning which usually facilitates and promotes learning in the next educational stages for students. The interviewed teachers thought that this kind of assessment caused students to focus more on how to pass the examination and on scoring high marks to enable them get a job or complete postgraduate studies. Salem, one of the teachers interviewed, reflected on his own views towards the implementation of summative assessment in the course he taught and claimed that:

“The current influence of summative assessment lies in students' focus on passing exams and as soon as they achieve this aim they will forget everything related to the exam. They study to guarantee passing the exam and get good marks. In the future, when students become teachers, they will use the same strategy with which they studied and they will not blame their students for studying just for passing the exam because they followed the same way when they were students.”

Rudy, had a similar point of view to Salem regarding the summative assessment practices applied at their department. He gave some details about that:

"This kind of assessment encourages students to focus on mid-term and final examinations. They just need to depend on the books and their handouts which they can study at home and there is no need to come to class. This

also motivates students to depend on memorization rather than practical work and comprehension."

One of the main findings related to teachers' views about summative assessment implementations is that they were not satisfied with the current dominance of summative assessment practices on the process of assessment and evaluation. Teachers who participated in this study perceived a lack of reasonable balance between the use of summative assessment and the use of other assessment practices such as direct observation, oral discussions, formative, peer and self-assessment. Rasheed, like other interviewed teachers who commented on this issue such as Khaled and Moneer, admitted:

"Yes, I depend mostly on summative assessment but if the choice were mine I will not use it as a main tool for assessment and evaluation."

Moneer expressed a similar belief about the extreme use of summative assessment and declared that:

"Unfortunately, it is a main tool but I am not satisfied with this strategy and if the decision were mine, I would use formative assessment as the dominant assessment method because it is very useful for supporting the teaching and learning process."

Rasheed, Moneer and other participants in this study mentioned many reasons for holding such views about the issue of summative assessment dominance (see 6.2.2.1).

Most interviewed teachers had the same point of view about the objectives that the assessment process should achieve. They thought that all assessment practices should be based on supporting teaching that increases understanding of the information and knowledge delivered during the lecture in particular and the course in general. All teachers involved in this study agreed that students should not be taught in a way that promotes memorization as a learning strategy. They thought that summative assessment practices usually lead to such a learning strategy while formative assessment practices work against this way of teaching and learning strategy. For example, Basem said that:

“One of the objectives of the assessment and testing for me is to measure students' abilities for real comprehension rather than memorization. The main goal is to make students understand the content of the syllabus and apply the knowledge and information they learn during the course and not depend on memorization in their learning.”

Other interviewed teachers from the three universities involved in this study shared the same view of the objectives of the assessment process. For example, Nadia said:

“My main aim is to improve my students' real comprehension and knowledge and not only raise their scores, which may not reflect their real level. I have found some students depend on a strategy of memorization to learn. When I assess students through discussing some issues related to the subject, I noticed that this strategy of learning does not lead to a complete understanding of the subject, which I intend to achieve as an aim of my teaching.”

As a result of the above quoted views of the interviewed teachers towards summative assessment and the intended objectives of their assessment in the course, teachers still had a strong belief that formative assessment would have more positive effects on the teaching and learning process. Through analysing teachers' answers and comments on the feasibility of using formative assessment practices to promote the education process, it was apparent that all participants supported the idea of using formative assessment more intensively in the classroom. This belief can be clearly seen in the participants' comments and answers. For instance, Mohand said that:

“If the choice were mine I would depend on formative assessment activities because these activities can help me to support the teaching and learning process.”

Salem also agreed with Mohamed's point of view about the importance of employing formative assessment in the classroom as an alternative to summative assessment. He argued that:

“I use summative assessment as a main formal tool for evaluation, but if the choice were mine, I would prefer using formative assessment as a main evaluative tool.”

The excerpts above show that all participants of this study believed that the assessment process was based mainly on high stakes summative assessment practices which

focused on evaluating students rather than supporting the teaching and learning process. They also realized that these assessment practices resulted in some negative effects on the educational process, as reported in the excerpts above. Therefore, all interviewed teachers thought that formative assessment practices could be employed as an alternative assessment method to induce positive effects and improve the teaching and learning process.

6.2.2.1 Teachers' Rationales for their Views towards the Assessment Practices

The previous section (6.2.2) reviewed teachers' views and attitudes towards the current assessment practices employed at their classes. They mentioned several reasons to clarify why they held these views. Therefore, this section focuses on exploring and analysing these reasons provided by the participants of this study.

All interviewed teachers thought that the current summative assessment practices had high-stakes traits and caused some teaching and learning difficulties for many reasons. For example, the great emphasis on using summative assessment practices as a main tool of evaluation caused students to concentrate more on achieving marks rather than acquiring knowledge and information. All interviewed teachers claimed that the main objective of education for students was to improve their assessment outcomes, which would enable them pass examinations, move to the next educational stage, graduate and obtain a job. Students were aware that the main requirements of employment depended on the outcomes of the assessment and evaluation processes rather than the outcomes resulting from the process of teaching and learning (see 6.3). Rahaf expressed some rationales which had led her to form some views and attitudes towards the summative assessment practices, based on to her educational experience. She explained:

“I noticed that the information and knowledge taught during the previous course are easily forgotten by students during the next educational stage because of their extreme concern about passing the exam rather than acquiring new skills and knowledge. The students' objective is to pass the exam, which is totally different from mine.”

In addition to that, the nature of the subjects taught, in the view of most of the interviewed teachers, can be one of the main factors that influencing teachers' views and their choice of assessment practices as Rafeeq argued (see Rafeeq's quotation in Section 6.2.1.2.1). Rahaf also had a similar point of view to Rafeeq and other interviewed teachers on this matter and said that:

"It is very difficult to design activities for formative practices when you teach a theoretical subject like Applied Linguistics, but for grammatical structures I will use formative assessment for sure."

All teachers who took part in this study have stated some reasons behind the overuse of summative assessment practices in their classrooms, as well as the reasons behind the limited use of other assessment practices and activities. They mentioned various reasons such as the regulations of their educational institutions, large numbers of students, lack of time and teachers' traditional views towards particular assessment practices. Some of these reasons can be explicitly noticed in Hosam, Refeeq and Mohaned's views and their comments about the reasons for employing the current assessment practices in section 6.2.1.2.1. Hosam also referred to the lack of technological facilities as one of the reasons that made summative assessment a main tool of evaluation and assessment:

"We do not have a language lab to teach listening skill in a proper way. This will encourage using summative assessment methods because there are no facilities for ongoing assessment, especially in a subject like listening."

Seham, Rafeeq and Fathi and other participants added another reason for the preference of using summative assessment practices, which is related to students' views towards summative assessment and other assessment practices such as formative assessment.

For example, Rafeeq said that:

"Another factor for this strategy is the students' complaints about ongoing (formative) assessment. Students think that it is not fair because the teacher's emotions might influence his evaluation and judgments. I think the exam should be formal and it is a crucial measurement to evaluate students' performance as a main strategy in the educational process."

Basem, Rasheed and Rahaf, in addition to other interviewed teachers raised the issue of teachers' and students' traditional views towards the conventional system of their education and assessment process, which was still followed by most of these teachers and students. As Rasheed and Rahaf said, respectively:

"Another reason for choosing summative assessment as a main tool for assessment is that it was and still the traditional method of assessment by which students and even teachers has been evaluated in early stages of their education. It also gives objective judgements and results which describe students' performance more accurately."

"We should consider the previous background of the students who grew up with a very systematic approach in which everything was controlled and rule governed. Definitely, students are influenced [by the current assessment methods] because they are used to being assessed in very traditional ways not at the university level but even in secondary school. These traditional methods do not make use of any technological facilities such as labs in the process of assessment."

6.2.2.2 Ways Followed by Teachers for Realising their Views into Practice

The interviewed teachers followed several strategies to translate and apply their views into practice while they taught and during the whole course, as they mentioned during the semi-structured interview sessions. For example, they thought that using the results of the assessment practices as a reward was an effective way to increase motivation for students. Basem said that:

"Sometimes I use marks as a reward for interactive and active students to motivate students and encourage them to study"

Participants of this study, such as Basem, Moneer, Mohand, Rahaf, Salem and others, thought that assessment practices such as summative, formative and other assessment practices can be employed to motivate and encourage students to learn. Basem, as he mentioned during the interview, did not use summative assessment practices only as an evaluative tool in order to give marks and judge his students' performance and achievement, but also he employed them as a motivational tool. Basem thought that some traditional methods of education and assessment, by which students and their

teachers had been taught before, could be currently used to encourage students to learn, as he did. Basem argued that:

"I use the traditional way that students are familiar with and by which they have been taught during previous educational stages. For example, they study to pass the exam. Even we as teachers, we studied in this way. According to my experience, this way is beneficial, especially to careless students. In this way, I simply inform the students that they will have a test in the next lecture on the topics that they have previously studied. In this way the students will be enforced to study."

In the same vein, peer assessment and oral discussions were employed with students inside the classroom for motivational purposes and to support the teaching and learning process as Moneer declared during the interview in which he said that:

"I use peer assessment to support teaching and learning process and as a motivational tool, but I do not use it as an evaluated tool. I also give opportunity to all students to discuss any topics or suggestions which may help to support teaching and learning process."

From another perspective, participants such as Seham, Salem and Nora, used formative assessment practices such as direct observation, peer and self-assessment as means to diagnose their students' performance and learning problems and to check whether their teaching methods and techniques were effective and successful. Seham used self-assessment for this purpose. She says that:

"I use self-assessment before the original exam to help students recognize their mistakes and weak points and be familiar with the questions of the exam."

Salem and Nora depended on direct observation, peer assessment and discussion with students as means to monitor their students' performance during the lectures and the course in general. Salem said:

"I always use direct observation as a method of assessment to check my students' performance. I try to use self-assessment, but I do not trust students and it is time consuming. However, instead of that I use peer assessment. I try to make a discussion with students to know what they are suffering from and whether they are doing well or not."

In addition to the same assessment methods as used by Seham and Salem, Nora also used constructive feedback after the assessment practices and activities, to discuss with students any learning problems they suffered from and how to avoid them in future assessment activities. Nora stated that:

"In the subject of conversation for beginners, when I evaluate students while they are speaking during the exam, I try to observe and concentrate on the students' mistakes and write down these mistakes to discuss them later with the aim of understanding their learning problems. In this way I use assessment to focus on the weak points of my students and we work together to solve them. I also do the same thing in the subject of writing, when I assess students' written work. I try to find, for example, some grammatical mistakes in tenses and give questions related to the students' mistakes to train them more on these tenses."

6.2.3 The Assessment Impact on the Educational Process (Washback Effects)

This section investigates the positive and negative impacts of the assessment practices on the educational process at the Libyan universities involved in this study, based on teachers' experience. The data collected from interviews are analysed in this section in order to address the third sub-research question stated in this study (see 1.3). In addition to exploring the impact of these factors on the classroom settings and all stakeholders of the educational process, this section also focuses on the main reasons that caused such effects and how teachers reacted to these effects during the course. Participants of this research study revealed several factors which had some positive and negative aspects on the educational and assessment process.

6.2.3.1 Negative Washback Effects

There was a general consensus by all interviewed teachers such as Salem, Moneer, Rudy, Basem, Khaled and other interviewees that the assessment policy adopted by the educational institutions and departments in which they taught was considered as one of the main factors that influenced the teaching and assessment practices in general. The extreme emphasis imposed by the educational institutions on the use of summative assessment as a main evaluative tool, as interviewed teachers reported, in the form of

high stakes assessment, resulted in diverse effect on students' current educational status and future, teachers' professional reputation and the educational institutions' reputation. Basem and Salem claimed that the assessment strategy for employing the assessment practices adopted by the educational institution and department in which they taught caused a great tendency towards a particular educational style that depends on memorizing information and knowledge required for passing the examination rather than understanding what is taught to be used beyond the exam. In this context, Basem said:

"Yes, they [summative assessment practices] influence students' future directly because the method by which teachers and students were taught mainly depends on measuring memorization and the theoretical side of knowledge rather than real understanding and practical application of the knowledge they learn and this has a great effect on their future education and career."

In the same vein, Moneer asserted that the impact of summative assessment practices did not cause learning difficulties for students alone, but they also extended to reach teachers and educational institutions. Moneer said that:

"The assessment methods that teachers are using and results obtained from the assessment process will affect them and their educational institution in general either positively or negatively. For example, when the assessment methods reflect negative results on students' proficiency during study or after graduation, this will influence negatively the educational reputation for both teachers and their institution and there will be unwillingness on the part of students to join our college and vice versa."

Some interviewed teachers such as Moneer, Salem and Rasheed, also indicated that assessment outcomes have a great effect on teachers' professional reputation. Teachers might be held to accountable by their departments if the majority of their students usually obtained low scores in the mid-term or final examinations. For this reason, some teachers are usually concerned with assessment outcomes and as a result they usually devote their teaching and assessment practices in the class to avoiding such outcomes.

Salem is one of the interviewed teachers who commented on this issue and how it affects teachers saying that:

"If my students get low marks just in my subject and good marks in other subjects, I will be responsible at least in front of my department and students. The impact of that situation will result in unwillingness of students to register for my subject. The department will also blame me as the cause of these results of my students, if compared to other teachers and subjects."

The way of using the assessment practices in the evaluation and educational process, as interviewees claimed, had affected students' learning objectives. Salem narrated his experience of this issue when he adopted an assessment method different from the traditional one. He stated:

"I myself inform students not depend on exams like mid-term and final exams and I try to make them work during the class and I am not going to evaluate them through mid-term and final exams. The result was that many students did not register in my subject because they want to depend on traditional mid-term and final exams and come to the lecture listening to the teacher and the teacher decides what elements of the topic are important that is it."

The assessment system adopted in the universities involved in this study influenced the content of the syllabus taught to students at the university level, as interviewed teachers claimed. Basem, Rasheed, Rudy and Nora stated that teachers simplified the topic of the subjects they taught to suit the students' weak proficiency level, to enable these students to pass the examinations given to them in the mid-term and final exam. Basem claims that:

"The main comment that I have is that most teachers simplify the main content of the syllabus to the extent it will not be suitable for the university level, in order to meet the weak abilities and skills of the students. Teachers also design examinations and assessment practices that do not meet the level at which students study, to avoid failure of their students. The examinations teachers set should be given to preparatory school students and not to students who study at university level."

The grading system adopted by the educational institutions and departments of the interviewed teachers involved in this study also has a great impact on the assessment practices which teachers can employ. Participants of this study such as Salem, Rudy,

Hosam and Basem claimed that the way of distributing marks to evaluate students forced them to depend heavily on summative assessment, which does not usually have positive effects on the teaching and learning process in comparison with the formative assessment practices. Interviewees considered this issue as one of the negative factors that influenced their assessment methods and made them unable to improve and support the teaching methods during the course. Basem gave a detailed description of the grading system which he used with students and how it influenced the education process of the course and subjects he taught. He stated that:

"I mainly depend on summative assessment rather than formative assessment, where sixty marks out of one hundred are given to summative assessment. Regarding the remaining forty marks, it depends on the teacher himself to use them in formative or summative assessment practices. For me as a teacher, I make a mid-term exam to which I give thirty marks out of these forty and the remaining ten marks, I use in formative assessment practices and activities. This means that students can achieve ninety marks out of one hundred from summative assessment, which can be described as high stakes assessment and will definitely affect students' current status and future education and career. This policy makes the students just think how to pass the exam. These methods and strategies of assessment have been inherited from one generation to another and do not reflect students' real abilities, skills and understanding."

6.2.3.2 Positive Washback Effects

Some participants employed assessment practices such as summative, formative, peer assessment, self-assessment, direct observation, oral discussions with students and constructive feedback after assessment activities as means to improve and support their teaching objectives and methods for inducing positive effects. For example, Moneer was one of the participants who narrated how the objectives of assessment and testing process for the subject he taught guided him to improve his teaching methods and syllabus of the subject.

"If the objectives of the assessment and testing process are intended to increase comprehension and I find that the content of the syllabus given to students encourages memorization then I need to modify the content of the syllabus to encourage comprehension rather than memorization. Regarding

the teaching methods, I may replace explaining lectures with different methods."

Other positive effects of the assessment practices on the educational process, as participants claimed, are that employing summative assessment can give more objective judgements about students' performance if compared with other assessment practices. Moreover, it saves time and effort especially when it is employed in evaluating large numbers of students in the class, as interviewees described.

Moneer and Rudy, as participants in this study, said that the assessment results alerted them to any defect in the teaching and learning process. They argued that teachers can monitor the effectiveness of their teaching and assessment methods according to the assessment outcomes, which describe the students' achievement and performance during the course. Moneer commented on this issue, saying:

"I feel responsible, especially if the majority of students got low marks in the exam. This is like an indicator for me that there is a particular defect which may be related to the teacher, students, the assessment and teaching methods or the syllabus. The main responsibility for me is to discover this defect. I think this feeling of responsibility happens only if the majority of students got low marks or do not understand the teacher. If most of them are doing well in the examinations, which reflects their comprehension, in this case, I will not feel responsible."

Assessment practices such as quizzes, oral questions and discussions with students helped some participants of this study such as Rudy, Hosam and Rafeeq to check their students' prior knowledge of any topic taught during the lecture and the course in general. It also helped them to check their students' understanding about the subject and the topic taught during the course. This method of assessment gave these teachers the advantage of discovering any learning problems that students might face and finding solutions for any learning difficulties as soon as possible. Rudy was one of the participants using this technique and he said:

"During explaining the lesson, I usually ask many questions to evaluate students' prior knowledge and background about the topic and also to check students' understanding of the topic at the end of the lesson. If I discover any

learning problems that students suffer from, then I need to check my teaching methods and strategies that I use. Therefore, I may modify some teaching methods and the strategies to make students more interested and improve their learning."

Some interviewed teachers talked about how diagnostic tests which they conducted in the initial sessions of the course helped them to adjust their teaching methods and the content of the syllabus for the subject intended to be taught during the course. Rudy, Rafeeq and Hosam, for example, have reported that such initial assessment gave them the chance to explore their students' learning problems, individual differences and their educational abilities. Hosam, who taught the subject of speaking, said during the interview that:

"I examine students' competence or proficiency through a test at the first lecture and consequently I can design a syllabus that meets the needs of all students on the course."

One of the most positive effects of the assessment practices on the teaching and learning process, which was reported by eight interviewed teachers (57%) was about how the constructive feedback which teachers give after any assessment activity helped them improving the learning and teaching process. It helped teachers to direct students on how to learn from the mistakes they made during any assessment activity, to increase the self-confidence and motivation of all students. The interviewed teachers indicated that they gave their students the required feedback in different ways after written and oral examinations, direct observation, oral discussions, peer or self-assessment. During the interview with Mohand, he mentioned how assessment is connected with constructive feedback was helpful and supportive to the educational process. He recommended that:

"Tests should be followed by constructive feedback after each assessment practice or activity every lecture to motivate students and help them in overcoming their learning problems. All these things have a very big role in developing the educational process."

Hosam was also one of the participants who had experienced the positive effects of feedback after assessment. He narrated:

"The assessment which I do will surely influence the students' future if they learn from their mistakes, which I inform them about through constructive feedback after each assessment process."

However, Hosam noted that the way in which feedback is delivered might lead to negative effects too. He applied various ways to make it more beneficial to his students.

He stated:

"I ask students to make presentations... to assess them and give them indirect feedback at the end of the lecture to the whole class and not individually to avoid frustration to the presenter and to ensure that all students get advantage. However, in case I feel that a particular student did not get any advantage of my indirect feedback, I deal with him/her individually, because my students are sensitive about being corrected in front of other colleagues."

6.2.3.3 Reasons for the current assessment impact on the educational process

This section reviews the main reasons that caused the assessment impact on the educational process. The interviewed teachers reported several reasons for this impact. For instance, all teachers involved in this study agreed that one of the main negative effects induced by the assessment practices was the excessive dependence on the use of formal summative assessments as a main tool of evaluation of students' performance and achievement (see 6.2.3.1). Participants attributed this impact to the assessment policy adopted by the educational institutions and departments in which they taught. Participants also gave different reasons for adopting this policy. One of the main reasons for employing formal summative assessment as the most common tool of evaluation at all levels of education was thought to be lack of knowledge of other alternative assessment practice in some educational institutions. Salem commented on this issue, saying:

“I do not think that they know about the formative assessment. They found things [assessment methods] like that and keep this policy as it is. They are following the traditional way of assessment.”

Participants reported that this method of assessment had been employed for many years at all levels of the education process. It had become the traditional trusted way of evaluation by which all teachers, inspectors and students were taught and evaluated at all stages of their educational life, as Rahaf and Rasheed commented (see 6.2.2.1). Participants also said that this way of assessment was highly trusted by their educational institutions and departments as an objective evaluation tool which could be employed to produce accurate judgements about students' performance in a short time and with less effort, especially with large numbers of students. It was apparent from the comments of participants such as Hosam, Rafeeq and Mohaned (see section 6.2.1.2.1) that technological facilities, lack of time and large numbers of students were the main reasons for depending on formal summative assessment practices, despite all the negative and positive aspects that might accompany them. These reasons, as interviewed teachers mentioned, made teachers unable to use alternative assessment practices that might be more modern and beneficial for teachers and students. Participants of this study said that they did not have language labs and modern equipment to facilitate their work in teaching and evaluating their students. In addition to that, the numbers of students in the classroom exceeded forty students, even reaching in some cases as many as seventy. Nora, Shareef, Rasheed and other interviewed teachers reported how the large numbers of students influenced the choice of the assessment method that they could use to evaluate students. Nora said:

“I depend on summative assessment practices as the main tool to evaluate my students because I have to follow the rules of the educational institution in which I work. This is the traditional way of assessment that we employ due to the big numbers of students. We have in some classes 70 students. I remember in an oral exam that I examined 103 students in a very limited time with just one colleague.”

Nora also claimed that large numbers of students in the classrooms prevented her from applying what she had learnt during the training courses that she had attended. She claimed that:

“I have received some training from the British Council in The Academy of Postgraduate Studies. They trained us in how to teach, do examinations, and distribute marks and use assessment process to support the teaching and learning process. We got many benefits from such training. Unfortunately, I could not apply everything that I learned in these training courses with our students, due to the large numbers of students we teach.”

The grading system and the way of distributing marks were considered by some participants of this study among the main reasons that caused the assessment impact on the teaching and learning process. This system made students are more concerned with one assessment method through which they could achieve marks that would increase their total average and ignore other assessment methods that may be more beneficial to their learning. The main reasons behind this system were the regulations of the educational institutions, as participants claimed. Rasheed commented on this issue and how he distributed marks during the course:

“I give just ten marks out of one hundred marks when I evaluate students in each lecture. I employ summative assessment as a mid-term exam with thirty marks and a final exam with sixty marks. We have to follow the regulations, which say 40 marks for the mid-term exam and 60 for the final. It is a common procedure in our university and we cannot ignore these regulations.”

The absence of training and workshops that enable teachers to update their knowledge about the impact of assessment practices on their teaching methods and students' learning strategies was among the reasons that essentially affected the process of education and assessment in general. There was a consensus by all participants that they considered this as one of the main reasons behind the impact of assessment on the educational process. They also mentioned several reasons that, together, reduced their opportunities to attend such useful workshops and training courses. Twelve interviewed teachers out of fourteen involved in this study admitted that they had not attend any

workshops or received any training courses about employing assessment practices to improve the teaching and learning process, since they started teaching at Libyan universities. Ten participants attributed this to the negative role of their educational institutions and departments' administration, regarding organizing and planning for important and useful events such as academic workshops and training courses. Moneer and Seham expressed this view when they were asked during the interview, what prevented them from receiving any training courses while teaching in the department. Respectively, Moneer and Seham pointed out that:

"Unfortunately, I have not attended any workshops here at the university. I think that the negative role of teachers and department administration is the main reason for the absence of these events and activities."

"No, I haven't and the main reason for that is the educational institution which does not offer any training."

The second reason that prevented participants from attending any useful workshops or training courses during their work as teachers was the overload of teaching hours during the course. Six of the interviewed teachers claimed that they were busy all the time during the academic year or semester, with giving lectures, evaluating students and correcting answer sheets for large numbers of students. Rahaf and Mohand have respectively commented on this issue saying:

"There are no workshops in our department. Teachers are busy with lectures and the teaching overload influences such these activities. They have other responsibilities and think these activities are time consuming."

"I think the overload of the teaching hours and huge numbers of students. Teachers will not have enough time for such workshops or training courses. It also because of the absence of the role of the educational institution and lack of financial support."

In addition to the above two reasons, there was a third reason, related to the network and the academic relationship between teachers inside and outside the department. A group of six interviewed teachers claimed that there was no academic cooperation or interaction among the teaching staff members at their departments. They did not have

any plans for group working or organising any beneficial events like academic conferences or meetings that would help to improve and update their knowledge about methods of assessment and teaching. Rafeeq is one of the participants, who commented on this issue, saying:

"I think the main reason for that is the weak role of educational institution towards this issue [academic cooperation] and also because of the absence of cooperation and group work among teaching staff members."

Hosam also noticed this fact and said:

"There are no cooperation projects with universities from other countries or projects that support such activities."

6.2.3.4 Teachers' reactions towards the assessment impact (Washback Effect)

Through analysing the data collected from the answers and comments of the interviewed teachers in the three Libyan universities involved in this study it appeared that teachers were aware of the impact of assessment on their teaching methods, students' learning and the educational process in general. Accordingly, all the interviewed teachers adopted various attitudes and reactions towards these effects. They had tried to avoid or reduce the negative effects of the assessment on the teaching and learning process and at the same time enhance and motivate the positive ones, despite all the obstacles they faced (see sections 6.2.3.2 and 6.2.3.1). Teachers often tended to modify their teaching and assessment practices, especially if they found they were not suitable for their students or did not help to achieve the objectives of the educational process. Rafeeq and another nine teachers (71%) who participated in the interview sessions confirmed that they employed this strategy as a reaction to any unexpected results of their assessment practices on the teaching and learning practices. Rafeeq declared that:

"Yes, I modify the content of the syllabus for the final exam, especially if I found students got low marks in the mid-term exam. I omit some topics in the final exam to enable students to get higher marks and to pass the exam that qualifies them go to the next academic year."

Rafeeq also followed the same technique with teaching methods, as he reported:

“Regarding the teaching methods, I also modify them by supporting the training and practical side to achieve the objectives of the assessment and testing process and to improve the outcomes of the evaluation process. I focus more on the practical side if the theoretical side alone is not enough to achieve the objectives of the assessment and testing process.”

Therefore, in the case of any defect caused by the reasons mentioned in the previous section (6.2.3.3) which may lead to real teaching or learning difficulties, teachers tried to deal with it in order to find an appropriate solution. For instance, all interviewed teachers admitted the unsuitability of depending on one method of assessment as a main tool for evaluating students' achievement during the whole the course. In other words, they were not completely satisfied with the current assessment policy of their departments that imposed the use of summative assessment as the main evaluation tool, and that was not their choice as Khaled, Moneer, Mohand, Salem and other participants stated (see section 6.2.2). Therefore, there were many attempts by teachers to introduce other assessment practices which they believed would have a positive impact on the teaching and learning process. Table 6.2 in Section 6.2.1.2 provides an outline of the alternative assessment practices employed by the interviewed teachers to avoid negative impacts of summative assessment as the interviewed teachers stated in Section 6.2.3.1. It was clear from Table 6.2 and teachers' comments during the interviews that all participants employed various forms of formative assessment besides summative assessment, with the purpose of inducing positive effects on the education process. Rafeeq, with four other interviewed teachers, as illustrated in Table 6.2 employed direct observation as a tool for evaluation of his students' performance in the class and of check their understanding to the topics of the subject taught. He said:

“Observation is one of the assessment methods which I use to evaluate students' work and understanding.”

The interviewed teachers also reported that, despite all the attempts to integrate formative assessment practices with summative assessment, the latter is still dominant and there is no reasonable balance, as teachers reported in previous sections (see 6.2.1.2; 6.2.1.2.2 and 6.2.2).

The analysed data also revealed that none of the interviewed teachers were satisfied with the grading system and distribution of marks adopted by the educational institutions and department (see sections 6.2.3.1 and 6.2.3.3). Teachers' reaction towards this issue was very weak because they were tied by the regulations of their educational institutions. As the interviewed teachers stated, they tried to give more marks to the formative assessment practices that they employed during the course to achieve a balance between this and the marks given to the summative assessment. The only way that teachers could do in this would be is to give forty marks to the formative assessment practices inside the classroom instead of giving them to the mid-term examination, as Rasheed and five other teachers were planning to do. Rasheed said:

"I support the idea of formative assessment being dominated in the assessment process. Next term I am planning to increase the marks for ongoing assessment inside the class to be twenty marks rather than ten marks."

6.3 Focus Group Data Analysis

This section represents the second phase of the qualitative data analysis. It is devoted to analysing three focus group interviews with students at the same three Libyan universities in which the semi-structured interviews with teachers were conducted. The qualitative data obtained from the focus group interviews with students was used to address the fourth sub-research question stated in this study: "What views do students have towards the current assessment practices; why do they have these views and how do they interact with them?" The data analysis in this section will be presented in three

sub-sections based on the following main themes created from the sub- research question mentioned above.

Theme 1: Students' views towards the current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities.

Theme 2: Students' rationales for their views towards the current assessment practices.

Theme 3: Students' reactions towards the current assessment practices.

Focus group interviews with students were also analysed by using thematic analysis approach (see Chapter Four, Section 4.3.5). Both themes and codes were created according to top-down or deductive approach in which themes and codes are pre-set in a way that guides to address the fourth sub-research question. The same steps that were followed in analysing semi-structured interviews with teachers were employed again to analyse the focus group with students. The data analysis process was started by reading the transcripts of the interviews many times with the aim of finding relevant information related to each theme that can help answering each part of the fourth sub-research question. As a next step, all information that was found relevant to each theme were grouped and analysed in a way that guide to answer the fourth sub-research question. It is also worth mentioning here that students' names in this analysis treated with complete confidentiality, as the participants were promised before taking part in the interview. Numbers were used as symbols to refer to the student's university and the academic year in which he/she studies instead of using students' names. For example, the first number refers to the university in which that student belongs to, while the second number indicates to the level of the interviewed student. For example, (1.1.A) indicates that the student belongs to University of Tripoli and studies in the first year and the letter 'A' indicates that this student is one of two from the first year students who took part in the interview.

6.3.1 Students' Views towards the Current Assessment Practices

Through analysing data collected from the focus group interviews with students, it was apparent that students had different views towards the assessment practices employed for evaluating them. Sixteen interviewed students out of twenty-four who participated in the interviews thought that the current assessment practices employed by their teachers did not evaluate and reflect their real understanding, abilities and skills in the subject taught. One of the interviewed students commented about this issue saying:

"I have personal experience in a particular subject which I am more interested in than the other subjects. At the same time, I feel that I have a very good and deep understanding about all topics of this subject in comparison with other subjects. However, my scores in the exam do not reflect this understanding and this may be attributed to the way of evaluation followed by the teacher." (2.4.A)

Another student was not satisfied with the summative assessment as the main evaluation tool and stated that:

"For me as a student, I believe that summative assessment employed at our department does not evaluate my real abilities and skills. It does not reflect my real understanding about the subject. The main reason for this belief is that I always have good participation inside the classroom and I am active all the time. My performance in the class is always better than what I achieve in the formal examinations such as mid-term and final examinations. At the same time, other colleagues who are not active and do not interact with the teacher in the class, they can achieve high marks in the mid-term and the final examinations." (2.2.B)

Another student said that:

"The assessment methods do not evaluate the real abilities and skills because teachers limit the syllabus of the subject. For example, in a subject like speaking, the teacher gives students some topics to study and questions will be about these topics. Students will memorize these topics and answer them in the exam. So, this does not reflect the real abilities and skills of students in speaking subject." (3.3A)

All interviewed students also claimed that the current assessment practices depended on traditional assessment methods such as summative assessment, which had negative influences on their motivation and learning. This point of view was supported by

thirteen other students and one of them expressed her thoughts during the interview about how the current assessment practices affected her motivation to learn, saying:

"The teaching and assessment methods do not motivate me. It is simply because I am not involved in setting the learning objectives which concern me as a learner. When I achieve the goals that I aspire to learn, that will motivate me more than when someone else sets them for me and I am not interested in them." (1.3A)

The same opinion was confirmed by another participant who claimed that:

"The only method of assessment is a sheet of paper filled with questions to be answered by students with the purpose of achieving marks which enable them to pass the exam and go to the next academic year. We are given the corrected answer sheet without feedback and that is your mark. When I get a low mark, the teacher does not give feedback that shows my mistakes and how to overcome them in the future. This is one of the ways that would motivate me to work hard in the future." (3.4.B)

More than eighty percent of students who participated in this study considered that the current employed assessment practices had great effects on their learning goals as well as their future education and career. Twenty students, who representing 83% of the sample of this study, admitted that achieving high marks was the first goal of their priorities when taking any examination. They declared that their learning goals had changed during their study because the assessment methods employed at their departments had a crucial impact on their future education and career after graduation.

For example, one of these students asserted:

"The main goal that I aspire to achieve in every examination that I take is mainly to pass with high marks because that will help me to increase my total average, which will also help me a lot in the future. For example, I can easily be accepted by employers for any job I apply for." (2.1.A)

The same point of view was shared by another student who confirmed:

"The main goal from the assessment process, for me as a student is to improve my scores because that will help me after graduation to get a job or complete my postgraduate study." (1.4.B)

6.3.2 Students' Rationales for their Views towards the Assessment Practices

All of the students' views towards the current employed assessment practices had emerged as a result of many reasons. This section provides an outline of the main reasons that led students to adopt their views. For example, one of the main reasons that made ninety percent of the interviewed students not satisfied with using summative assessment as the main evaluation tool was that it did not help them to learn. They claimed that summative assessment was not usually followed by a constructive feedback, which was one of the important factors that would help them to improve their learning. Some participants expressed the following views:

"The common assessment method used by teachers in our department is summative assessment and it does not motivate me to learn because it is not usually followed by feedback that shows me my mistakes and how work to avoid them in the future." (2.2.B)

"Many teachers do not employ corrective feedback with students because that will take lecture time, which is limited. Therefore, students cannot discover their mistakes and that will affect learning." (1.2.A)

In the same vein, all of the interviewed students also mentioned another reason which is related to summative assessment objectives. According to students' views, summative assessment is not concerned with improving students' learning, but with evaluating what students achieved during the course. It should not be used as the only method of evaluation, as it does not give any motivation for learning and developing students' understanding and skills during lectures. One of the students who participated in this study said that:

"Summative assessment does not aim to develop our learning skills. Its main purpose is to evaluate what students have achieved during the course and measures if they are able to pass the exam and go to the next academic year."

For this reason, students believed that formative assessment should be employed, besides summative assessment, for motivational purposes, with the aim of improving

learning and developing teaching, as most participants stated. Two interviewed students who mentioned this issue said:

"I think that a good assessment is what measures the practical performance and knowledge for students, which reflects their real abilities and competence and this cannot be achieved by summative assessment. Therefore, this is what formative assessment does." (2.3.A)

"In the subjects that totally depend on formative assessments in evaluation like Speaking and Listening I can achieve high marks. However, in those subjects that depend totally on summative assessment as the main tool of evaluation, I always get low marks." (2.3.B)

As stated in the previous section (6.3.1), eighty percent of the interviewed students considered that the current assessment practices had great impact on their learning goals and future education and career. Therefore, students have made some reactions towards these effects.

6.3.3 Students' Reactions towards the Current Assessment Practices

The great emphasis among students with achieving high marks rather than acquiring information and knowledge was a reaction towards the dominance of high-stakes summative assessment. Students were worried throughout the period of their study about the total average which is usually affected by the results of the assessment process. All students thought that a high total average was the only way to continue their studies or get a job and the comments of the interviewed students below demonstrate this issue more clearly.

"The main goal that I aspire to achieve in every examination that I take is mainly to pass all examinations with high mark, because that will help me to increase my total average, which will also help me a lot in the future. For example, I can easily be accepted by employers for any job I apply for." (2.1.A)

"Before I came to college, my main aim was to acquire knowledge and improve my language skills and abilities. Now I am in the fourth year and the main aim is to graduate." (3.4A)

"Before I came to the university, my goal was to master English and it is still the same. However, to be honest I have added another aim, which is to get high scores." (2.4B)

As the time of lectures is limited and the number of students is large, students and teachers were unable to have enough chance to employ teaching and assessment methods which are centred on the students' participation in the class. For example, some of the students who participated in this study said that:

"We do not have enough chance to discuss topics and express our thoughts during the lecture. The main reason for that is the large numbers of students in the class, with a limited time for lectures. In this case the teacher cannot give enough time to students and as a result of this situation; teachers depend on a teacher-centred approach as a teaching method and summative assessment as an evaluation tool." (2.2.B)

"The subject of "Drama" is taught through sheets that students read and they memorize the events of the play, instead of watching these events in a film that facilitates understanding the events of the play." (3.3.B)

Lack of technological facilities in departments of English, such as language laboratories, data show devices and access to the internet was considered by the interviewed students as a main reason that caused many learning problems, especially with speaking and listening skills. Lack of technological facilities forced teachers and departments to employ certain teaching and assessment methods which were compatible with what was available in the college. This caused many learning problems for students, which teachers were unable to solve. One of the interviewed students expressed his view towards this issue during the interviews, stating:

"It is something normal to have obstacles in your study journey, but the real problem is when you as a student cannot overcome these problems. For example, one of the learning problems caused by the lack of technological facilities, which most students have suffered from, is related with the listening skill. Teachers cannot help students to solve these problems and overcome them because there are no laboratories that help students listen and learn this skill in a proper way. In addition to that, these obstacles in listening skill negatively influence the learning of the speaking skill, in that students are not able to speak and pronounce words properly because they do not have the chance to listen properly." (3.4.A)

6.4 Summary of the Chapter

This section presents the findings of this chapter obtained from the qualitative data analysis of fourteen semi-structured interviews with teachers as well as three focus group interviews with students in three Libyan universities. The findings discussed in this chapter are based on addressing the research questions of this study stated in the first chapter.

Firstly, regarding the first sub-research question of the study "What are the current teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do they employ these practices?", the findings have shown that 10 interviewed teachers out of fourteen 71% employed various teaching practices that varied between activities and methods which are centred either on teachers or on students as shown in Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1. The roles of the teacher and students in the implementation of the current teaching practices were influenced by various circumstances and reasons, such as students' educational level, subject taught, teaching objectives, technological facilities and students' culture. In addition to that, the findings revealed that twelve participants in this study out of fourteen, (86%) of the sample, preferred employing teaching practices centred on students as the main teaching method. Likewise, the interviewed teachers also reported employing mixed assessment practices, as shown in Table 6.2, with great emphasis on summative assessment practices in comparison with formative assessment practices. The findings of data analysis indicated that high stakes summative assessment practices in the form of mid-term and final examinations were employed as a compulsory evaluation tool by all participants, due to the regulations imposed by their educational institutions.

Secondly, regarding the second sub-research question of the study, "What views do teachers hold towards the current assessment practices they employ at Libyan universities; why do they hold these views and how are these views translated into

practice?", the data analysis showed that the interviewed teachers shared similar views towards the current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities. The prevailing belief among the interviewed teachers was that there is not a reasonable balance between the use of summative assessment practices and other formative assessment practices. They thought that summative assessment practices employed at Libyan universities only evaluative purposes and did not support the teaching and learning process. Therefore, all of the interviewed teachers believed that they should not be employed as the only method of assessment and other alternative assessment methods, such as formative assessment practices, should play a bigger role in the assessment process. The main reasons behind these beliefs were related to the policy of the educational institutions, the large number of students, lack of technological facilities as well as teachers' and students' traditional views towards particular formative assessment practices such as peer and self-assessments.

Thirdly, regarding the third sub-research question of this study, "What are the main effects of the current assessment practices on the teaching and learning process; why are these effects there and how do teachers deal with them?", the results of data analysis have also revealed that the current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities led to some negative and positive washback effects on the educational process. The objectives of the assessment process, which were mainly based on evaluative purposes, were said to have resulted in negative washback effects, which in turn influenced students' learning objectives. In other words, students became more concerned with passing the examinations rather than improving their real learning skills and abilities. In addition to that, the negative washback effects extended to teaching methods and the content of the syllabus. On the other hand, the assessment practices also resulted in positive washback effects that were considered by the interviewed teachers as a contributing factor in supporting and improving the educational process. The

interviewed teachers employed some assessment practices such as weekly quizzes, direct observation, peer and self-assessment, constructive feedback, mid-term and final examinations for pedagogical purposes such as motivating students, diagnosing their learning problems, and improving the content of the syllabus and teaching methods.

Finally, regarding the fourth sub-research question of the study, "What views do students have towards the current assessment practices; why do they have these views and how do they respond to them?", the findings of the data analysis of the students' focus group interviews revealed that all of the interviewed students shared similar views to teachers towards the current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities. Students believed that the current assessment practices did not evaluate and reflect their real understanding, abilities and skills in the subjects taught because they were based on traditional assessment methods such as summative assessment. The main reasons for holding these views by students were that summative assessment practices did not motivate them to learn and did not help them to achieve their learning objectives.

The findings obtained from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data will be discussed in more detail in the next chapters in order to integrate and triangulate these findings to provide possible answers to the research questions.

Chapter Seven: General Discussion

7.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter One, this study investigates the impact of the assessment practices employed in Libyan university classrooms. The key findings that emerged from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis are discussed in the light of the major research questions posed in this study and possible explanations for them are provided. This chapter is divided into four main sections. Section one discusses the main teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers in their classes. After that, the discussion is focused on the reasons that affected teachers' implementation of the teaching and assessment practices, followed by their application to teaching and assessment practices. Section two is devoted to discussing teachers' views and attitudes towards the current assessment practices. This is followed by section three, which discusses the assessment impact (washback effect) on the current educational process. In the final section, the students' views towards the current assessment practices employed by their teachers are discussed.

It is worth mentioning here that the quantitative and qualitative findings obtained from Chapters Five and Six will be discussed in more detail in this chapter in order to triangulate these findings in the light of the literature review and the research questions. Each research question will be presented at the beginning of each section of this chapter, followed by a detailed discussion of the relevant findings from teachers' responses to the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with teachers. In addition to that, the findings of previous studies, relevant to the findings of this study, whenever applicable, will be presented. The main and sub-research questions on which the discussion will be based in this chapter are as follows:

MRQ - What are the teachers and students' views towards the impact of the current assessment practices on their teaching and learning of EFL in the higher education sector in Libya?

SRQ 1- What are the current EFL teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do they employ these practices?

SRQ 2- What views do teachers hold towards the current EFL assessment practices they employ at Libyan universities; why do they hold these views and how are they translated into practice?

SRQ 3- What are the main effects of the current assessment practices on the teaching and learning of EFL; why are these effects there and how do teachers deal with them?

SRQ 4- What views do students have towards the current assessment practices; why do they have these views and how do they deal with them?

The main findings in relation to the above research questions are outlined in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7. 1: the main findings of quantitative and qualitative analysis

Research Questions	Findings of Quantitative Analysis	Findings of Qualitative Analysis
SRQ - 1	Teachers' Questionnaire Responses	Teachers' Semi-Structured Interview Responses
	<p>1- Most teaching practices are centred on teachers and students' interaction in the class.</p> <p>2- Students are given regular opportunities for participation, discussion and motivation in the class.</p> <p>3- The educational goals are provided from the initial lectures of the course.</p> <p>4- Written and oral feedback are provided after most assessment activities.</p> <p>5- Ongoing assessment activities are used throughout the course to diagnose students' learning strengths and weaknesses.</p>	<p>1- Few interviewed teachers employed teaching practices that are mainly centred on teachers.</p> <p>2- Few interviewed teachers employed teaching practices that are mainly centred on students.</p> <p>3- Most interviewed teachers employed teaching practices that are centred on the interactions between both teachers and students.</p> <p>4- All interviewed teachers employed summative assessment practices for evaluative purposes.</p> <p>5- All interviewed teachers, to some extent, employed formative assessment practices.</p>

	<p>6- Teachers encourage peer and self-assessment and use the outcomes to motivate learning.</p>	<p>6- All interviewed teachers employed constructive feedback.</p> <p>7- 36% of the interviewed teachers employed peer assessment.</p> <p>8- 21% of the interviewed teachers employed self-assessment.</p> <p>9- 36% of the interviewed teachers employed direct observation of their students' performance.</p>
SRQ - 2		Teachers' Semi-Structured Interview Responses
		<p>1- Many teachers believe that there is not a reasonable balance between the use of summative assessment practices and formative assessment practices.</p> <p>2- They think that summative assessment practices employed at Libyan universities are mainly based on evaluative purposes and do not support the teaching and learning process.</p> <p>3- Alternative assessment methods such as formative assessment practices should play a bigger role in the assessment process.</p> <p>4- The main reasons behind the current practices are related to the policy of the educational institutions, large numbers of students, the mark distribution system, a lack, of educational resources as well as teachers and students' traditional views towards particular formative assessment practices such as peer and self-assessments.</p>
SRQ - 3		Teachers' Semi-Structured Interview Responses
		<p>1- The current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities have led to some negative and positive washback effects on the educational process.</p> <p>2- The objectives of the assessment process, which are mainly based on evaluative purposes, have resulted in negative washback effects which, in turn, have influenced students' learning objectives.</p> <p>3- The negative washback effects have extended to teaching methods and the content of the syllabus.</p> <p>4- The formative assessment practices have also resulted in positive washback effects that were considered by the interviewed teachers as contributing factors in supporting and improving the educational process.</p> <p>5- The main reasons behind these washback</p>

		effects are attributed to the policy of the educational institutions, large numbers of students, lack of educational resources as well as teachers traditional views towards summative assessment practices and particular formative assessment practices such as peer and self-assessments.
SRQ - 4		Students' Focus Group Interview Responses
		<p>1- Students believe that the current assessment practices do not evaluate and reflect their real understanding, abilities and skills in the subjects taught because they are commonly based on traditional assessment methods such as summative assessment.</p> <p>2- The main reasons for students holding these views are that summative assessment practices do not motivate them to learn and do not help them to achieve their current and future learning objectives.</p> <p>3- The main reactions taken by students towards these assessment practices is that they become more concerned with passing the examinations and achieving high marks, rather than acquiring knowledge.</p>

7.2 Teaching and Assessment Practices

This section reviews the teaching and assessment practices in the light of the first sub-research question posed in Chapter One, namely: “What are the current teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do they employ these practices?” The findings of quantitative and qualitative analysis in this section will be discussed, for teaching and assessment practices in turn, in the following sub-sections.

7.2.1 The current teaching practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities

As the teaching practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities may be influenced by variety of factors, assessment practices being one such factor, this section sheds light on the main teaching practices employed by teachers in order to provide a detailed answer to the first part of the first sub-research question. To some extent, the findings from the teachers’ questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with teachers

have revealed that most teachers who participated in this study claimed to have employed similar teaching practices when teaching their students, as can be seen in Table 5.3 in Chapter Five and Table 6.1 in Chapter Six. The teaching practices, as teachers claimed, were mainly based on teachers' and students' involvement and interaction in most teaching practices and activities employed in the classroom. In other words, the teaching practices, as claimed by teachers, fluctuated between student-centred and teacher-centred teaching instruction. Figure 7.1 provides an outline of the main teaching practices employed inside the classroom that teachers mentioned in their responses during the interview sessions.

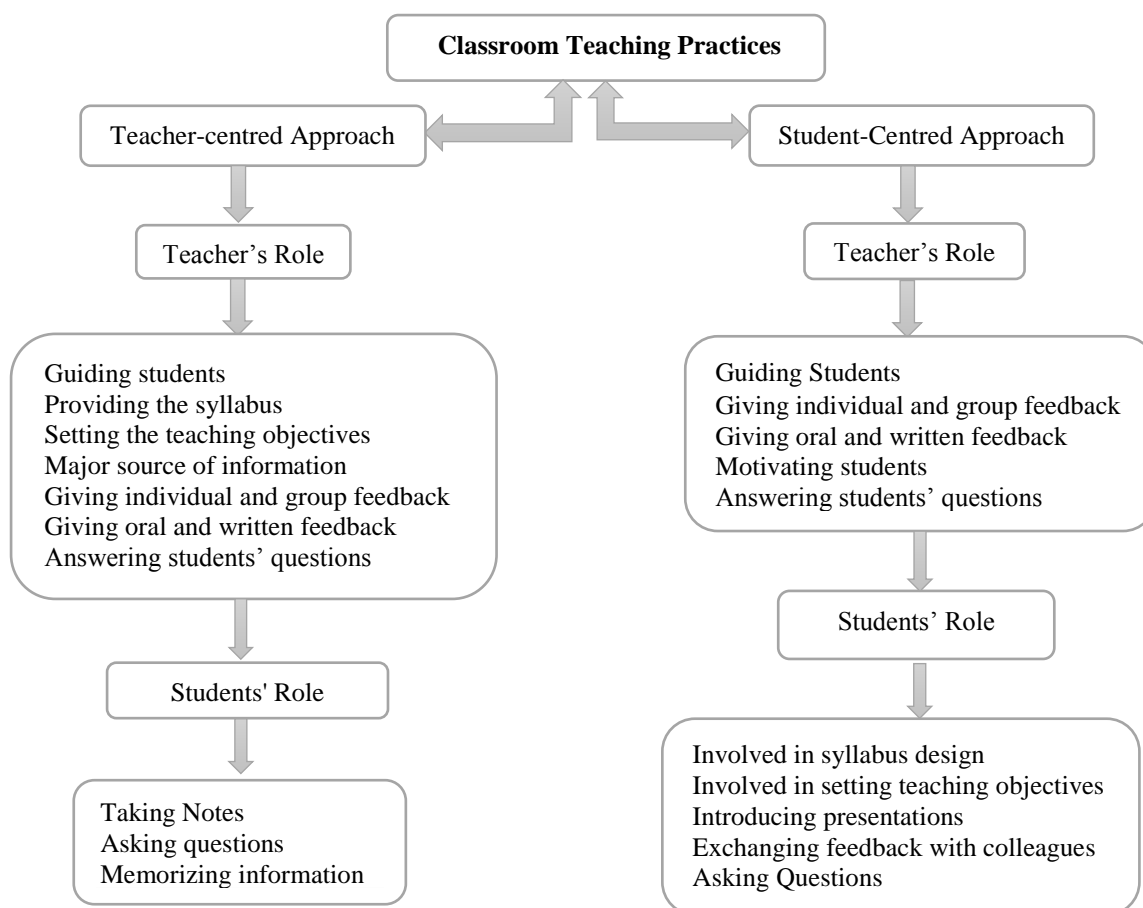


Figure 7.1 Classroom Teaching Practices

In the teacher-centred approach, as can be seen from Figure 7.1, most teaching practices in the classroom were centred on the teacher, who was the main source of information and knowledge. In addition to that, the teacher was responsible for providing students with the required teaching objectives and activities, in order to help students to learn. In other words, students were passive and just learned what the teacher decided inside the classroom. In the second approach, as teachers claimed, most teaching practices were centred on the students, who had a major role inside the classroom. In this approach, students were more responsible for their learning and the teacher's role was restricted to being a guide who provided students with the feedback they needed.

Most teachers indicated that they depended mainly on student-centred instruction as a teaching method, except for some intervention from teachers when needed. Teachers claimed that they worked as the only source of information and knowledge in the class, just only when students' background about the subject was limited or students had suffered from some learning problems at previous stages of their education. Teachers also reported that they played this role in teaching because of the lack of the required teaching aids, such as internet access, data show, computers and language laboratories in their classes. The absence of these educational facilities made it difficult to engage students in the process of education especially in subjects like speaking, listening, phonetics and drama, as teachers claimed. Therefore, teachers needed to work as the main source of information and knowledge in the class.

Most teachers who participated in this study claimed that they employed teaching practices centred on students as shown in Figure 7.1 rather than using teaching practices based on the traditional method, i.e. teacher-centred instruction. A few teachers, who preferred to use the traditional teaching method in which they were the source of information and knowledge, while students' role in the educational process was passive. The findings also showed that teachers claimed a greater tendency to employ teaching

practices that support learning autonomy. These findings correspond with those of other studies in the literature. Approaches that involve students taking greater responsibility for their learning have been widely employed and recommended by other educationalists and researchers under the name of “learner autonomy”. This approach to learning is defined in the literature as requiring learners to have “some control over their learning process” (Palfreyman, 2001: 5). The finding also corresponds with Little’s argument regarding learner autonomy, which he described as “the product of an interactive process in which the teacher gradually enlarges the scope of her learners’ autonomy by gradually allowing them more control of the process and content of their learning” (Little, 2007: 26). This method of teaching (i.e learner autonomy) has been applied in other contexts in the higher education sector, for example, at the University of Warwick in The UK by Ushioda et al (2011).

7.2.2 Assessment Practices Employed by Teachers at Libyan Universities

As stated in the literature reviewed in Chapter Three, many research studies have mentioned two main types of assessment practices that are usually employed by teachers, namely assessment for learning (formative assessment) and assessment of learning (summative assessment). For instance, Dunn and Mulvenon (2009) and Wininger (2005) and many other scholars have emphasized the important role of these two kinds of assessment to the educational process and how they are related to each other. Participants of this study also confirmed that they employed both methods of assessment practices which are similar to what has been mentioned by other studies in the literature. These assessment methods can be clearly seen in the participants’ questionnaire and interviews responses in Table 5.4 in Chapter Five and Table 6.2 in Chapter Six. Both Tables showed that the interviewed teachers in this study employed mixed assessment practices such as summative and formative assessment practices to varying degrees, during the semester or the academic year. As teachers claimed during

the interview sessions, they employed summative assessment practices as mid-term and final examinations at the middle and the end of the semester or academic year. However, they were employed only as evaluative tools to measure their students' achievements within the course for the purpose of grading, classification or certification. Despite the importance of this method of assessment, summative assessment, to the educational process as teachers claimed, the qualitative data analysis from the semi-structured interviews have demonstrated dominance of summative assessment practices over formative assessment practices. In a similar way to many other educationalists in the reviewed literature, teachers involved in this study criticized this dominance of summative assessment practices over other methods of assessment. The main reason for this criticism of the summative assessment practices is that they are not mainly oriented to support the teaching and learning practices in the classroom. For instance, Moneer has the same belief like other participants of this study about the excessive use of summative assessment and declared:

“Unfortunately, it [summative assessment] is the main tool of evaluation but I am not satisfied with this strategy of assessment and if the decision were mine, I would use formative assessment as the dominant assessment method because it is very useful for supporting the teaching and learning process.”

Despite the significant role of summative assessment (assessment of learning) for the educational process, it has been criticised by many researchers in the field of education, such as Harlen (2005); McDowell and Montgomery (2013) and Williams (2014). This criticism is usually related to the objectives of summative assessment practices and its negative side effects on the educational process students' motivation for learning.

Teacher-participants of this study stated several reasons why summative assessment was employed as the main evaluative tool for the assessment process at their educational institutions. Most of these reasons were related to the context in which the educational process is conducted. For example, the large numbers of students in the

classroom and the limited number of teaching hours during the course made teachers unable to employ some important formative assessment practices, such as constructive feedback, in their classes. Teachers' responses to the interview questions show that large numbers of students in the classroom prevented them from providing individual feedback to each student. The findings of this study regarding the negative impact of large numbers of students on the assessment and education process are consistent with numerous studies in the literature (Monks & Schmidt, 2010; Bedard & Kuhn, 2008; Walia, 2008; Kokkelenberg et al, 2008 and Bandiera et al, 2009).

In addition, Table 5.6 in the quantitative data analysis chapter and teachers' interview responses has demonstrated that the lack of educational resources and facilities such as computers, internet access and language laboratories negatively influenced their teaching and assessment practices. This impact, as teachers claimed, was one of the main reasons that constrained their implementation of formative assessment practices in their classes and, in turn, increased the use of summative assessment practices.

A further constraint claimed by teachers was the orientation of their universities towards summative assessment, and they cited two main reasons. The first one is referred to the easy way of conducting such assessment practices in the light of the current conditions of the educational process which cannot provide the simple educational resources and facilities to teachers and students inside the classrooms. Teachers can undertake this kind of assessment in a short period of time and with less effort, as it is not a continuous assessment. The second reason is a belief that summative assessment practices can produce more objective and reliable results about students' achievements during the course, compared with formative assessment practices. Other reasons, which are related to teachers' and students' views and attitudes, will be discussed in the next sub-sections.

7.3 Teachers' Views and Attitudes towards the Assessment Practices

This section discusses the findings related to the teachers' views and attitudes towards the assessment practices in the light of the second sub-research question, namely: “What views do teachers hold towards the current assessment practices they employ at Libyan universities; why do they hold these views and how are they translated into practice?” The findings of the qualitative data analysis revealed that teachers had several and varied views and attitudes towards assessment practices which they employed. The prevailing belief among teachers is that there was no a reasonable balance between the implementation of summative assessment and other alternative assessment practices. These views indicate that this kind of assessment does not adequately help to evaluate students' real skills and abilities. Teachers expressed the belief that summative assessment practices cannot be incorporated in the education of EFL in order to improve students' skills and abilities in the target language. The main reason behind this point of view, as the interviewed teachers claimed, appears to be that summative assessment practices have high-stakes impact on teachers and students alike. Therefore, teachers claimed that the summative assessments employed at the three universities involved in this study were mainly used for grading, classification and certification purposes. This method of assessment, as participants think, is high-stakes assessment which usually has current and future effects on students and other stakeholders of the educational process. The general point of view expressed by teachers about this kind of assessment is that it can have negative impact on teaching methods and students' learning strategies and techniques, as will be discussed later in more details in section 7.4 in this chapter. This point of view among teacher-participants of this study seems to be resonant to some extent with other educationalists' views towards summative assessment practices and their impact on the teaching and learning process. For example, Harlen (2005) pointed out that assessment and testing are described as *high stakes* whenever the results of the

tests are used to make important decisions that influence the status and future of students, teachers and educational institutions. The nature of high stakes assessment may lead to negative impact on students' motivation for learning, teaching methodology and the content of the syllabus (Harlen & Deakin, 2003; Au, 2007). In this respect, Muñoz and Álvarez, (2010: 34) argued that "high-stakes tests have more power to modify teacher and learner behaviour whereas low stakes tests, such as classroom-based assessment, are not central to decision-making and therefore have fewer consequences". The main source of this power that high-stakes assessment has on teaching and learning as Muñoz and Álvarez (ibid: 33) claim is based on "important educational and professional decisions, such as admissions, graduation, employment, or promotions, and therefore affect people's futures."

On the other hand, the teachers seemed to have positive views towards formative assessment practices. They considered that formative assessment can be useful for diagnosing teaching and learning problems and supporting the educational process in general. In addition to that, this belief can be clearly seen reflected in their classroom assessment practices in Table 5.4 in Chapter Five and Table 6.2 in Chapter Six. The findings obtained from the qualitative data analysis showed that all teachers employed this method of assessment, besides summative assessment, in their classrooms as a personal choice, because they believed it could support their teaching.

The findings of this study also disclosed that teachers had positive views towards different forms of formative assessment practices, such as constructive feedback, direct observation, peer and self-assessment. These views were based on teachers' belief that these forms of formative assessment could help, to a great extent, to improve their teaching practices and enhance their students' learning skills, strategies and abilities. This belief, expressed by teachers involved in this study, towards the importance of formative assessment practices seems to be consistent with many other studies in the

literature during the last three decades. The idea that assessment can be used to improve teaching methods and learning skills has been widely investigated during the last three decades since Black and Wiliam's (1998a) extensive review of research on classroom formative assessment practices. Most of these studies investigated the impact of different forms of formative assessment on teaching and learning process. The findings suggested that formative assessment practices can positively promote teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Halen, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Heritage, 2010; Fluckiger, et al. 2010; Swaffield, 2011; So & Lee, 2011; Jonsson et al. 2014; Yüksel & Gündüz, 2017).

In contrast to these positive views towards formative assessment, the findings of the qualitative analysis for this study revealed that just five teachers (36%) from the whole sample claimed to employ peer assessment. While just three interviewed teachers (21%) out of fourteen teacher-participants claimed to employ self-assessment inside the classroom as demonstrated in Table 6.2. The main reason why some teachers avoid peer assessment, self-assessment and other formative assessment practices is related to their different views that they hold about the various formative assessment methods.

The findings, obtained from the qualitative data analysis, have demonstrated that some teachers, representing 50% of the sample in this study had negative views towards peer and self-assessment. The main reasons that caused teachers have these views are mainly related to the students themselves who will be the main element in this assessment process. For example, some interviewed teachers reported that their students' language proficiency level and background did not enable them to practise these two forms of formative assessment. They thought that their students were not competent to assess themselves or their peers, as students are not trained on such forms of assessment at previous stages of their education. In addition to that, these teachers would not trust their students' ability to practise these forms of assessment. The teachers believed that

students would not be able to produce objective assessments of their educational performance, or even their peers' performance. This issue was reported by the interviewed teachers such as Rahaf who commented that:

"We should consider the previous background of the students who grew up with a very systematic approach in which everything was controlled and rule governed. Definitely, students are influenced [by the current assessment methods] because they are used to being assessed in very traditional ways not at the university level but even in secondary school."

Students' educational background, shown in this study to have an impact on peer and self-assessment, was considered in Weir's (2005) socio-cognitive framework as one of the experiential characteristics of the test takers. These characteristics, as claimed by Weir, can be one of the factors that influence the validity of the assessment and testing processes. Weir (2005: 54) suggests that "every attempt should be made to ensure that candidates are familiar with the task type and other environment features before sitting the test proper". Therefore, peer and self-assessment practices at the Libyan universities, in the current circumstances, cannot be considered as fair and valid. Students would need to be trained and familiarised with these forms of assessment practices in early educational stages, for such practices to be valid for use at university level.

The findings of this study regarding teachers' views and attitudes towards peer and self-assessment appear to be incompatible with views and findings stated in previous studies, where many commentators have asserted the importance of these two forms of assessment to the students' motivation and the improvement of their educational abilities and skills (Black et al., 2004; Noonan & Duncan, 2005; Kumar, 2013). In contrast to the findings of this study, in which teachers doubted the feasibility of peer and self-assessment, the findings of a survey study conducted by Noonan and Duncan (2005: 7) in Western Canada were completely different. They declared that:

"The results of this study have indicated that peer and self-assessment are viewed positively across subject areas, which suggests that there is potential

for a greater applicability of these strategies than may be generally accepted by educators.”

Noonan and Duncan (ibid) also argued that peer and self-assessment can enhance learning in four different ways. Peer and self-assessment may be employed to:

1. Increase student involvement in learning processes (e.g. students assume teaching responsibilities);
2. Increase social interactions and trust in others;
3. Facilitate individual feedback;
4. Focus students on the process rather than the product.

In the same vein, Black et al (2004) suggested that self-assessment may help learners to understand the learning goals and then facilitate the achievement of these learning goals. In another separate study, Black et al (2003) argued that some students may be more willing to discuss their comments and learning activities with their peers rather than their teachers which, in turn, may promote their motivation to learn.

7.4 Assessment Impact on the Educational Process (Washback Effects)

This section discusses the findings related to the assessment impact on the educational process in the light of the third sub-research question, namely: “What are the main effects of the current assessment practices on the teaching and learning EFL; why are these effects there and how do teachers deal with them?”

Some previous studies in the reviewed literature indicated that different assessment practices can have positive and negative impacts on teaching and learning practices employed in the classroom (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; DeLuca et al. 2015; McDowell & Montgomery, 2013; Adnan & Mahmood, 2014; Andrews, 2004; Qi, 2005). The assessment practices can have positive impact when they support and improve teaching and learning practices and can have negative impact when they impede teaching and

learning practices. There is a consensus among researchers in viewing washback as any effects — positive or negative, intended or unintended — that assessment practices can have on teaching and learning and all stakeholders involved in this process.

Therefore, a detailed discussion to the findings of this research study regarding this impact (washback effect) on the teaching and learning practices at Libyan universities' classrooms will be addressed in this section. The findings will be discussed in the light of the third sub-research question posed in Chapter One, namely: what are the main effects of the current assessment practices on the teaching and learning process; why are these effects there and how do teachers deal with them? The findings obtained from the qualitative analysis in this study indicated that the assessment practices employed in the Libyan universities have a significant impact on the outcomes of the educational process, as teacher-participants claimed. In some cases, this impact was positive and in other cases it was negative.

7.4.1 Negative Washback Effects

The findings of the qualitative data analysis in section 6.2.3.1 in Chapter Six indicated that the assessment orientation of this sample of Libyan universities has resulted in negative effects on the educational outcomes. For instance, the education and assessment policy adopted by these Libyan universities required that students' achievement and performance during the course should be assessed by using two formal compulsory examinations, usually mid-term and a final examination. Here, the main assessment objectives are based on grading, classification or certification objectives as the interviewed teachers in this study claimed. This orientation resulted in high stakes summative assessments being used as the main assessment tool for evaluating students' educational achievement especially with large numbers of students and limited teaching time. The orientation had a great impact on students' future education and career as well as teachers' educational reputation have a negative influence on the learning and

teaching practices. The effect of this negative washback was that students adapted and modified their learning practice, and teachers modified not only their teaching but even the content of the syllabus taught, to meet the objectives of the assessment process, which exists mainly for grading and certification purposes. There was a concern on the part of students and their teachers, to maximise the scores achieved in the mid-term and final examinations, even if they do not reflect the students' real learning skills and competence. As the interviewed teachers claimed, this assessment strategy had negatively affected the educational objectives of students. Students modified their learning strategies to meet the objectives of the assessment process. For instance, some students depended on memorizing the information required for passing the examination, rather than understanding what was taught so they could use it beyond the exam. For this reason, teachers noticed that some of their students were not able to apply what they had learnt during previous educational stages. Therefore, teachers believed that these negative effects of assessment process might extend beyond students' graduation and could influence any further education or their future career. Such findings as those stated above are consistent to some extent with the findings of the review conducted by Au (2007: 264) in which he reviewed the findings of 49 qualitative studies regarding the effects of high-stakes assessment on education and the content of the syllabus. Au outlined the findings of the all studies that he reviewed, saying:

“Tests have the predominant effect of narrowing curricular content to those subjects included in the tests, resulting in the increased fragmentation of knowledge forms into bits and pieces learned for the sake of the tests themselves, and compelling teachers to use more lecture-based, teacher-centered pedagogies.”

According to the findings stated above, there is a great possibility that the assessment practices employed at Libyan universities, and their outcomes have real problems in relation to their consequential validity, highlighted by Weir (2005) in the socio-

cognitive framework. Weir (2005: 266) mentioned this issue in his framework and argued that:

"We also need to consider the washback validity of the tests we develop or enter students for. This is primarily concerned with the effects of a test on what goes on in the preparation for the test and accordingly is likely to be an important aspect of test impact."

Weir (2005) pointed to the psychological characteristics of the test takers as one of the crucial factors that may influence the validity of the test. The findings mentioned above in this section demonstrated that the nature and objectives of the assessment practices employed at Libyan universities can have a negative influence on the psychological characteristics of the test takers. The extreme emphasis on evaluating students' achievement by mid-term and final examinations and the importance of their scores and outcomes to students' future education and career may negatively influence the students' motivation for learning. The findings showed that most of the teaching and learning methods are devoted to ensuring students pass these tests with high scores. Therefore, the mid-term and final examinations employed at Libyan universities in the form of high stakes summative assessment may be invalid because of their negative impact on the students' motivation for learning. It is evident from the findings of this study that high stakes summative assessment employed at Libyan universities can have clear influence on the criterion-related validity evidence. As highlighted by Weir (2005) a test is said to have criterion-related validity if it can predict future performance in the ability being tested. The scores and outcomes of the assessment at Libyan universities do not reflect students' real language competence, compared with their future performance in the target language. Participants noticed this issue and one of them pointed out that:

"I noticed that the information and knowledge taught during the previous course are easily forgotten by students during the next educational stage because of their extreme concern about passing the exam rather than acquiring new skills and knowledge. The students' objective is to pass the exam, which is totally different from mine."

Teachers were also influenced by the outcomes of the assessment process. For example, teachers feel responsibility towards their departments, especially when their students keep getting low marks in the same subject, while the same students score high marks in the subjects taught by other teachers (see section 6.2.3.1). This may influence teachers' professional reputation, and as a reaction on the part of teachers, they may make some modifications to their teaching methods or the content of the syllabus to meet the assessment criteria and objectives. These findings reinforce the complexity of the washback phenomenon raised by other studies in the literature, such as those reviewed in Section 3.6.3 in the literature review chapter in this study. The findings of this study are also compatible with other findings mentioned by Tsagari (2011) in relation to the influence of the First Certificate in English (FCE) exam on teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices. She found that teachers showed a great deal of anxiety, fear and pressure due to the high-stakes nature of the FCE exam, as they felt that their professional performance was judged by their students' test scores.

On the other hand, the findings of this study also revealed that the assessment practices also had some positive effects on the teaching and learning practices which contributed significantly in improving the educational process and students' motivation. These positive effects are discussed in more detail in the following section.

7.4.2 Positive Washback Effects

The findings of the analysed quantitative and qualitative data indicated that teachers who participated in this research study believed that formative assessment practices can generate more positive effects on the educational process than summative assessment can. As discussed in section 7.3, teachers' positive views towards the different forms of formative assessment resulted in a great tendency on the part of teachers to employ some of these forms, despite the dominance of the summative assessment practices. Even those teachers who did not employ peer and self-assessment in their classes still

had positive views towards these two forms of assessment but the surrounding circumstances did not give them the opportunity to practise peer and self-assessment. The responses of the interviewed teachers indicated that the different forms of formative assessment had positive effects on the teaching and learning practices. Most participants of this study reported that they employed formative assessment practices as means to improve and support their teaching objectives and methods, to generate positive educational effects. For example, teachers noticed positive effects when employing direct observation for their students' performance or providing feedback after assessment activities. Through these two formative assessment forms, teachers could monitor their students' performance and understanding of the information and knowledge taught. In addition to that the results obtained from the formal or informal assessment practices employed in the classroom can demonstrate the efficiency of the teaching and assessment methods and objectives. The assessment outcomes played a significant role to help teachers discover any defect in their teaching and assessment methods and set the required remedies to improve them in the future. The findings mentioned above seem to resonate with other findings of previous studies in the reviewed literature as stated in the previous sections of this chapter.

The findings also revealed that some diagnostic tests that teachers conduct at early stages of the course had some positive effects, which teachers exploited to learn their students' learning needs, as well as their individual differences. Through these diagnostic tests, as teachers claimed, they could make some modifications to the content of the syllabus, their teaching methods and the educational and assessment objectives, to meet their students' current competence and background in the subject taught.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the constructive feedback which teachers gave after assessment activities. Constructive feedback, as teachers claimed, enables students to understand the topics taught more easily, which improves and

accelerates their learning. It enabled teachers to direct students to learn from the mistakes they made during some assessment activity, to increase self-confidence and give them more motivation and engagement to students for learning. The interviewed teachers indicated that they gave their students the required feedback in a variety of forms, either individually or in groups, after written and oral examinations, direct observation, oral discussions, peer or self-assessment. The findings indicated that feedback can positively contribute to produce better learning and echo the results of other studies conducted by researchers such as (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hounsell, 2007; Shute, 2007; Fluckiger et al., 2010; Carless et al., 2011). All these researchers discussed the importance of feedback as a key strategy to successful teaching and learning in the field of formative assessment in recent decades. The results of their studies indicate that formative feedback is a key element and one of the main features of formative assessment on which teachers and students need to focus in order to improve the quality of their teaching and learning (see 3.3.1.1 for more details).

The findings of this study provide evidence for positive effects of feedback on students' performance and learning improvement. They did not show any negative effects that feedback might have on students' learning, such as have been reported by other studies in the reviewed literature (Black et al., 2002; Goodman et al, 2004; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Swaffield, 2011). Black et al. (2002) argued that marks which are given to students as feedback on their performance in a particular examination may lead to negative effects, particularly for those students who scored low marks. In other words, these students with low scores may think that their weak learning ability was the reason behind their poor success. A study by Goodman et al (2004) investigated the claim that increasing feedback specificity improves performance and learning. They argued that increasing feedback specificity is useful at initial stages of performance but it may

negatively reflect on the creativity and exploration of students in later, more independent learning stages.

Participants mentioned constraints which in some cases made the feedback process more difficult. Teachers confirmed the positive impact and effectiveness of the feedback they provided to their students and how that enabled students to improve their learning and understanding. However, these teachers have also acknowledged that they were tied by the large numbers of students in the class, limited teaching time and lack of educational resources which, sometimes, made individual feedback impossible.

7.4.3 Reasons for the Assessment Impact

The findings of both the quantitative and qualitative analysis indicated factors associated with negative and positive effects of the assessment on educational process. Teachers' responses to the questionnaire and interview questions indicated that the large numbers of students, lack of educational resources and insufficient teaching time were among the main reasons that resulted in negative effects of assessment on teaching and learning practices. It was evident from the teachers' responses to the interview questions that the implementation of formative assessment practices was not an easy task with large numbers of students, and very limited time. For instance, giving individual feedback to students in a classroom with more than forty students during a limited teaching time, will negatively affect the contents of the syllabus that should be covered during the course. In addition, teachers claimed that lack of the educational resources reduced the chance of using formative assessment practices. All these reasons, according to the interviewed teachers, constrained their use of alternative assessment practices. The decision makers in the educational institutions and teachers had selected summative assessment practices to assess students as it is the most efficient assessment method in such an educational environment. Summative assessment practices in the

form of mid-term and final examinations could be employed more easily as a tool for measurement of students' achievement in a short time and for large numbers of students.

According to this educational and assessment context at the Libyan universities mentioned above, context validity as one of the essential aspects of the socio-cognitive framework is questioned. The interviewed participants, who took part in this study, mentioned several reasons related to the educational context that made them unable to employ assessment practices that could help in improving the validity of their tests. For instance, teachers adopted high stakes examinations to evaluate their students because of the regulations of their educational institutions, the large number of students, limited teaching time and educational resources. One participant of the qualitative study admitted this fact and said:

"We do not have a language lab to teach listening skill in a proper way. This will encourage using summative assessment methods because there are no facilities for ongoing assessment, especially in a subject like listening."

Another teacher said:

"I depend on summative assessment practices as the main tool to evaluate my students because I have to follow the rules of the educational institution in which I work. This is the traditional way of assessment that we employ due to the big numbers of students. We have in some classes 70 students. I remember in an oral exam that I examined 103 students in a very limited time with just one colleague."

As Weir (2005) argues, task setting and task administration are considered as important aspects of the context validity. The findings of this study revealed that the task setting and task administration for testing students' listening and speaking skills cannot provide context validity evidence which reflects the students' real competence in these skills. The way in which the test is administered, especially for subjects related to speaking and listening skills, can have a great impact on the reliability and validity when testing these skills. Weir (2005: 82) highlighted this issue and argued that "if the test is not well administered, unreliable results may occur". Therefore, to increase the context validity

of the test outcomes for a skill like listening, test administrators should ensure that the room of the test is suitably equipped with the required equipment before the test takes place (Weir, 2005).

The grading system and the way of distributing marks was considered by some participants of this study as among the main reasons that caused the assessment impact on the teaching and learning process. Teachers who employed both assessment methods, namely, summative and formative assessment, acknowledged that most marks were allocated to summative assessment practices. This system made students more concerned with an assessment method through which they could achieve marks that increased their total average and led them to ignore other assessment methods that may be more beneficial to their learning. The main reason for this system was the regulations of the educational institutions, as participants claimed.

The absence of training courses and workshops that would help teachers to update their professional knowledge about the impact of assessment practices on their teaching methods and students' learning strategies was among the reasons that essentially affected the education and assessment processes. Teacher-participants of this study mentioned several reasons that, together, reduced their opportunities to attend such useful workshops and training courses. The findings of the qualitative analysis showed that 85% of teacher-participants admitted that they had not attended any workshops on assessment in the educational process. They also had not received any training courses about employing assessment practices to improve the teaching and learning process. Participants attributed this to the negative role of their educational institutions and departments' administration. Libyan universities do not have any plan for organizing important and useful training events for teachers such as academic workshops and training courses. These findings, in terms of the lack of assessment training courses and developing the language assessment literacy of teachers, corroborate the findings

reported by other studies in the literature in Section 3.2.5 such as Vogt and Tsagari (2014) and Lam (2015).

7.5 Students' Views towards the Assessment Practices

This section discusses the students' views towards the assessment practices and objectives employed to assess them and how they engaged with this process of assessment. The findings will be discussed in the light of the fourth sub-research question posed in Chapter One, namely: "What views do students have towards the current assessment practices; why do they have these views and how do they deal with them?" The findings of the second phase of the qualitative data analysis in Chapter Six have shown that students have different views towards the assessment practices employed by their teachers and the educational institutions in which they study.

The findings make clear that most students, (sixteen students, 66%), involved in this study thought that the current assessment practices employed by their teachers did not evaluate and reflect their real understanding, abilities and skills in the subjects taught. Students claimed that they usually showed good performance and skills inside the classroom during the normal lectures, but the outcomes of the assessment process did not reflect their real skills and performance in the class. Students believed that the mode of assessment was the main reason for this. In other words, they were not completely satisfied with the use of summative assessment as the main method of assessment and the neglect of other alternative assessment methods that could be useful for their learning. Students considered these assessment practices, namely summative assessment, as a traditional assessment method which usually had negative effects on their motivation and learning in general. More than eighty percent of students who participated in this study considered that the current assessment practices had significant effects on their learning goals, as well as their future education and career. As students claimed, they noticed that the negative effects of the current assessment practices could

be clearly seen in their learning and performance when they moved from one educational stage to another. Students claimed that they were unable to perform some tasks and activities related to their previous learning. Twenty students, who represented 83% of the sample for this study, admitted that achieving high marks was their top learning priority for mid-term and final examinations. They acknowledged that their learning goals had changed during the period of their study because the assessment methods employed in their departments had a crucial impact on their future education and career after graduation. The views of students towards the assessment practices employed at their educational institutions can be considered as normal reactions on the part of student because these assessment practices can be classified as high stakes assessment practices. Most findings of previous studies in the field of education, in relation to high stakes assessment practices, have revealed that such assessment practices can have this impact on learner' views, especially in terms of their assessment and educational objectives. Many researchers have argued that summative assessment practices usually result in high-stakes assessment which, in turn, does not support real learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Au, 2007; Irons, 2008; Falchikov, 2013).

The findings of qualitative analysis of the focus group interviews with students also showed that students had formed these views, based upon different circumstances and reasons that they encountered during their study in different educational stages. For instance, one of the main reasons that made ninety percent of the interviewed students dissatisfied with the use of summative assessment as the main evaluation tool was that it did not support or improve their learning skills and abilities. They claimed that summative assessment was not usually followed by constructive feedback which was one of the important factors that would help them to improve their learning during the course. In the same vein, all of the interviewed students also mentioned another reason, related to the objectives of the summative assessment practices. According to students' a

views, summative assessment is not devoted to improving students' learning; it is just designed to evaluate what students have achieved during the course. Students argued that it should not be used as the only method of evaluation, as it does not give any motivation for learning and developing their understanding and skills. For this reason, they believed that formative assessment should be employed alongside summative assessment, for motivational purposes, with the aim of improving learning and developing teaching (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Black et al. 2003; Halen, 2006; Heritage, 2010 Fluckiger, et al. 2010; Swaffield, 2011; So & Lee, 2011; Jonsson et al. 2014).

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the main and sub-research questions have been answered and discussed. It was apparent from the findings of three methods of data collection and analysis of this research study that there were, to some extent, similar findings among the questionnaire responses, teachers' semi structured interviews and students' focus group interviews. There is a general consensus among the participants of these three samples that high-stakes summative assessment predominates. However, formative assessment was employed by teachers, despite the various constraints on its use. It can be concluded that the current assessment practices employed in these three Libyan universities have negative effects on teaching and learning practices. The results also indicated that some assessment practices have had effects on teaching and learning practices especially those related to formative assessment. The findings of this study correspond to some extent with other previous studies in the literature, (see Sections 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 3.6.3.1 and 3.6.3.2). These studies found that various assessment practices can have positive or negative educational impacts.

It was also evident that the findings of the qualitative data analysis of the teachers' semi-structured interviews and students' focus group interviews were similar to a great

extent. Both teachers and students involved in this research study appeared to have similar views towards the assessment practices employed. They agreed that summative assessment was employed with more emphasis than any other alternative assessment practices. This emphasis on this kind of assessment increased the negative impact of assessment on teaching and learning and minimized the positive impact. Both teachers and students considered that the current summative assessment practices had high-stakes traits which influenced, in different ways, teachers' and students' academic future and reputation as well as their future career. Teachers and students thought that this kind of assessment minimized feedback which is one of the most significant elements for learning and motivation. Students had become less motivated for learning, as they were concerned with passing examinations and scoring high marks, this being one of the most important educational objectives, as it would secure them a place in the next educational stage.

On the other hand, and despite the restricted use of formative assessment, both teachers and students seemed to have positive impressions of formative assessment practices, which they believed to have positive impacts on teaching and learning.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations

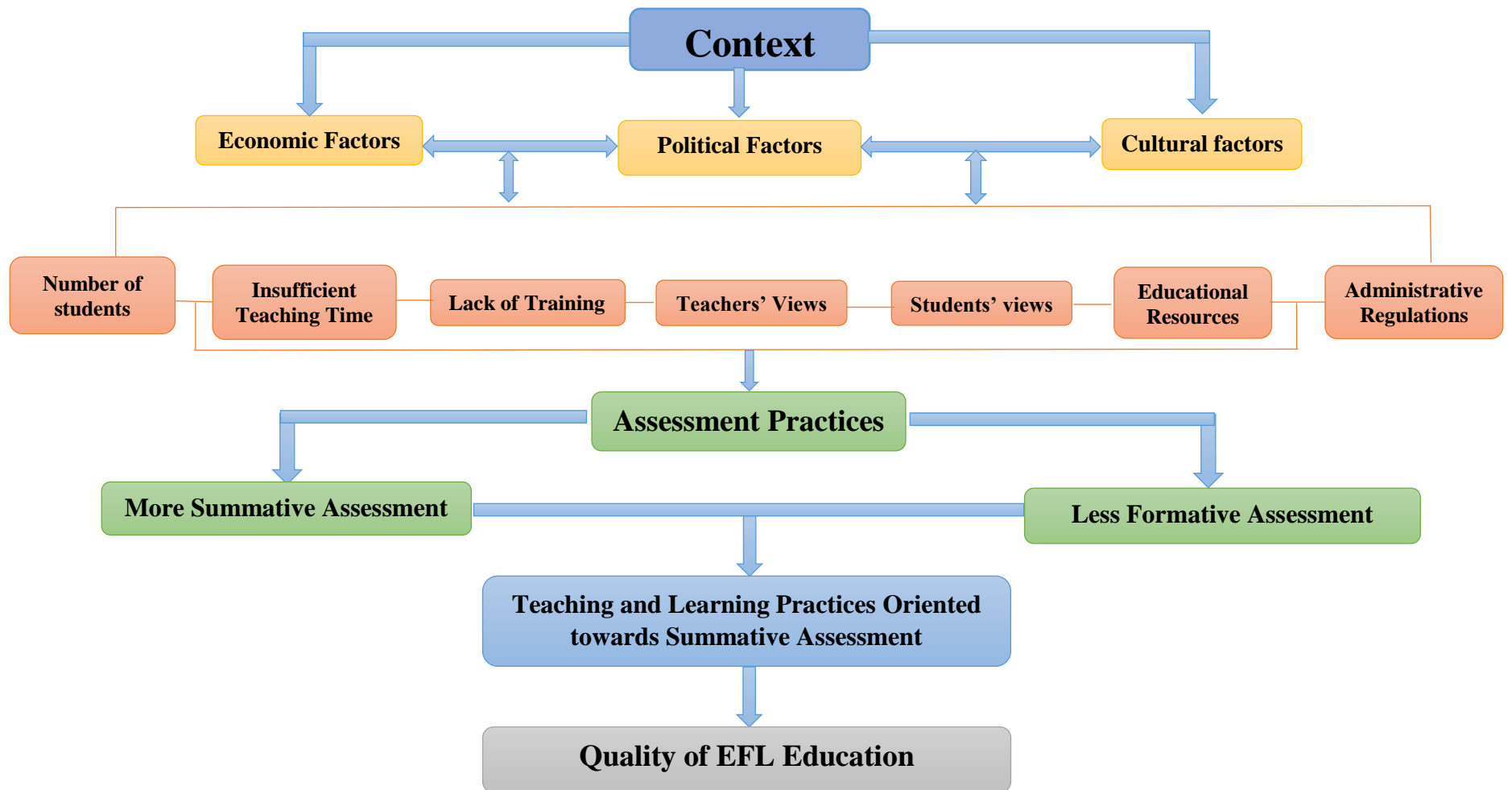
8.1 Introduction

This study has been conducted with the aim of investigating teachers' and students' views towards the impact of assessment practices on their teaching and learning of EFL in the higher education sector in Libya. To achieve this aim, varied research methods including a questionnaire for teachers, face to face semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group interviews with students were utilised to collect the required data. Teachers and students who were teaching and learning EFL from three different Libyan universities were involved as a sample for this research study. This chapter offers general and concluding remarks on the issues that have been investigated during this research process. The chapter provides an overview of the research process, including the main research findings and implications, limitations of the study, contributions, recommendations and suggestions for further research. It also presents a conceptual model to help understand and explain the phenomenon of assessment impact on EFL education and to improve the teaching and learning of EFL in Libyan higher education.

8.2 Summary of the Main Research Findings and Implications

In the light of the research findings in Chapter Seven, besides the facts and figures about the context of the Libyan education sector provided in Chapter Two, it is apparent that the context of teaching and learning EFL at Libyan universities is influenced by several interrelated factors. These factors can be categorised into external and internal to the education process, as demonstrated in the following sub-sections and illustrated in Figure 8.1 below. Within the Libyan educational context, every single factor has a special impact on other factors and the assessment is just one factor in this cycle that

correlates with other factors to produce either positive or negative impact on the quality of EFL education. These factors are illustrated and discussed below.



- External Factors
 (See Section 8.2.1 - Page 177)
- Internal Factors
 (See Section 8.2.2 - Page 178)

Figure 8. 1 Summary of the Main Research Findings

8.2.1 The External Factors

The external factors, comprising economic, political and cultural factors, as shown in Figure 8.1 above, contextualise the education process, including the teaching, learning and assessment practices, but do not directly influence it. Most facts and figures related to the research context, stated in Chapter Two of this study, indicated that some economic, political and cultural factors have played a significant role in the way of teaching and assessing EFL. The limited financial support by the Libyan government and MoE to the higher education sector in recent decades resulted in a lack of educational resources and technological facilities within the universities. This increased the negative impact of large numbers of students on the effectiveness and quality of assessment and education processes. All these reasons were among the most important factors that negatively influenced the use of formative assessment practices and consequently increased the use of summative assessment practices as an alternative. In the educational context mentioned above, it was not easy for teachers to use some important formative assessment practices such as peer and self-assessment, direct observation and individual feedback.

Another factor is that teachers and students were influenced by some traditional views from the culture of Libyan society about the objectives of assessment and education processes (see Section 2.5). Achieving these objectives has commonly been associated with obtaining high scores in the subjects taught, irrespective of acquiring the required information and knowledge in these subjects that students have studied during the academic year. The main reason for adopting such views might be attributed to the requirements of the job market and postgraduate studies, after students graduate from the university.

8.2.2 Internal Factors

These internal factors, as shown in Figure 8.1 above, are related directly to the education and assessment process. They are also related to the external factors discussed in the previous section and have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the assessment and education process when teaching and learning EFL at Libyan universities. They are listed below, with a discussion of their effects on the practices of assessment and education of EFL at Libyan universities.

1- Number of Students

As discussed earlier, the increasing numbers of students at classes of the Libyan universities comes as a result of some economic and political factors. This increase of student numbers has directly influenced the assessment and education of EFL. Ideally, a class for teaching and learning EFL should not have a large number of students, in order to give the chance to all students to share and participate equally in most learning activities in the class. This principle was mentioned by several participants in the focus group interviews with students. Some of these participants claimed that their participation, under their teachers' supervision and observation, in a speaking focused class did not exceed five minutes in a two-hour session. The main reason for that, as they claimed, was the large number of students, which was over sixty in the class.

2- Insufficient Teaching Time

Insufficient teaching time can also have a negative impact on teaching and learning EFL at Libyan universities, as this language is taught in a foreign environment, namely, in a non-English speaking country. Students have a very limited time to learn some important communication skills in the target language during classes. They do not have any opportunity to practise the four communication skills with people outside of the class, in a real learning context. Teachers, meanwhile, are overwhelmed by correcting

the large numbers of examination answer sheets in different subjects and they are unable to follow up their students' performance inside or outside of the class because of the short teaching time. As mentioned in studies reviewed in the literature review chapter and findings of this study in Chapter Seven (see Section 7.4.2 and 7.4.3), the development of formative assessment practices requires enough teaching time. Teachers need to make direct observation of their students' performance inside the class and provide the required feedback, either individually or in groups, according to the students' learning needs. Insufficient teaching time also makes it hard for teachers to implement some diagnostic tests and observations to find out the individual differences among their students, in order to give more time and attention to those students with weak learning abilities. In the light of all these circumstances, teachers and administrative supervisors have no other choice except using summative assessment at the middle and the end of the academic year or semester as the main assessment tool to evaluate students' achievement.

3- Lack of Training

Another important factor is related to the lack of pre and in-service training programmes for the teaching staff in Libyan universities, as claimed by teachers during the interview sessions. It was indicated by the participants in the interviews sessions that they did not receive any training courses about employing formative assessment practices. Their background and experience about assessment, during the various stages of their education as students and career as teachers, was mainly based on summative assessment. This fact has influenced the views of administrative supervisors of the academic departments at Libyan universities towards the teachers' abilities to implement some forms of formative assessment practices. As raised by teachers who participated in the interview sessions in this study, the results of formative assessment

are not highly trusted by academic department supervisors. The main reason for these views is that the implementation of formative assessment practices requires highly qualified teachers who have attended various pre and in-service training programmes about assessment methods. There is a possibility that teachers with little training and experience about the implementation of the various forms of formative assessment may produce outcomes based on their subjective judgements, leading to unreliable results. Regardless of the absence of the training programmes about assessment at Libyan universities, there was another factor that negatively affected teachers' background and experience in this aspect. The findings of the qualitative data analysis of this study revealed that teachers did not have the chance to attend or participate in some academic events such as conferences, seminars and workshops related to the role of assessment in the education process (see Section 7.4.3). Such events can help teachers to enrich their information and knowledge about the important and useful role of assessment in relation to teaching and learning practices. The main reasons for lack of such experience, as participants claimed, were the negative role of the academic departments as well as the poor motivation and cooperation among teachers to organize such useful events.

4- Teachers' Views

The views that teachers held towards the current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities indicated that they were not satisfied with the dominance of summative assessment practices on education of EFL over formative assessment (see Table 7.1 in Section 7.1, Chapter Seven). They also believed that the current summative assessment practices had negative washback impact on teaching and learning EFL. Participants thought that this impact would be attributed to the power of high stakes summative assessment, stemming from the mark distribution system, on students' future education and career. This impact has also extended to influence the educational

reputation of teachers and the education institutions. On the other hand, teachers' views towards the formative assessment practices indicated that they were satisfied with their positive impact on their teaching methods and students' learning improvement, despite all the difficulties that minimised the implementation of formative assessment. It is also worth mentioning in this vein that some interviewed teachers, to some extent, were not willing to employ some forms of formative assessment such as peer and self-assessment despite their positive impact on the educational process (see Table 7.1 in Section 7.1, Chapter Seven). The main reason for this attitude appears to be that teachers thought that their students were not well enough trained to employ such assessment practices in previous educational stages. Therefore, teachers thought that students would not be able to provide peer feedback or learn from their mistakes, as the main assessment approach by which students were evaluated in their previous education were summative assessment.

5- Students' Views

The main views of students about the current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities involved in this study indicated that high-stakes summative assessment practices were dominant over formative assessment, for several reasons mentioned previously in this section. This dominance of high-stakes summative assessment has been given more power because it is strongly associated with the power of marks, as the interviewed students believed. Students thought that the success of their current education and future career depended on their performance in the mid-term and final examinations taken each academic year or semester. Therefore, they favoured all learning skills and strategies that would enable them to achieve high scores in these examinations. Students also paid great attention and devoted more time in their academic work to the content of the syllabus that they thought was likely to be included

in these examinations and ignored other parts of the syllabus which were not likely to be included in the examinations. As a consequence of this situation, students were less motivated towards other assessment practices even if these assessment practices may have positive effects on their language proficiency. Students' learning objectives have been influenced by the current assessment practices employed at Libyan universities due to other factors that are mentioned in this section. On the other hand, the findings of this study indicated that the interviewed students had positive views about formative assessment and its positive impact on their learning of EFL, but at the same time, they believed that the power of summative assessment practices could not be ignored.

6- Educational Resources

The findings of this study also indicate that the availability of educational resources and facilities can have a positive or negative impact on assessment practices which in turn will influence the quality of EFL education. Educational aids and facilities such as internet access, data show and language labs can affect teachers' teaching methods and students' motivation to learn EFL, especially in subjects like Listening, Drama and Phonetics. Teachers used some traditional assessment methods to assess such subjects, which did not reflect the students' real skills and competence either in everyday classes or in the mid-term or final examinations. Students need to listen to or watch real conversations or films to be taught or assessed to measure their real communication skills in the target language. These findings, regarding the role of educational resources and facilities in the quality of EFL education, are consistent with findings of other studies in this field as discussed in Chapter Three.

7- Administrative Regulations

The administrative regulations of the educational institutions have played a significant role and influenced the teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers during

the academic course. For example, teachers are tied by the mark distribution system mandated by their academic departments, which impose a mark distribution plan for teachers to follow. This system of mark distribution states that most marks should be given to mid-term and final examinations in the form of high-stakes summative assessment practices, with no or just a few marks allocated to formative assessment practices. This policy has influenced integrating formative assessment practices in the education process with the aim of improving it. This administrative policy has affected the motivation of both teachers and students towards the implementation of formative assessment. Students are not interested to engage in the assessment activities that are not rewarded by marks and they give more concern to those activities that will enable them to collect marks and pass the subject at the end of the academic year or semester (see Table 7.1 in Section 7.1, Chapter Seven). This in turn has influenced teachers' motivation to employ formative assessment practices.

8.3 Understanding the Nature of Assessment Impact on EFL Education

As discussed in section 3.8.2 of Chapter Three, the most common pedagogical approaches in different fields of education, especially in western countries, are still based on the constructivist views, and this is the case in the field of foreign language education. For instance, the most common pedagogical approaches, such as cognitive and communicative approaches, applied nowadays in the field of foreign language education have emerged from the constructivist learning views (see Section 3.8.2). However, the learning and teaching practices which are consonant with these pedagogical approaches emphasise an active role for students, in which formative assessment is of key importance. There is evidence that the dominance of summative assessment practices has negative consequences on the application of such pedagogical approaches (see Chapter Three, Sections 3.5.2 and 3.6.3.2). Therefore, the researcher

has devised a conceptual model which is grounded on the findings of this study, as shown in Figure 8.2. This model was constructed to help understand and explain the phenomenon of assessment impact on EFL education and to improve the teaching and learning of EFL in Libyan higher education. The model is also intended to mitigate negative impacts of assessment on teaching and learning.

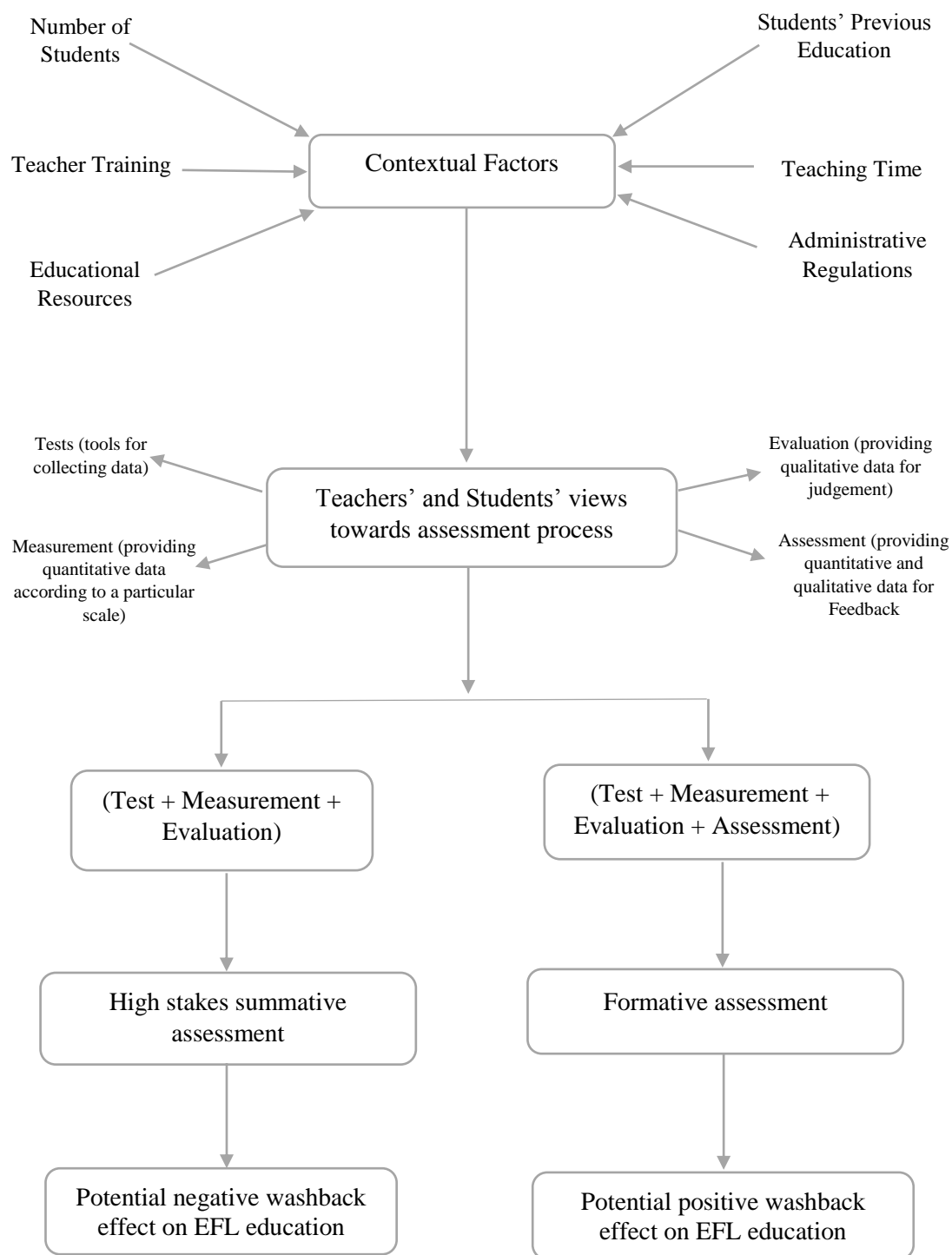


Figure 8. 2 Understanding the nature of assessment impact on EFL education

The findings of this study revealed that several contextual factors can have a direct impact on teachers' and students' views towards the implementation of various assessment practices inside the classroom (see section 8.2). As can be seen in Figure 8.2, there are six contextual factors which can influence and shape teachers' and students'

views towards the assessment practices (see Sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2). The assessment process is complex and consists of multiple interrelated stages as shown in Figure 8.2. These can be influenced by teachers' and students' views. As explained earlier in Chapter Three, Section 3.2, each stage of assessment is complementary to other stages in order to form a complete assessment process. For example, tests are usually used as tools to collect data about students' achievement or performance, while measurement aims to provide quantitative data according to a particular scale (see Sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4). Another important stage is the evaluation process in which qualitative data is provided to enable the teachers to take a decision and make judgement about students' achievement according to a particular scale (see 3.2.2). In the final stage comes the assessment process, within which all the previous stages work together to provide the required feedback about students' achievement for the purpose of improving the teaching and learning process. The whole assessment process, which includes all four stages, can be influenced by teachers' and students' views which in turn are influenced by the contextual factors mentioned above in the diagram. As the findings of this study revealed, the negative impact of the contextual factors made teachers unable to use other alternative assessment practices that could help improve teaching and learning. Large numbers of students and insufficient teaching time do not give teachers and students the opportunity to employ peer and self-assessment or give individual feedback. Students also are not familiar with some formative assessment practices because they did not experience these assessment forms in previous education stages. Teachers will need to work for a long time to make their students familiar with this kind of assessment. Therefore, many teachers and decision-makers reject formative assessment practices such as individual feedback, peer and self-assessment and instead just use summative assessment as an evaluative tool. As a result, the assessment process will be restricted to

tests, measurement and evaluation only for grading, classification or certification purposes. This will not be a complete assessment process because there is no place for constructive feedback from teachers to their students or from students to their peers to improve teaching and learning. This kind of assessment, therefore, is likely to result in high stakes summative assessment, which in turn will lead to negative washback effects on the educational process.

There is ample evidence in the literature of language teaching which shows that various contextual factors can shape teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes and also determine the appropriate teaching methods, which are compatible with a particular educational context (Borg, 2003). In this vein, Borg (2006: 275) argues that:

“The social, institutional, instructional, and physical settings in which teachers work have a major impact on their cognition and practices. The study of cognitions and practices in isolation of the contexts in which they occur will inevitably, therefore, provide partial, if not flawed, characteristics of teachers and teaching.”

In brief, the contextual factors do not only influence teachers' pedagogical beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices, as mentioned in Borg's review, but also, as shown in this study, can have the same impact on both teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes towards assessment. The findings of this study present further evidence to support the previous studies mentioned in Borg's review, on how the educational contextual factors influenced not only teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes but also students' educational beliefs and attitudes. The contextual factors, according to the findings of this study, influenced both teachers' and students' views towards the implementation of assessment practices which in turn influenced their views towards the implementation of language teaching and learning (see Sections 2.4 and 8.2). In addition to that, teachers' views towards some assessment practices were not consistent with what they used in their classrooms because of the impact of contextual factors, as

the findings of this study revealed (see 8.2.2). The interviewed teachers in this study admitted that formative assessment can be more useful for improving the teaching and learning process and they endeavoured to apply it in their classes. However, some contextual factors such as those mentioned in Figure 8.2 prevented them.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

This study is restricted to exploring teachers' and students' views of the impact of assessment practices on teaching and learning EFL in Libyan universities. It did not investigate this impact on the material content and future implications for students' performance after graduation. In this study, the research methods employed for collecting the required data for the research were restricted to teachers' questionnaire, face to face semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group interviews with students. The researcher did not employ direct observation of teachers' teaching and assessment methods, as this is not acceptable to most teaching staff members, especially women. Teachers were not willing to be observed by another teacher in the presence of their adult students because they thought it would influence their professional reputation. Teachers also thought that the process of observation in the presence of a third party, namely the adult students, would influence the confidentiality of their participation in the study. In addition, there may be a great possibility that some teachers would perform differently from usual if observed, to avoid any criticism from the part of the observer or their students. For all these reasons, the researcher rejected the idea of using direct observation of participants in the classroom.

This study was focused on teaching and learning EFL in the Libyan higher education sector and did not discuss this impact of assessment on a wider context such as other disciplines in the social and applied sciences. Moreover, the sample of this study was restricted to involving participants from teachers and students in three universities out

of eleven universities in Libya and all of them were from the Tripolitania Region, the western part of Libya. This might have an impact on the representativeness of the researched community and the findings of the study. The main reason for not involving more teachers and students from other Libyan universities is related to the large size of Libya, with some universities located far away from each other, which would impact the time required for data collection. In addition to that, when the data was collected in 2016 some cities and regions in Libya, like Benghazi, the second largest city in Libya, and other surrounding cities were not stable and not under control, because of the war. As a result, the researcher decided to involve the biggest universities in the Tripolitania Region in the western part of the country, Tripoli, Misurata and Elmergib Universities as a convenience sample. Another advantage of collecting data from this region is that it is the most populated. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are only representative of the universities involved and cannot be generalised to other universities in the country especially in the Cyrenaica region in the east or Fazzan region in the south.

8.5 Researcher's Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made, which the researcher would encourage all stakeholders in the Libyan higher education sector to apply for the teaching and learning of EFL. The recommendations stated in this section are categorised into three groups. Each group aims to address a particular educational problem that may cause some pedagogical or learning difficulties to either teachers or students, and then recommend a solution that explains what can be done to overcome these problems.

8.5.1 Recommendations Related to Educational Resourcing Problems

The first group of recommendations focuses on finding some solutions to the problem of large classes and the lack of important educational aids and facilities mentioned by participants of this study in both the quantitative and qualitative data.

1- Smaller Class Sizes

According to the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study, the number of students in a class is usually above forty which normally will influence the quality of any assessment activities in a negative way, especially in the field of EFL education. Large classes can cause negative impact on the educational and assessment process, especially when using peer and self-assessment or providing the feedback to students (Monks & Schmidt, 2010; Bedard & Kuhn, 2008; Walia, 2008; Kokkelenberg et al. 2008; Bandiera et al. 2009). Owing to the large numbers of students in the classrooms in the Libyan universities, the decision makers in the higher education sector should recruit additional teaching staff to meet the large numbers of students. Therefore, it is recommended that the number of teachers is increased to an extent that makes the number of students range between ten and twenty in each classroom. In the same vein, it is highly recommended that English departments in each university should apply admission examinations for secondary school graduates who are interested to study EFL before they are officially enrolled. These examinations should be developed and designed according to specific criteria in order to check whether or not these students will be capable and successful to study in this field or not in the future. For example, students need to show a satisfactory level use of the four skills in English, which might help them in their future education in this field.

2- Providing more educational facilities and aids

Lack of educational resources is one of the factors that affected teaching, learning and assessment practices, as mentioned by both teachers and students who participated in this research study (see Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2). Participants of this study stated that most English departments in which they taught suffered from the lack of language laboratories, libraries and other technological facilities required for teaching EFL. Therefore, the MoE should provide universities and departments of English with more educational facilities and aids to support the education and assessment process. This can be done by building new and large university campuses that have modern technological facilities. Provision of educational facilities such as internet access in the classrooms, libraries with access to leading international journals and language labs should be one of the priorities for MoE to improve teaching EFL in Libya. Some technological facilities, such as computers which are connected to the Internet in the language laboratories can help in using some formative assessment practices such as peer and self-assessment. Students could improve their communication skills in English through visiting some websites which would help them assess their language abilities and proficiency in the target language inside the classroom, under their teachers' supervision. Such assessment techniques would also encourage teachers and students to integrate a student-centred approach in the process of EFL education. Therefore, it is recommended that each department of English in each university should at least be provided with a language lab with twenty computers connected by a good Internet service. In addition to that, all classrooms should be provided with data show projectors to be used them as educational tools in order to increase students' understanding and motivation in the content of the lecture.

8.5.2 Recommendations Related to the Educational Policy at Libyan Universities

The second group of recommendations seeks to offer the required solutions to some problems related to the educational policies adopted by the MoE and decision makers at Libyan universities in general and English departments in particular.

1- Providing pre- and in-Service Training Programmes

The findings of this study and other previous studies carried out in Libya at the field of EFL, such as Suwaed, (2011) and Elabbar, (2011) raise the problem of training programmes for teachers in the higher education sector. Teachers of English language at Libyan universities do not have the opportunity to improve their teaching skills through regular training programmes (see section 2.4.3). Most of the current teachers are need to update their information and improve their teaching skills in the field of EFL and not just depend on what they learned during their previous education. For this reason, the MoE should organize pre- and in-service training programmes before or after each academic year to increase ‘assessment literacy’ among teachers in the higher education sector in various aspects related to assessing and evaluating EFL. It would be useful for teachers to be engaged in theoretical and practical training courses to ensure that they will be able to apply successfully what they learnt from these courses in the classroom. In these training programmes, the important concepts related to assessment process (see Chapter Three, Section 3.2) should be introduced to teachers in order to ensure they are able to employ them effectively in the class with students.

2- Providing more support for the academic events

The findings of the qualitative data analysis of this study revealed that teachers do not have the chance to attend or participate in important academic events such as conferences, seminars and workshops related in role of assessment to the educational improvement (see Section 7.4.3). Such academic events are important for exchanging

and updating knowledge and information among teaching staff members. The MoE and decision makers at Libyan universities should encourage such events and motivate teachers to organize and participate in popular academic events related to teaching and assessing EFL programmes. This can be done by providing financial support to such events as academic conferences and workshops inside Libyan universities. The financial support should not be restricted to local academic events but it also should be extended to any academic participation in such events abroad. This would greatly help teachers to learn about other experiences in other countries in different parts of the world, in the field of EFL education and assessment.

3- Changing the current educational policy at Libyan universities

The current educational policy adopted by the Libyan universities, which is based on a top-down policy, usually encourages the dominance of summative assessment practices over other alternative assessments (see Section 2.3, 2.4.2, 2.5 and 7.4.1). There should be some change in the current educational policy from a top-down policy to a bottom-up policy at Libyan universities, in order to consider teachers' and students' needs at this advanced stage of education and deal with them as important stakeholders, in order to promote more student-centred learning strategies. This policy should make students more aware of and responsible for the objectives of the assessment and education processes from the beginning of the academic year or semester and should not be mandated by a top-down educational policy. This policy would also help teachers and students to adopt student-centred approach as it would be based on the students' learning needs. It also would be compatible with most contemporary educational approaches such as CLT (see section 3.8.2 in Chapter Three).

4- Modifying the current system of mark distribution

As mentioned in the findings of this study in Chapter Seven (see Section 7.4.3), the grading distribution system adopted by departments' administration is among the main factors that resulted in a negative washback impact of the assessment practices on the educational process. The Mark distribution system can have such effects; especially if most marks in the assessment cycle are linked to summative assessment practices (see Section 2.5 in Chapter Two and Section 3.5.2 in Chapter Three). Therefore, it is strongly recommended to adopt a new system of mark distribution that encourages both teachers and students to change their traditional teaching and learning methods and motivates students to be more active inside the classroom and work as a centre of the educational process. A beneficial way to reduce the negative impact of assessment on teaching and learning practices would be to distribute marks equally between summative and formative assessment practices. More marks should be given to students' performance and participation in various ongoing formative assessment activities inside the classroom. This system of mark distribution would be likely to increase students' learning motivation and make them more interested to participate and interact in various formative assessments, which in turn would reflect positively on their learning strategies. Involving students in formative assessment practices through rewarding them with marks would also encourage student-centred learning, which is considered as one of the most important aspects in EFL education.

5- Allowing more time for formative assessment practices

As discussed in Section 2.5 of Chapter Two and the findings of this study, formative assessment practices are not widely used by teachers at Libyan universities because of the dominance of summative assessment practices. Many studies, as discussed in Section 3.5.1 in Chapter Three, confirmed the positive role of formative assessment in

improving the teaching and learning process. These studies proved that formative assessment practices can help learners to be actively engaged' in the learning process, which makes students more motivated for learning in the class. Therefore, teaching of EFL as a major subject at Libyan universities should be given more time in order to incorporate more formative assessment practices in the process of education. For instance, subjects that are related to the teaching of four skills should be taught for six or eight hours a week instead of four hours a week. This would help teachers to track their students' learning and give a chance to students to be trained on some forms of assessment practices such as peer and self-assessment which are mainly based on students' role in the classroom. It would help in providing regular and individual feedback for students and motivate students to have a more active role in their learning and improve their language competence.

8.5.3 Recommendations for Teachers

The third group of recommendations is devoted to teachers of EFL at Libyan universities and other teachers in this career. It provides some useful strategies for more collaborative work to improve the teaching methods and help students get more advantages from the feedback that they receive after assessment activities and practices.

1- Collaborative work and exchanging experience among teachers

One of the main reasons behind the impact of the assessment practices on teaching and learning EFL at Libyan universities is related to the lack of the co-operation and team work among teaching staff members (see Sections 8.2.2 and 6.2.3.3). In this vein, Shulman and Shulman, (2004: 264) claimed that teachers can “learn from their own and one another’s experience.” From this perspective, there should be a kind of collaborative work, periodic meetings and discussions among the teaching staff members inside English departments to share and exchange experiences and knowledge

about different teaching and assessment methods. It would be useful to hold these meetings at the end of each academic year or semester with the aim of finding out to what extent the assessment methods which they employed during the course helped them to improve the teaching and learning practices. Teachers also need, during these meetings, to find out the negative washback effects of their assessment practices during the course and work together to set the required pedagogical remedies, in order to avoid similar problems in the next academic year or semester. One useful way of avoiding the negative impact of assessment on teaching methods and learning objectives and practices is by involving students in diagnosing these effects. For example, teachers could work together during these periodical meetings to develop a questionnaire to be distributed among teachers and students at the end of the academic year or semester, to explore the main teaching and learning problems that might be directly or indirectly related to the assessment process. The results of these questionnaires could be analysed by teachers in the department in order to learn how assessment positively or negatively, affected the quality of EFL education. As a result, they would be able to set a future plan to enable the educational objectives to be achieved more efficiently. In doing so, teachers would potentially be able to overcome most of the teaching and learning difficulties related to both education and assessment processes during the course.

It is also highly recommended that the administration of English Departments at Libyan universities encourages teachers of EFL at the university level to write some articles discussing the challenges associated with educational assessment. Authors of these publications should mention the educational problems that teachers and students encounter in the classrooms because of the impact of the assessment practices on teaching and learning EFL. It would also be useful to suggest or set some remedial solutions to the negative impact of the assessment practices within the educational

context in which they teach. A useful way to encourage university teachers to publish articles in this field would be to include their publications among the factors considered in teachers' promotions.

2- Paying more attention to students' individual learning differences

The individual learning differences among students can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of both assessment and feedback processes (see 8.2.2). Therefore, teachers should be aware of their students' individual learning differences and pay more attention for them, especially when designing assessment activities or providing students with the required feedback after assessment (see Section 3.5.1.2). Shute, (2008: 135) mentioned this issue and indicated that "a struggling student may require greater support and structure from a formative feedback message compared to a proficient student". Instructors should be aware of the suitable techniques by which each student or group of students prefer to receive feedback in the class. For example, some students are willing to be assessed or provided with the required feedback about their performance in public and in front of their classmates. In contrast, some students may be less motivated by being assessed or receiving feedback in public and may prefer other techniques, such as individual feedback, face to face feedback with their instructors or just written feedback. Another useful method that teachers can adopt to reduce and overcome the negative impact of the individual learning differences in the class would be to involve students as partners in the feedback process (Fluckiger et al, 2010). The best way of using this strategy would be to involve students in peer assessment practices that allow them to exchange feedback under the teacher's guidance. This technique would help students be more interactive and independent and it can help them improving their learning skills. Black et al (2003) argued that some students may

be more willing to discuss their comments and learning activities with their peers rather than their teachers which, in turn, may promote their motivation to learn.

8.6 Suggestions for Further Research

As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter (see section 8.2) one of the main criticisms of formative assessment practices by the decision makers inside Libyan universities was that formative assessment is not reliable and cannot offer objective results. Therefore, further research is needed to ascertain whether these views held by the decision makers as well as teachers in the higher education sector towards the validity and reliability of formative assessment are right or wrong. The administration of most departments of the Libyan universities claim that summative assessment practices are more objective and can produce more valid and reliable results that can be employed to evaluate students. All these issues can be discussed in some publications presented by the university instructors in order to improve the role of educational assessment in teaching and learning EFL at Libyan universities.

It would also be useful for further research to investigate whether assessment practices can play a significance role in promoting learners' autonomy. This can be achieved by using formative assessment practices such as peer and self-assessment to motivate students to be independent in their assessment, which would help them discover their learning problems and using the assessment outcomes in developing their learning strategies.

It would also be useful if similar studies were to be conducted in other social or applied sciences to explore the impact of assessment practices on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning practices in different educational fields within the Libyan higher education sector. The results of such studies may be compared with the results of this

study to make use of any different positive or negative washback effects obtained to support teaching and learning EFL not only at the university level but also at other educational stages in the Libyan educational system. In addition, it might be helpful to conduct research into how other countries manage these problems.

8.7 Originality and Contribution

Before commencing this research project, the researcher made a detailed search looking for previous studies in this area particularly in the Libyan higher education context and in the Arabian region in general. The researcher found that most of the past research in this area in the Libyan context or in the context of other Arab world countries was confined to the early educational stages and among learners who were not learning English as a major subject. There was little coverage of the pedagogical implications of assessment practices on teaching and learning EFL as a major subject among speakers of Arabic in the higher education sector in Libya, the Arab countries and all over the world. Therefore, the findings of this study have contributed to highlighting the main effects of the assessment practices on teaching and learning of EFL as a major subject at the university level in Libya and other Arab world countries. It also demonstrated how these effects can be positive or negative, on teachers and students, teaching methods and the educational institutions in general. The findings and the pedagogical recommendations of this study can potentially contribute to the pedagogy of EFL in these contexts. Moreover, the conceptual model, which is grounded on the findings of this study, can help understand and explain the phenomenon of assessment impact on EFL education and to improve the teaching and learning of EFL in Libyan higher education. The model is also intended to mitigate negative impacts of assessment on teaching and learning. It is possible that improving EFL education as a major subject at the university level will positively reflect on teaching and learning EFL in the other

educational stages in Libya, like primary and secondary school. Students who study English as a major subject in the Libyan universities will become teachers of English in the future, after their graduation from the university. They will teach EFL at Libyan primary and secondary schools. Therefore, the quality of their education at the university stage will affect the quality of EFL education at other educational stages. The role of the English language is not restricted to the educational sector but it extends to other public sectors in Libya, such as medicine, industry and tourism. This means that improving EFL in Libyan universities will have positive implications for all other public and private sectors in the country.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Teacher,

This questionnaire is a part of my PhD research at University of Hull in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand teachers and students views to the use of high-stakes summative assessment in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Libyan higher education sector. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and under no circumstances will your individual responses be released to your department, college or university administration. It is worth mentioning that participation in this survey is voluntary and you are free to discontinue at any time. However, your professional experiences and opinions are crucial to helping me understand teaching and assessment methods from the educator's point of view. I would greatly appreciate your taking the time to complete this survey.

N.B.

**** I need some volunteers to participate in the interview sessions.***

**** If you are willing to participate, please leave your mobile phone or email to be contacted later and your participation would be highly appreciated.***

Section I:

Please tick one appropriate answer or provide the right answer in the space.

- (1) Your gender: ☐Female ☐ Male
- (2) Department of, College of,
University of
- (3) Your age: ☐ 22 – 30 ☐ 31 – 40 ☐ 41 - 50 ☐ Over 50
- (4) Your academic qualification: ☐MA ☐ PhD
- (5) Your Major: ☐ Education ☐ Applied Linguistics ☐ Literature ☐ Translation
- (4) Years of experience: ☐ 1 - 5 ☐ 6 - 10 ☐ 11 - 15 ☐ Over 15

(5) Subjects and levels that you are currently teaching:

.....

.....

.....

(6) Number of lectures you teach per week:

(7) Number of Students in your class:

☐ 10 – 19

☐ 20 – 29

☐ 30 – 39

☐ 40 or above

Section II: The Current Teaching Practices

“As a lecturer, how often do you practise these teaching strategies and methods in your class?”

Could you please tick one box from 1 to 5 opposite to each item in the table by using the five point scale provided below?

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Mostly 5 = Always.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Creating regular opportunities for all students to participate in the classroom activities.					
2. Creating equal opportunities for all students to increase motivation for learning.					
3. Giving the opportunity to all students to ask questions.					
4. Employing classroom discussion (e.g. teacher/student and student/student) as a teaching instrument to increase students' knowledge and improve their understanding.					
5. Motivating students to set their learning goals (e.g. determine what they need to learn) before and during the course.					
6. Asking students to give constructive feedback to their peers.					
7. Motivating students to evaluate their own work.					
8. Providing students with written or oral feedback after each task, exercise or assignment.					
9. Providing opportunities, (such as group or individual discussions), for students to reflect on feedback provided and act on advice given.					
10. Introducing the educational goals before each course and lesson that you teach.					

11. Involving students in managing and planning for their learning.					
12. Tracking students' progress to make changes on teaching (through individual feedback or interviews).					

Section III: Teachers' views.

"According to your experience as a lecturer, to what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statements?"

Could you please choose one number from 1 to 5 and write it in the square opposed to each item in the table by using the five point scale provided below.

1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Uncertain 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree.

	1	2	3	4	5
13. Most of students have the same chance to participate in the class.					
14. The teaching methods used in the class make students active rather than passive in the class.					
15. The teacher is the only source for information and knowledge required for learning.					
16. Most of technological facilities needed to promote teaching and learning (e.g. computers, data show, lab and internet access) are available in my class.					
17. Most of students are more concerned with achieving knowledge and improving their language competence rather than achieving higher marks.					

Section IV: Assessment Methods and Techniques

"When you measure your students' abilities, performance and progress, how often do you use the following assessment methods and techniques during the educational course or programme?"

Could you please choose one number from 1 to 5 and write it in the square opposed to each item in the table by using the five point scale provided below.

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Mostly 5 = Always.

	1	2	3	4	5
18. Assessing students' educational skills at the beginning of the teaching course.					
19. Using ongoing assessment activities throughout the course to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses.					
20. Providing students with clear evaluation criteria that will be					

used in the assessment process.					
21. The assessment results are returned immediately after any quiz or examination to students to learn from their mistakes.					
22. Using portfolios for monitoring and assessing students' educational progress.					
23. Providing each student with a continual feedback about his performance.					
24. Employing frequent assessment activities to track each student's educational achievement.					
25. Supporting peer-assessment as an assessment tool to consolidate learning and evaluate students' performance.					
26. Encouraging self-assessment in my classes and using the outcomes to motivate learning.					

Section V: Factors that influence assessment methods

“According to your opinions and beliefs as a lecturer, to what extent do you think that the following factors may positively or negatively affect the assessment methods and objectives in your class?”

Could you please choose one number from 1 to 5 and write it in the square opposed to each item in the table by using the five point scale provided below.

1 = strongly negative 2 = negative 3 = no effect 4 = positive 5 = strongly positive.

	1	2	3	4	5
27. The large number of students in the class.					
28. Lack of technological facilities in the department.					
29. Insufficient teaching time.					
30. Using students' self-assessment as assessment tool to measure students learning and attainment.					
31. Employing students' peer-assessment in the evaluation process.					
32. Employing high-stakes examinations that have crucial impact on students' future education and career.					

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey.

Appendix 2A: Teachers' Interviews Questions

1. Could you tell me about the current assessment methods, strategies and techniques that you are using in your class?
2. Could you tell me about the assessment activities and practices which you use to support the teaching and learning process during the course? And how?
3. Do you think that current assessment methods and techniques influence the status and future of students, teachers and educational institutions?
4. To what extent do you feel that you are responsible if your students get low marks?
5. Could you tell me about the teaching methods and practices that you employ in your class?
6. Could you tell me if you need to modify the content of the syllabus that you teach or your teaching methods according to students' learning needs during the course? And why?
7. Could you tell me if you need to modify the content of the syllabus that you teach or your teaching methods according to the objectives of the assessment and testing process? Why?
8. Can you tell me about the main goals of the assessment and testing process for the course that you teach?
9. Do you think that you depend on summative assessment practices as a main tool to evaluate your students? Why?
10. Could I know the main formative assessment practices and activities which you use to evaluate students and to improve teaching and learning process?

11. Have you ever attended any workshops on the classroom assessment methods and techniques?
12. Have you ever received any training for using different assessment techniques and strategies at your class?
13. Could I know the main factors and obstacles that prevent you to achieve the objectives of the assessment and education process?
14. Would you like to add any further comments or notes on the current assessment and education methods and techniques in your department?

Appendix 2B: Sample of Teachers' Interviews Transcript

Q1- Could you tell me about the current assessment methods, strategies and techniques that you are using in your class?

Participant: In general, I always make an oral test at the first five minutes of the lecture in which I ask the students on the previous lesson {AP}. Sometimes, I make a recap as a summary of what have been said in the last lecture with the help of the PowerPoint slides whereas the first slide will contain a summary of the previous lesson {TP}.

Researcher: do you test of the students' understanding by using this strategy of what have been taught in the previous lesson?

Participant: I follow this technique when the lessons are related to each other and also to assess students' understanding of the previous lessons and also to motivate them {TVs}. I sometimes use formative assessment once a month {FA} and also give them a test or two tests during the whole year {AP} in additional to the mid-term and final exam {SA} or to ask them write an assignment at home and bring it to be assessed by the teacher {AP}. I both use summative and formative assessment.

Q2- Could you tell me about the assessment activities and practices which you use to support the teaching and learning process during the course? And how?

Participant: I use the traditional way that students are used to and by which they have been taught in previous educational stages (they study to pass the exam) even we as teachers we studied by using this way. According to my experience this way is beneficial especially to careless students {TVs}. In this way, I simply inform the students that they have a test next lecture in the topics that they have previously studied. In this way the students will be enforced to study {FA}.

Researcher: To support the teaching and learning process and also to set the objectives of the course and the assessment process or even to form the syllabus, do you use placement test at the beginning of the course?

Participant: It depends on the nature of the subject. For example, I teach two subjects: Phonetics and Speaking. In the first subject I did not use placement test because it is the first time for students to study this subject and I know that my students do not have previous knowledge about this subject {TVs}. On the other hand, I made a placement test in speaking subject {AP} to assess the students' level and to know if the syllabus that I am going to teach is suitable for their level and abilities {RA}. I found that the syllabus is higher than their level and as a result I modified the syllabus to make it simple and to fill the gap between their abilities and the syllabus and after that I come back to the original syllabus and the results were satisfied {TRW}.

Researcher: Do you use diagnostic tests to support the teaching and learning process?

Participant: I rarely use them but if I found my students cannot understand a specific point I try to make a diagnostic test to discover the problem {TRW, TVs}.

Q3- Do you think that current assessment methods and techniques influence the status and future of students, teachers and educational institutions?

Participant: Yes, they affect on students' future directly because the method by which teachers and students were taught mainly depends on measuring memorization and the theoretical side of knowledge rather than real understanding and practical application of the knowledge they learn and this has a great effect on their future education and career. {AP, TVs, CI}

Researcher: what method of assessment which you mainly depend on, summative or formative?

Participant: I mainly depend on summative rather than formative {AP} whereas sixty marks out of one hundred marks are given to summative assessment {GS}. Regarding the remaining forty marks, it depends on the teacher himself to use them in a formative or summative assessment practices {GS}. For me as a teacher, I make a mid-term exam to which I give thirty marks out of forty and the remaining ten marks I use them in a formative assessment practices and activities {GS, AP}. This means that students can achieve ninety marks out of one hundred from summative assessment which can be described as high stakes assessment and will definitely affect students' current states and future education and career. This made the students just think how to pass the exam {TVs, AP, GS, ADs}. These methods and strategies of assessment have been inherited from one generation to another. These methods and strategies of assessment do not reflect students' real abilities, skills and understanding {TVs, CI}.

Regarding the teachers, to some extent they are influenced by assessment methods and techniques in terms of their educational reputation and maybe against the educational institution in which he is teaching {TVs}.

Regarding the educational institution, there will be an impact on the educational reputation of the institution and students' number will decrease because of students and their parents' hesitation to enroll in such department or educational institution {CI}.

Q4- To what extent do you feel that you are responsible if your students get low marks?

Participant: To be honest, I feel nervous and not comfortable when students cannot understand my explanation and when their performance and achievement is poor {TRW}. However, I do not feel responsible for their low marks because I do my best and use various ways to support them encourage them to learn {TVs}. I ask my good students to support their weak colleagues and that was useful strategy for them {TP, SC}. I do not feel responsible because those students who get low marks suffer from real learning difficulties and problems in previous educational stages which I am not responsible for {TVs, CI}.

Q5- Could you tell me about the teaching methods and practices that you employ in your class?

Participant: The methods that I use depend on the nature of the lesson that I explain {TVs}. I set some questions that need to be answered by the students. These questions reveal to what extent they understood some definitions and topics that I taught them before {FA}. I use the communicative approach as method of teaching {AP}. I give the opportunity for discussion in my class {AP}. When students encounter any learning difficulties because their lack of knowledge about a certain topic or subject I need to work as the only source of knowledge and information to help them by filling the educational gap and that is the common method most teachers employ {TP, LDs}. For example in the subject of speaking that I teach, I provided students with all information and knowledge at the beginning of the course because of their poor speaking abilities and skills {TP, LDs}. When I felt that their abilities and skills have improved, I gave them assignments and questions to search about by themselves and to present them inside the class {TP}.

Researcher: Do you deal with students individually, in groups or as a whole class?

Participant: I deal with students by using the three methods {TP}. However, I often deal with them individually and in pairs and rarely as a whole class. I always involve the active students who have self-confidence in the discussion as a technique to motivate other student who are less motivated or shy and make them more confident and enthusiastic {SC, SM}. However, I found that students like to receive information from their teacher rather than creating and producing information {TP, TVs}.

Q6- Could you tell me if you need to modify the content of the syllabus that you teach or your teaching methods according to students' learning needs during the course? And why?

Participant: Yes, I modify the content of the syllabus when find my students level is less than the content which I teach {TRW, TVs}. In this case I try to make it simpler to fill the learning gaps that students suffering from. In the subject of phonetics and phonology, I could not apply the plan for the syllabus intended and gave the students simplified topics before go to the main content. Regarding the teaching methods, I do not modify them if some students can understand my explanation and actively interact with me. For example, I do not involve students in the objectives of the subject which I teach because they do not have previous knowledge about it and do not know the nature of the subject {TVs}. However, in a subject like speaking I involve them. So this involvement depends on the nature of the subject {TVs}.

Q7- Could you tell me if you need to modify the content of the syllabus that you teach or your teaching methods according to the objectives of the assessment and testing process? Why?

Participant: The main objective of the assessment and testing process is to improve students' understanding and increasing their information and knowledge about the subject I teach {OsA}. Sometimes I use marks as a reward to interactive and active students to motivate students and encouraging them to study {SM}. One of the objectives of the assessment and testing for me is to measure students' abilities for real comprehension rather than memorization {OsA}. Regarding the teaching methods, time is not enough to modify them and sometimes I cannot finish the content of the subject {TDs}. So it is difficult to change teaching methods according to the objectives of the assessment and testing process {TRW}.

Q8- Can you tell me about the main goals of the assessment and testing process for the course that you teach?

Participant: The main goal is to make students understand the content of the syllabus and apply knowledge and information which they learn during the course and do not depend on memorization in their learning {OsA}.

Q9- Do you think that you depend on summative assessment practices as a main tool to evaluate your students? Why?

Participant: Yes, summative assessment is the main assessment tool for evaluating {AP, SA}. The main reason for following this strategy, it saves time and effort and also because of the large number of the students inside the class. Sometimes I have forty students in the class and I have to use summative assessment as a main a tool {RA, CI,}. Another reason is the administration of the college imposes using summative assessment as main tool {RA, CI}.

Researcher: Do you think that summative assessment is objective rather than subjective make it as a main assessment tool?

Participant: Yes, I think so. I can depend on the results of the summative assessment as fair assessment tool that can be free the teacher' bias to some extent {TVs}.

Q10- Could I know the main formative assessment practices and activities which you use to evaluate students and to improve teaching and learning process?

Participant: I usually make an oral test during the first five minutes of the lecture as I mentioned before in my answer to the first question in the interview {FA}.

Researcher: do you give marks for this test?

Participant: Sometimes I gave marks to this oral test especially when I feel students careless and do not react with my questions {SM, TRW, RA, AP}. However, the main reason behind doing this test is to support teaching and learning process {FA}.

Q11- Have you ever attended any workshops on the classroom assessment methods and techniques?

Participant: We do not have any co-operation among teachers. The role of teachers regarding this issue is negative {CI, TK}.

Q12- Have you ever received any training for using different assessment techniques and strategies at your class?

Participant: I have never ever received any training {CI, TK}.

Q13- Could I know the main factors and obstacles that prevents you to achieve the objectives of the assessment and education process?

Participant: The large number and insufficient time are main factors and obstacles that encounter me {CI, RA,}. The small number of the teaching rooms made us increase the number of students in each group and consequently it becomes too difficult to apply formative assessment or other useful teaching activities {CI, RS}. This problem affected on the subject objectives {OsA} whereas we teach subjects that require four hours a week, just two hours a week. Regarding the education process obstacles, they are similar to assessment and what I have been mentioned earlier.

Q14- Would you like to add any further comments or notes on the current assessment and education methods and techniques in your department?

Participant: The main notes which I have is that most teachers simplify the main content of syllabus to the extent it will not be suitable for a university level in order to meet weak abilities and skills for the students {TRW, TVs}. Teachers also design examinations and assessment practices that do not meet the level in which students study to avoid failure of their students {TRW}. The examination teachers give, should be given to preparatory school students not university students {TVs}.

Researcher: what about you? Do you do the same thing for your examinations and the teaching subject?

Participant: For me, I do little modifications that are useful in some occasions which require that and reflect positively on my students' level {TRW}.

Researcher: could you give me a percentage of teachers who adopt this method in their teaching?

Participant: I can say 50% of teachers follow this strategy. I can say that the main reason for this problem because the department does not give teachers a particular curriculum to teach it and give the teacher a complete freedom to give whatever he sees is suitable to his or her students {CI}.

Appendix 3A: Questions of the Focus Group Interviews

1. To what extent do you think that the current teaching and assessment methods improve the real abilities and skills that you need to learn English?
2. To what extent do think that the current assessment and testing process evaluates the real abilities and skills of your learning?
3. To what extent do the teaching and assessment methods motivate you to improve your language learning?
4. Could you tell me about the main goals that you aspire to achieve when you take the test?
5. Could you tell me about the main goals that you intend to achieve before and during your study?
6. Can I know the main learning problems that you encounter during your study?
7. Could you tell me about if you are involved in setting the objectives of assessment and education process?
8. Have you ever been given the chance to practice self or peer assessment? How?
9. Have you ever been provided by a constructive feedback after any test or assessment activity?
10. To what extent can the results of examinations that you take influence your future education or career?
11. Do you think that the examinations you take cover the whole content of the syllabus that you studied during the course?
12. Do you think that the syllabus you study meets your learning needs?

13. Do you think that you have enough chance for discussion and to express your thoughts with instructor or colleagues?

14. Would you like to add any further comments or notes on the current assessment and education methods and techniques in your department?

Appendix 3B: Sample of Focus Group Interviews Transcript

1. To what extent do you think that the current teaching and assessment methods improve the real abilities and skills that you need to learn English?

3.2.A - For me the current teaching and assessment methods used by teachers who taught me do not improve me as a student {SVs}.

3.1.B - To some extent, they improved me. Sometimes I feel that they improved me and sometimes they do not {SVs}.

3.4.B - They are very traditional teaching methods in comparison with international teaching methods used in the world nowadays as well as the assessment methods are traditional methods that I feel as a students they do not evaluate me in a correct and accurate way that reflects my level in English {SVs, RSVs}.

Researcher: do your teachers give all students the chance to participate in the class?

3.3.A - In spoken, it is compulsory to participate in the class by a presentation or a conversation but in other subjects we do not have the chance because the teacher is the only speaker during the lecture and we just listen {SVs, TC}.

3.3.B - Most teachers, not all, give the opportunity for intelligent students not for all students to participate {CI}.

3.1.A - We have also chance to participate in reading, listening and spoken. For example in Reading, the teacher asks us to make a summary to the text we read {SC}.

Researcher: is there active interaction between you and teachers?

3.4.A - There is no interaction with teachers in general. It is a traditional way, they speak and explain and we listen {TC}.

3.3.A- Just in speaking we participate but other subjects no {TC, SC, FA}.

3.1.B - Sometimes students are negative and do not participate {SR}.

3.1.A-Some teachers do not like students to participate, they prefer to explain without interruption {TC}.

2. To what extent do you think that the current assessment and testing process evaluates the real abilities and skills of your learning?

3.4.A - Most students in our department are not academically qualified. This is because teachers follow assessment methods which are not challengeable to students and very simple {SVs}.

3.4.B - We had some examinations in Spoken which ask students very simple questions and do not meet their real abilities in university level. For example, some questions ask about colours or personal information {SVs}. The content of the subjects taught is lower than the students' level especially active and clever ones. The syllabus restricts eager students whose abilities and skills are higher than syllabuses taught. This reflected negatively on students' real competence {RSVs}. You find students with high scores that do not reflect his real skills and abilities {SVs}.

3.2.B - This problem made careless and weak students who are usually absent have the high scores like active and clever students who are always present. Examinations are designed with the same level of difficulty that does not contain tough questions that challenges clever students {SVs}.

3.3.B - The assessment methods do not evaluate the real abilities and skills because teachers limit the syllabus of the subject {SVs}. For example, in a subject like spoken, the teacher gives students some topics to study and questions will be about these topics. Students will memorize these topics and answer them in the exam {RSVs}. So this does not reflect the real abilities and skills for students in speaking subject {SVs}.

3.3.A - The questions of the exam do not distinguish excellent students from other students with normal or weak abilities. All students can get high marks because the very simple questions that are not able to examine the real abilities and skills of the clever and excellent students {SVs}.

3.2.A - We cannot find any differences in the syllabus and assessment methods as we proceed to advanced levels {SVs}.

3.1.B - The assessment and testing process do not evaluate my real abilities and skills because there is no diversity in the exam questions and assessment methods {SVs}.

3. To what extent do the teaching and assessment methods motivate you to improve your language learning?

3.4.A - Unfortunately, the technological facilities which is one of the most important teaching methods that support teaching are not available and this reflected negatively on the students' motivation for learning {SVs, CI, SM}.

3.3.B - For example, the subject of "Drama" is taught through sheets that students read and memorize the events of the play instead of watching these events in a film that facilitates understanding the events of the play {CI, SVs, SR}.

3.3.A - Only in the subject of Spoken, the teacher uses marks as a reward to motivate us when we answer questions or participate in the class. In other subjects, we are not motivated {SM}.

3.2.B - In the subject of Phonetics, the teacher asked us to act a real conversation in which our stress, intonation, and pronunciation will be observed by the teacher and marks will be given as a reward to motivate students {SM, SR}. The teacher's personality and good knowledge is the best thing that makes students motivated {SR, TK, SVs}.

3.1.A - For example in the subject of Phonetics, the teacher evaluated us through the mid-term exam only {AP, SA}. This strategy of assessment demotivated us and most of students do not need to participate in the class and attend lectures because we can study the syllabus at home and attend the exam to get the score and pass to the next academic year {SM, RSVs}. No marks are given to the participation in the class {GS}.

3.4.B - As the only method of assessment is a sheet of paper and filled by questions that need answers from the part of the students to achieve marks which enable them to pass the exam and go to the next academic year, no feedback, we are given the exam sheet and that is your mark and no more {GS, RSVs, SA}. When the student gets weak or good mark, the teacher does not give feedback that shows the mistakes and how to overcome them. This will motivate you and to work hard in the future {SVs, RSVs}.

3.2.A - Some teacher do not give us the answer sheet of the exam after correction. They just tell you the mark that you get without any feedback that might direct you and show the student's mistakes.

3.3.B - The worst thing is when the teacher builds some predictions about the students' performance and tell us how many students will pass before the exam takes place and sometimes this happens at early stages, at the beginning of the academic year {SM}.

4. Could you tell me about the main goals that you aspire to achieve when you take the test?

3.3.A - Marks come in my priority {LOs}.

3.2.B - For me and most Libyan students study to get good Mark in the exam {LOs}.

3.1.B - The first thing for me is the marks to raise my average that enables me get a job {LOs}.

3.3.B - If I get low marks that will decrease my total average and employers will not be interested to work with them. Some graduate students with good abilities and skills are refused from jobs because of their low average {SVs, LOs}.

3.1.A - Marks are the most important goal for me to pass and get good job {LOs}.

3.1.B - I want to know my mistakes but still marks important for me {LOs}.

3.2.A - The main goal for some students is to compete other colleagues and get marks higher than their colleague achieve {LOs}.

5. Could you tell me about the main goals that you intend to achieve before and during your study?

3.4.A - Before I come to college, the main aim is to acquire knowledge and improve my language skills and abilities. Now I am in the fourth year and the main aim is to graduate {LOs}.

3.1.A - My aim is to acquire language and still the same up to now but I am still at the beginning of the way and it may change during the next stages {LOs}.

3.1.B - At the beginning I aimed to be the first of my class but now just to graduate and work after that {LOs}.

3.3.A - I came to learn English and I still have the same aim{LOs}.

6. *Can I know the main learning problems that you encounter during your study?*

3.4.B - It is something normal to have obstacles in your study journey, but the problem is when you as a student cannot overcome these problem.For example, the learning problems that all students suffer from when they learn the listening skill. Teachers cannot help students to solve these problems and overcome them because there are no laboratories that help students listen and learn this skill in a proper way {CI}. In addition to that, these obstacles in listening skill influenced negatively in learning the speaking skill whereas students are not able to speak and pronounce words properly because they do not listen properly {SVs, CI}.

3.3.B - there is no concern with all technological facilities in the department that help students to learn and make them more motivated {SM, CI}. Another important factor is the lack of teaching time that students need to be more exposure to the language acquisition {CI}. Another problem is related to the syllabus, for example in the subject of grammar, I still study in same book from the first year until the third year now {TP}. There is no development in the syllabus taught while proceeding during the academic years {SVs}.

3.2.B - Some problems related to the learning environment. Most students cannot find the convenient environment out of the class to communicate in English and practice the different skills that may improve their competence at home and any private or public places {CI}.

Researcher: Do you have any problems related to the assessment methods?

3.3.A - some learning problems related to the methods of assessment whereas we do not receive any feedback from the teacher after mid-term and final examinations that show our mistakes and guide us in the future stages {SVs, AP}.

7. *Could you tell me about if you are involved in setting the objectives of assessment and education process?*

3.4.A - According to my experience for four years at the department as a student, I could not notice any role to the student in the department or the class. Students are just receptive. If we try to suggest any idea or subject, it will not be accepted and rejected immediately {TC}.

3.3.B - I have the same experience as my colleague in the fourth year. The student has no effective role in the class. They just receive information and knowledge and assessed according to that {TC}.

3.2.A - Teachers do not accept and corrections from students.

3.1.B - Just in the subject of listening, the teacher asked us to set the questions for the exam and suggest topics to learn {FA}.

Researcher: Could you tell me about any idea or aim you wished to suggest and has been ignored by the teacher or the department?

3.4.B - I wished that top students in the department are given special attention by granting them courses and training to improve their language competence {LOs}. I also wished to learn a syllabus which meets the level for the academic year we study in {LOs}. The syllabus of subject of grammar is the same in the first, second and third year. We asked the teacher to change the syllabus but he ignored our request.

3.3.A - We did not learn the 12th aspects of English tenses until we started the third year which be supposed to be taught from the first year.

8. Have you ever been given the chance to practice self or peer assessment? How?

3.2.B - We do not practice these methods of assessment because the students will not be objective in their assessments practices {SVs}.

3.3.B - We have practiced peer assessment in the second year and just in the subject of speaking where my colleagues have 25% per cent to assess my conversations with other colleagues while the rest of evaluation is done by the teacher. However, we never practice self-assessment in our classes {FA}.

3.4.A - Regarding self-assessment, I do it personally to evaluate my mistake and avoid them in the future. While peer assessment is too difficult to practice with colleagues because we do not have the culture to accept others corrections especially from those in the same level {SVs, RSVs}. For example, I could not find colleagues who interact with me to practice this kind of assessment even out of the class because they think that it is a kind of show {SVs, SR}.

3.1.A - We practice self-assessment in the reading subject whereas we read and evaluate our reading skill development {FA, SC}. We also practice peer assessment with each other to our mistakes and give advice to each other in some topics {FA}.

9. Have you ever been provided by a constructive feedback after any test or assessment activity?

3.4.B - Yes, there is a constructive feedback depending on the students' participation in the class. I still remember in the first year when I made a presentation which was not in a required way. The feedback that I had received, in that time, played a great role to avoid mistakes and improve my presentation skills {FA}.

3.3.A - There was no an individual feedback. However, the feedback was given in groups all to the whole class after the exam {FA}.

3.2.A - We usually receive a motivational feedback from some teachers to be like other excellent students in the class {SM}.

3.1.B - The most feedback we receive is in the subject of listening especially correcting our spelling mistakes and showing us new strategies and tactics to improve our listening skills {FA}.

10. To what extent can the results of examinations that you take influence your future education or career?

3.4.A - Regarding the career, they play a very important role. The higher marks and good results you achieve, the greater opportunities you will get for a career. Regarding the education, most of students are not interested to carry on for higher education and this, in turn, does not have a great influence for results of examinations on the students' future education {SVs}.

3.2.B - I think the results of examinations have a negative effect on future education and career when they do not reflect the real abilities and skills of the graduated student. In this case, he will not be qualified for his job or carrying on his education {SVs}.

3.1.A - I think if the student's marks are low this, in turn, will be disappointed to the student when he goes to work field or even higher education {SR}.

11. Do you think that the examinations you take cover the whole content of the syllabus that you studied during the course?

3.4.B - It is often the examinations do not cover the syllabus we study especially in the subjects with big content. I think it is a strategy to facilitate the exam to students in order to get high marks.

3.2.A - Sometimes the questions of the exam do not cover all the topics of the syllabus given in the class. They just cover a few topics and ignore many topics in which students have good understanding. This, in turn, will not reflect the real abilities and skills of the student in that subject {SVs}.

3.3.B - what I noticed in the third year that 60% percent of examinations cover the whole content of the syllabus but 40% percent of examinations do not {SVs}.

3.1.B - It depends on the teacher who designs the test but most of examinations cover the content of the syllabus {SVs}.

12. Do you think that the syllabus you study meets your learning needs?

3.4.A - They meet part of our learning needs but not all needs {SVs}.

13. Do you think that you have enough chance for discussion and to express your thoughts with instructor or colleagues?

3.4.B - The teaching methods used are very classic and traditional which made the student's role also traditional in the class and he cannot express his taught and discuss any topics with colleagues and teachers {SR, SVs}.

Researcher: would you like to add any further comments about this issue from other students?

3.2.B - The same thing happens with us in the second year.

14. Would you like to add any further comments or notes on the current assessment and education methods and techniques in your department?

3.3.A - In the first year we studied the subject of listening with one laptop because of the lack of technological facilities {CI}. I suggest that our department teach us listening subject for four years and not just in the first year because of the importance of this skill for learning the language {LOs}.

3.2.A - The problem that we face in learning the language lies in following theoretical methods in teaching the language rather than practical methods which are very important and they are the essential base for acquiring the four skills {TP}.

Researcher: could you tell me which is the common assessment method, summative or formative, used to evaluate you?

3.4.A - The common assessment method is summative rather than formative. It dominates 90% percent of other assessment methods in a form of mid-term and final exam {SA, SVs}.

3.4.B - In the fact there is no other assessment method except summative assessment {SA, SVs}.

Researcher: Why it is the only method of assessment?

3.4.A - It is the strategy of the our department to evaluate students and judge if they are able to move to the next academic year {CI, SVs}.

3.3.B - This assessment method, summative assessment, is not fair because active students who always attend and participate in the class during the whole year should undergo to the same measurement scale like other who are absent during lectures or less actives students in the class {SVs, SA}. This kind of measurement does not reflect a valid assessment and evaluation to the real abilities and skills of those students who might have any physical or psychological problems during the day of the exam {SVs, SA}.

Researcher: What about other students? Do you want to add anything regarding this issue?

3.2.B - The same thing, summative assessment is still dominant{SVs, SA}.

3.1.A – Summative assessment is the only way that is used to evaluate us{SVs, SA}.

Appendix 4: Themes and Codes Used for Qualitative Data Analysis

Sub-research Questions	Themes	Codes
SRQ 1- What are the current EFL teaching and assessment practices employed by teachers at Libyan universities; why and how do they employ these practices?	Teaching and assessment practices	Teaching practices (TP) Teacher-centred (TC) Student-centred (SC)
		Assessment practices (AP) Formative Assessment (FA) Summative Assessment (SA)
	Reasons for employing the teaching and assessment practices.	Reasons for teaching practices (RT) Contextual Impact (CI)
		Reasons for assessment practices (RA)
	Means and mechanisms for employing the teaching and assessment practices.	Means and mechanisms for teaching practices (MMT)
		Means and mechanisms for assessment practices (MMA)
SRQ 2- What views do teachers hold towards the current assessment practices they employ at Libyan universities; why do they hold these views and how are they translated into practice?	Teachers' views towards the current assessment practices which they employ.	Teachers' views (TVs)
	Rationale and motives for holding these views by teachers.	Rational for teachers' views (RTVs) Teachers' Knowledge (TK)
	Ways and procedures used for translating these views into practice by the teachers.	Teachers' ways to translate their views into practices (TWV)
SRQ 3- What are the main effects of the current assessment practices on the teaching and learning EFL; why are these effects there and how do teachers deal with them?	Assessment influence on teaching and learning practices. (washback effects).	Washback effects (WE) Grading System (GS)
	Reasons for the washback effects.	Reasons for washback effects (RWE) Objectives of the Assessment (OsA)
	Teachers' reaction towards the washback effects.	Teachers' reaction to washback (TRW)
SRQ 4- What views do students have towards the current assessment practices; why do they have these views and how do they deal with them?	Students' views towards the current assessment practices.	Students' views (SVs)
	The main rationales for holding these views by students towards the current assessment practices.	Reason for students' views (RSVs) Students' motivation (SM) Learning Objectives (LOs)
	Students' reactions towards the current assessment practices.	Students' Reaction (SR)

Appendix 5: Formal Notification of Ethical Approval from University of Hull

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ETHICAL PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

FORMAL NOTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Reference Number:	FoE 15/16-47
Name:	Ahmad Omeman
Programme of Study:	Doctor of Philosophy
Research Area/Title:	Teachers and students views to the use of High-Stakes Summative Assessment in Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language in Higher Education in Libya
Image Permission Form	N/A
Name of Supervisor:	Dr Peter Williams
Date Approved by Supervisor:	12/10/15
Date Approved by Ethics Committee:	30/11/15



Faculty of Education Ethics Committee

