

التعرف على مفاهيم أساتذة الجامعات حول التقويم التكويني

الهادف في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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الخلاصة :

إن امتلاك مواقف إيجابية تجاه التقويم التكويني في الفصل الدراسي لا شك له أهمية قصوى في تدريس وتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. إن التعرف على آراء المعلمين نحو التقويم التكويني قد يكون له أكثر فائدة لدعم تعلم الطلاب. تبحث هذه الدراسة في التحقق من آراء أساتذة الجامعات اللببية حول التقويم التكويني في الفصل الدراسي. وبناءً على ذلك، تمت صياغة سؤال البحث التالي لتوجيه الدراسة الحالية: ما هي مفاهيم التدريس التي يحملها أساتذة الجامعات اللببية تجاه التقويم التكويني في تدريس وتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؟ تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيانات مكتوبة ذاتيا أجاب عليها 30 معلما في اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الزاوية العامة. تمت دعوة المعلمين لإبداء آرائهم حول دور التقويم التكويني في تحسين تعليم الطلاب. تم تحليل النتائج بالنسبة المئوية في الإحصاءات الوصفية. تظهر الإحصائيات أنه تم التعبير عن آراء قوية جدًا حول التقويم التكويني كاستراتيجية قوية لدعم تعلم الطلاب. يقم التقويم التكويني الطلاب في عملية التعليم من خلال تحديد الفجوة في تعليم الطلاب، تقديم تغذية راجعة بناءة، وتقديم تقدم واضح في التعليم. وقد تؤدي أدلة جديدة إلى استنتاج أن هناك صلة قوية بين التقويم التكويني وتطوير التعليم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقويم التكويني والتعليم، مفاهيم التقويم التكويني في التعليم الجامعي

Exploring University Teachers' Conceptions of Formative Assessment in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Abstract

Having positive attitudes towards formative assessment in the classroom is unquestionably of paramount importance in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Investigating teachers' conceptions towards formative assessment would be more useful

for supporting students 'learning. This study investigates the Libyan university teachers 'views about formative assessment in the classroom. Based on this, the following research question was formulated to guide the current study: *What teaching conceptions do Libyan university teachers hold towards formative assessment in teaching and learning English as a foreign language?* Data were collected through self-completed questionnaires answered by 30 EFL teachers at the public University of Zawia. The teachers were invited to give their opinions about formative assessment role in improving student learning. The data were analyzed through a calculation of the percentage in descriptive statistics. Very strong opinions were expressed about formative assessment as a powerful strategy to supports student learning. Formative assessment involves students in the learning process through identifying the gap in student learning, providing constructive feedback and providing clear learning progressions. And new evidence may lead to the conclusion that there is a strong link between formative assessment and Learning development.

Keywords: *Conceptions of Assessment and Learning, Formative Assessment in University Education.*

Introduction

There has been much debate on the issue of assessment and learning. Assessment should be used for learning rather than to be just for assessment. Assessment has the benefit of a good education, particularly in university education. Assessment would perform the function of supporting student learning in the classroom (Ecclestone,1996).

Samuelowicz & Bain (2002) illustrated that the teachers who believe that the role of teaching is to facilitate students' learning

and encourage them to be involved in their learning through adopting critical thinking skills consider assessment as an integral part of the learning process in which a complete transformation of knowledge would happen. Moreover, Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne (2008) argue that teachers who thought that teaching is a construction of knowledge, they need to use a variety of formative assessment practices instead of traditional ones. However, according to Postareff et al (2012), a large number of teachers employ assessment of learning (summative) instead of using assessment for learning (formative). Different teaching conceptions towards assessment and learning may affect teachers' performance in the classroom (Brown, 2004; Brown, et al 2011).

Teachers and learners, therefore, need to adopt learner-centered assessment in which students can participate in the classroom and develop an awareness of how their needs can be satisfied accordingly. Hence, it is important for teachers to think about formative assessment and use it in the classroom in order to know what students need and to identify their learning problems in order to improve their performance. This requires that teachers need to encourage their students to compare their own work to criteria and/or standard and then receiving assessment feedback to enhance their learning and involve them in the learning process (Bould, 1991, 1995, Taras, 2005, 2010).

University EFL teachers, therefore, need to shift their focus from assessment to learning perspectives adopting appropriate educational methods of assessment such as formative assessment strategies – peer-assessment and self-assessment. They need to change their attitudes towards this strategy that involves students in their learning and helps them to take a decision about what they

need to do next. However, “even if teachers have all the required knowledge and skills for formative assessment, without the appropriate attitudes toward the role that formative assessment can play in teaching and learning, their knowledge and skills will lie dormant” (Heritage, 2007:145).

Formative assessment strategies empower students to be actively involved and have good communication skills in the learning process. EFL teachers, therefore, are invited to see this strategy as a way of learning and assessment in the Libyan university classrooms. Thus, EFL teachers should set a high value on both learning how to teach and learning how to assess. In this regard, there is an urgent need for qualified teachers to believe that new methods for solving the problems and using different techniques to improve assessment and learning would be adopted in Libyan university classrooms. Then, more effort would be made to make teachers well aware of the formative assessment strategies and raise the quality of EFL teaching and learning inside classrooms with the aim of encouraging students to receive a wide knowledge through developing the process of thinking to keep pace with the latest innovations in the learning and assessment process.

EFL Libyan university teachers are invited to give their conceptions about the fundamental principles of the formative assessment approach in which learners need to be involved in the learning process and become more independent of their teachers. This is because the aim of formative assessment is to give university students more power over their own learning (Gibbs, 1999).

Though there has been much research concentrating on teachers' and students' conceptions of formative assessment in the teaching and learning processes, more issues need to be known regarding

teachers' views towards formative assessment as a way to develop learning in university Libyan classes (Fletcher et al., 2012). Accordingly, knowing teachers' conceptions of formative assessment would attach a lot of importance to conceptions of teaching, learning and assessment in Libyan university education (Thompson, 1992). Finally, this study contributes more to our understanding of the results obtained from the subject being investigated in this paper comparing to other contexts.

Conceptions of Assessment and Learning

It has been argued that assessment and learning are interrelated – they are closely connected and affect each other (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Various studies were conducted in order to explore conceptions of assessment in relation to all dimensions of teaching learner-centered assessment (Dochy & McDowell, 1997; Brown et al., 2011; Webber, 2012). Heritage (2007:140) argues that “..., assessment is often viewed as something in competition with teaching, rather than as an integral part of teaching and learning found that assessment would be described as improvement for teaching and learning”. Effective assessment is integral to English language teaching and learning classes (James & Pedder, 2006). Ecclestone (1996) argues that although assessment is for assessment; it is supposed to achieve main purposes, namely empowers students to receive feedback on their own work and to give them confidence in their own learning. Assessment is very important to develop the learning process, particularly in university education. James (2006: 56) stated that “teaching and assessment are blended towards the goals of learning, particularly the goal of closing the gap between current understanding and the new understanding sought”.

Learners, therefore, can develop their own learning through their continuing participation. As a result, receiving feedback and closing the learning gap in any subject can be learned by learners and then, they may use them subconsciously and intentionally. This concept is essential for education as teachers need to direct students' aims towards achieving their own goals and offering other ones to solve them independently (Blanck, 1998).

In this regard, Vygotsky (1978) created The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPR) to show the relationship between teaching, learning and assessment interactions. According to Gipps (1994) the purpose of The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is mainly to assess students' performance and show what learners do to accomplish the best performance. "In educational assessment tester and pupil would collaborate to produce the best performance of which the pupil is capable, given help from an adult, rather than withholding such help to produce typical performance" (Gipps, 1994:9).

Thus, teachers should assist their students to use their help and provide appropriate feedback such as giving hints, clues, asking questions, and so forth. This type of assessment is called "dynamic assessment" which is very important for improving and using authentic classroom assessment (Bodrova and Leog, 2007:44). Students may develop their skills and assess themselves if they are offered any assistance from their teacher (Black et al, 2002), who acts as a guide and a facilitator of their learning (Goldstein, 1999). Teachers, therefore, need to apply the most effective activities on the students' learning, for example, 'clues', 'hints', 'books' or 'peer cooperative activities' (Bodrova and Leog (2007:43). The role of the teachers in formative assessment is to scaffold students'

learning and “move them from what they already know to what they can do next” (Heritage, 2007:142).

Scaffolding is a helpful way to teach students how to develop their skills, concepts or levels of understanding. And, “with scaffolding, the task itself is not changed, but what the learner initially does is made easier with assistance” (Bodrova and Leog, 2007:47). Hence, scaffolding is a special kind of help provided by the teacher to make students know how to perform certain activities with the aim to do such these activities alone (ibid). Scaffolding learning occurs “when teachers scaffold learning for students, they make an assessment of a student’s strengths and weakness, and on the basis of this assessment, provide the student with an idea of how to proceed with his or her own learning. When scaffolding learning, teachers provide students with hints rather than answers, so that students have the opportunity to get to the answer themselves” (Brook, 2004: 64). Thus, the effective learning is learning that would take place during the teacher assistance since the learner is ready to learn and work with his scaffolding teaching (Goldstein, 1999).

University teachers need to believe that “there is an understandable tension between the desirability in educational and motivational terms of involving learners in assessment...” (Tudor,1996:164). It is argued that the shift in the teacher and the student roles in the classroom is a concept of both learner-centered practice and learner-centered assessment (McCombs, 1998: 400). In other words, in order to make students part in classroom activities and discussions, students would take their responsibility to judge their work and improve their learning. Moreover, teachers need to have positive conceptions and encourage students to

participate in the learning process by assessing their own performance to monitor and direct their learning since students' decision become more important to construct their knowledge and evaluate their learning (Sadler, 1989). To achieve this, teachers should have a good attitude towards assessment and learning and think that learning is a shared responsibility inside classrooms (McCombs, 1998). In addition, they need to react positively to formative assessment through which students have the advantage of a good education in the learning process (Dochy & McDoweeel, 1997). Boud (2000) illustrated that formative assessment would develop teaching and learning and create a possible opportunity for successful progression of students' learning.

However, the literature of assessment in theory and practice incorporated the process of both summative and formative assessment, their function and the very close relationship between them in the enhancement of the teaching and learning quality (Taras, 2005; 2007). Since the meaning of 'formative assessment' is not clear enough, teachers and students need to draw a distinction between formative and summative forms (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Assessment for learning helps teachers to rethink again and again about student learning and their roles in the classroom (James, 2006). Summative assessment seems to be opposite of formative assessment. Summative assessment would be used for measuring results achieved by the students performed at a given time in the end of a specific course (Light & Cox, 2003). Thus, the use of summative assessment seems to be just for grading and certifying process. More importantly, teachers need to have strong opposing views that formative (assessment for learning) and summative (assessment of learning) functions would

not be the same (Biggs, 2003). Formative assessment is intended to support critical reflection and create good education (Ecclestone (2002).

Formative assessment activities help in linking between autonomy and motivation for working (Blanche, 1988). Ecclestone (2002) and Brophy (2004) appreciated the role of intrinsic motivation created by assessment process in developing the skills of meta-cognition and reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of one's own learning. Motivation would help learners to become more active, and then they can participate in the classroom activities and assessment practices. Subsequently, their learning responsibility which results from such participation may increase their confidence and motivation that leads to an effective and essential learning (Benson, 2001; Finch, 2007; Watkins et al, 2007).

Assessment for learning can lead to a significant improvement in student work (Cowan, 2006). To achieve this and get better education, student self-assessment which is a strategy of formative assessment needs to be employed in the classroom (James, 2006: 58). Formative practices can be used as key components of the self-assessment process that improves student learning. A considerable shift, therefore, from the teaching perspective to student learning centrality is more required (Boud, 1991; 1995). This is because formative assessment principles are related to learning and teaching context. And Enhancing student performance through self-assessment entails that teachers need to know both the self-assessment process and its implementation in the classroom (Taras, 2010: 199).

Ecclestone (1996) confirmed that the focus of the shift need to be from just measuring and diagnosing student learning to

implementing Formative assessment that could set goals and check learning progress. The emphasis is very much on diagnosing learners' learning needs, and making a great progress in the learning situation. Assessment should increase self-learning and support critical thinking skills (Gipps, 1994). Finally, EFL teachers should believe in making a very positive contribution to the success of formative assessment in enhancing teaching, learning and assessment disciplines in university education.

Formative Assessment in University Education

As mentioned earlier, assessment is of vital importance in the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, "...teachers' beliefs about assessment, teaching and learning played a significant role in their enactment of formative feedback processes in their classrooms" (Perumanathan, 2014:201). Formative assessment is very essential for a teacher classroom work to make learning happen and improve EFL learner performance.

Formative assessment is a systematic process to continuously gather evidence about learning. The data are used to identify a student's current level of learning and to adapt lessons to help the student reach the desired learning goal. In formative assessment, students are active participants with their teachers, sharing learning goals and understanding how their learning is progressing, what next steps they need to take, and how to take them (Heritage, 2007: 141).

From this, teachers would consider formative assessment as a beneficial process that provides further knowledge and information required to improve students' performance. More importantly, the formative assessment methods used by university teachers have an essential role in improving students' learning (Atkins, 2004). To

enhance student performance and make teachers work to be a step forward, formative assessment need to be used effectively in the classroom. However, there is a close relationship between assessment and learning; it appears that there is a big gap between theory and practice. Teachers, therefore, need to think positively about formative assessment and its implementation in EFL teaching university classes (Heritage, 2007).

EFL teachers in university education need to know that assessment for learning encourages students to take their own responsibility for ensuring their learning. Formative assessment is “all those things that teachers and students do together that help the teachers know where the learners are when they are learning and what they need to do to improve and how to go about it” (William & Marshall, 2002:47). This form of assessment would be useful for improving university teaching and learning methods. Assessment for learning is used to improve one’s performance and identify strengths and weaknesses after receiving teacher feedback. Pereira & Flores (2016:22) confirmed that in teachers’ perspective, “formative assessment improves the learning process, allows the monitoring of learning and feedback, identifies learning difficulties and it is a fairer assessment mode”. They stated that teachers viewed formative assessment as a continuous assessment process including the importance of student-centered assessment methods such as the ‘written test’, ‘practical work in groups’, ‘oral presentations’, ‘individual work and reports’.

Leahy and William (2012) argued that formative assessment power in improving student performance has been steadily increased over the last of quarter of a century. Dessie & Heeralal (2016) conducted a study investigating teachers’ perception of formative

assessment and learning concluding that the majority of teachers held positive perceptions about this type of assessment as a powerful strategy to enhance students' learning. And lots of teachers indicated that formative assessment would be an integral part of the teaching and learning processes. In addition, they saw that assessment for learning is a powerful way to

identify students' problem in learning, to improve every student science achievement, to empower students to study from day one, to capture students attention and effort, to develop students positive self-esteem and confidence, to motivate students to learn, to ensure all students to have an experience of success and to make all of them competent learners, and to reduce the rate of repetition and dropout than summative assessment (Dessie & Heeralal, 2016:76).

However, most teachers agreed that formative assessment would be separate from the teaching and learning processes. The teachers viewed formative assessment as a continuous tool used to evaluate students' performance and to provide constructive feedback in order to improve students' ability (Dessie & Heeralal, 2016:76). However, Heritage (2007: 145) considered that formative assessment is inseparable from the teaching/learning process and one cannot take place without the other. This is because formative Assessment has a strong influence on university teachers' classroom work as well as on taking students' learning forward (Black and Wiliam, 2012). From this, it is clear that this form of assessment is related to the teacher work that encourages and enhances student ability in the classroom (Black, 1986).

Dessie & Heeralal (2016) found that a large number of teachers believed that formative assessment includes language tests, tasks

and assignments, oral questions, class works, home works, midterm exams to make learning happen through which the learners construct and reconstruct meaning for themselves. In this regard, Agbesanwa (2014) argues that formative assessment activities employed by EFL teachers would be 'paper and pencil test', 'quiz', 'portfolio', 'anecdotal record', 'interview', 'group work', 'performance task', 'question and answer (oral)', 'observation and project'.

Fakeye (2016) concluded that teachers have disposition and positive attitudes to formative assessment and its constructive feedback which are indispensable to support students' learning outcomes in EFL teaching and learning classroom. Moreover, the teachers' conception showed that assessment for learning would involve students in their own learning. However, as explained by the teachers, such the activities mentioned above were not considered as an integral part of the instruction to enhance student learning excluding simple oral questions which were used for evaluation rather than for learning purposes.

Dessie & Heeralal (2016:77) highlighted that there has been a considerable number of teachers thought that formative assessment strategies would give teachers and students an opportunity to interact with each other. The interaction between teachers and students is resulted from the assessment feedback which is very important for students to identify and fill gaps in the learning process. Thus, identifying and filling gaps as well as giving feedback play a seminal role in formative assessment. Nevertheless, it was concluded that teachers negatively considered it as detailed correction of students' work (Dessie & Heeralal, 2016).

Identifying the 'gap' is a key element in assessment for learning. And "the teacher's task is to identify and build on immature but maturing structures and, through collaboration and guidance, to facilitate cognitive growth" (Heritage, 2007:141-142). Filling the gap requires that students need to think deeply and find a solution to deal with their problems and improve their performances through receiving teacher feedback (ibid).

Ahmedi (2019) concluded that the teachers had positive attitudes towards formative assessment as a strategy to support quality in education however they would not implement this form of assessment in practice. According to (Heritage, 2007), formative assessment is used to improve education through providing constructive feedback to both teachers and students. Formative assessment feedback would make the teachers be aware of the current student performance through which prior knowledge will be considered

The other benefit of feedback is to help students identifying actual and potential learning stages. It has been argued that providing students with the formative feedback 'loop' is assured by 'Sadler's model' in which teachers and students are being involved in the learning process. Feedback provided by teacher need to be effective, understandable, showing learning progressions as well as not be judgmental. Effective assessment feedback is always required in order to close the gap between the students' current performance and the intended achievable goals as well as to provide more information regarding the teaching/learning process. Adopting assessment for learning style entails students to receive feedback to enhance their learning. Formative assessment feedback also plays an important role in motivating students for

learning through being well aware of their learning capacity (Heritage, 2007).

Formative assessment feedback given by the teacher is very necessary for making a notable change that helps students to achieve their learning goals and check their own progress (Irons, 2008). In this regard, students may have a chance to be aware of their weakness and strengths. Then, they may interact with their teachers and colleagues to improve their own work. Accordingly, they would have a wide developed knowledge and collect relevant information about their own work. Moreover, students may become more independent of their teachers through formative assessment practices (Ecclestone, 1996).

In addition, students may increase their motivation for learning and make a possible learning atmosphere in the classroom through formative assessment activities including "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" (Black & Wiliam, 1998: 2).

Integrating formative assessment in the learning process requires that teachers need to have an encouraging response and to have enough knowledge to assess student performance (Heritage, 2007). Accordingly, new teachers need to have opportunities to be very knowledgeable about the role of formative assessment in supporting students' learning. This is because well-formed teachers about strategies of formative assessment play an important role in making students familiar with the skills essential to integrate assessment in classroom practice (Heritage, 2007).

The learning process would be enhanced through formative assessment in which students become active involvement in the learning process. Formative assessment methods include self- and peer assessment through which students work to gather with their teacher in order to develop their current learning and achieve their own desirable goals. This leads students to us 'metacognitive processes' by which they need to think deeply and monitor their learning in order to meet their own needs and become 'self-reliant' ones (Heritage, 2007). Besides, Ecclestone (2007) states that the involvement of students in their learning could take place when they have the opportunity for discussing the assessment criteria, comparing their work to the agreed criteria, receiving continuing feedback when using formative assessment inside classrooms. Formative assessment is therefore, very essential for effective teaching and learning that would be diagnosed and enhanced through providing constructive feedback. She confirmed that this form of assessment is used to make learners familiar with their abilities and learning outcomes, to provide constructive feedback, to check progress and accomplishments, to motivate learners and monitor their own learning. "Formative assessment has to encourage critical reflection and engagement with dilemmas in subject disciplines, social and occupationally related issued" (Ecclestone, 2002: 40).

For learning progression, students need to work in close collaboration with their teachers on establishing and determining the assessment criteria to achieve much success in learning progress. By providing guidance for teachers and students, formative assessment would develop a learning progression which is clearly shown in progressive work towards the ultimate desirable

goal. However, students without teachers could not arrive at a clear progression for understanding and achieving their standard desired goals. Formative assessment would develop learning progressions toward standards. Learning progressions would help teachers and students in determining what should be learned to achieve progress and identifying students' current learning. Learning progression includes 'short-term goals' that students need to consider in order to achieving successful criteria which guide students' learning (Heritage, 2007).

Above all, it was very clear that the role of formative assessment is to give students more power over their learning. This is because it gives the teachers the opportunity to make frequent, interactive assessments of student understanding of all their educational challenges (Ikpi et al., 2019:36).

Formative assessment may not help students to become independent of their teachers. However, formative assessment strategies such as self-assessment and peer assessment which increase the student awareness and meets their demand for further education aiming those students would learn independently of their teachers. This requires that students need to be involved in the learning process and improve their own work through the teacher feedback and the interaction between the students and their teacher in the classroom (Ecclestone, 1996).

EFL teachers, therefore, need to think about these strategies and to encourage students to learn and assess their own learning authentically through classroom interactions and communication skills instead of memorizing lessons, taking dictation and/or receiving knowledge without active participation in its construction. Formative assessment strategies like peer- and/or -

self-assessment tools become required to support English language teaching, learning and assessment in university classrooms. Due to this fact and in order to involve students in their own learning, most teachers need to believe in doing self-assessment, peer-assessment, asking oral questions, and providing effective feedback to improve their learning. Finally, for these big issues, investigating the EFL teachers' conceptions of formative assessment in Libyan university education are of paramount importance to assessment and learning.

Research Methodology

Data Collection and Analysis

To investigate teachers' conceptions of formative assessment, constructing a questionnaire is useful to examine quantitative data. Questionnaires are defined as "written instruments that present all participants with the same series of questions or statements, which the participants then react to either through providing written answers, marking Likert-style judgements or selecting options from a series of statements" (Gass and Mackey, 2007:148). Construction is an important part of a questionnaire in order to think and make sure about "what the questions in a survey are designed to measure or what the construct is that the measure is trying to assess" (Tymms, 2012: 237).

According to Robson (2002) attitudes, values, motives and beliefs would be investigated by using questionnaires. Based on this and on the research question used for this study, the questionnaire would be a suitable instrument to explore teachers' conceptions in the current study since it helps in asking all the participants the same questions (Cohen et al, 2007). However, Leedy (2005) claims that if a questionnaire would not achieve the aims of the

study and would not answer the research question, it may lead to inaccurate and insufficient findings. In response to the research question created for this study, a questionnaire was conducted to measure and analyze teaching conceptions of formative assessment held by university teachers who were certified and experienced in English language teaching in Libyan classrooms. The questionnaire has 24 closed-ended items (see appendix.1) divided into 6 clusters, namely teaching conception of formative assessment as a power over learning, teaching conception of formative assessment as a power to provide feedback, teaching conception of formative assessment as a power to involve students in their learning, teaching conception of formative assessment as a power to identify and fill the gap in student learning and teaching conception of formative assessment as a power to develop learning progressions.

The 5 - point Likert scale has been selected as a rating scale for each statement ranged from agree (A), strongly agree (SA), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD) and uncertain (U) (see Appendix 1). However, the responses appeared to be in three: agree and strongly agree for agree (A) responses, disagree and strongly disagree for disagree (D) responses and neutral (U) to uncertainty about the statement. The questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 30 EFL university teachers at Zawia University in Egelate Zone (Bell, 1993). Gall et al. (2007:170) defined a random sample as “a group of individuals drawn by a procedure in which all the individuals in the defined population have an equal and independent chance of being selected as a number of the sample”. However, “ill-constructed questionnaires” may not provide reliable and invalid data. Typical

questionnaires are used for identifying “categories, viewpoints and models that have been precisely defined by the researcher in advance, and numerical or directly quantifiable data are collected to determine the relationship between these categories and to test the research hypotheses” (Dornyei, 2003: 12-14).

The first step in the analysis of the data was entering the data into the computer and then presenting the findings obtained in clear understandable statistical tables. Dytham (2011:5) ensures that simple descriptive statistics are “in fact extremely useful for data investigation”. Accordingly, this type of statistics is used for analyzing the questionnaire. The statistics present numbers and their percentages of the teachers who responded to the items of the questionnaire that have been positively and highly perceived.

Findings

The goal of this section is to present and analyses data as well as to discuss the findings obtained from the quantitative data in order to address teaching conceptions towards formative assessment held by university teachers in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Libyan classrooms.

Table1: Teachers’ conceptions on formative assessment as a power over education.

No	Items	No %	A (1)	SA (2)	D (3)	SD (4)	U (5)	Agree (1) (2)	Disagree (3) (4)
1	Formative assessment is an alternative approach adopted to	Coun t	10	7	5	8	0	17	13
		%	33.3	23.3	16.6	26.6	0.0	56.6	43.3

	assess students' learning performance.								
2	Formative assessment supports student learning in learner-centered assessment tasks.	Count	9	9	5	6	1	18	11
		%	30.0	30.0	16.6	20.0	3.3	60.0	36.6
3	Formative assessment (assessment for learning) contrasts with summative assessment (assessment of learning).	Count	8	7	8	2	5	15	10
		%	26.6	23.3	26.6	6.6	16.6	50.0	33.3
4	Formative assessment is assessment for learning, continuous assessment or classroom assessment.	Count	9	8	7	3	3	17	10
		%	30.0	26.6	23.3	10.0	10.0	56.6	33.3
5	Formative assessment needs to be an integral part of the communicative classroom learning and practice.	Count	8	8	8	2	4	16	10
		%	26.6	26.6	26.6	6.6	13.3	53.3	33.3
6	Formative assessment encompasses all the activities done by	Count	12	4	6	7	1	16	13
		%	40.0	13.3	20.0	23.3	3.3	53.3	43.3

	teachers and/or students in a communicative classroom.								
7	Formative assessment increases teaching loads and involves extra work in a communicative language classroom.	Count	10	10	5	5	0	20	10
		%	33.3	33.3	16.6	16.6	0.0	66.6	33.3
8	Formative assessment entails teachers to do certain tasks or activities in a communicative learning classroom.	Count	15	6	3	4	2	21	7
		%	50.0	20.0	10.0	13.3	6.6	70.0	23.3
The Average Rate of Agreement					17.5 %				

The statistics above indicate that the average rate of the teachers' conceptions on formative assessment as a power over education is 17.5%. The average rate of agreement was supported by each item in (table1). According to the first one, the majority of the teachers were agreed that formative assessment is an alternative approach adopted to assess students' learning performance. Moreover, the next item shows that the majority of the participants were agreed that classroom assessment develops student learning in learner-centered assessment tasks. In addition, in the light of the third item, the majority of the participants have the same opinion that formative assessment contrasts with summative assessment. Besides, the fourth statement shows the majority of the participants were agreed that formative assessment is assessment for learning

and continuous classroom assessment. In addition, according to the item number five, many teachers were agreed about formative assessment needs as an integral part of the communicative classroom learning and practice. And for item six, the majority of the participants were agreed that formative assessment includes all the activities done by both teachers and/or students in the EFL classroom. Moreover, for item 7, many teachers were agreed that continuous assessment increases teaching loads and involves extra work in a communicative language classroom. Moreover, concerning the last item, the majority of the participants were agreed that formative assessment entails teachers to do certain tasks in classroom learning. Finally, the teachers were very positive towards these conceptions.

Table 2: Teachers’ conceptions on formative assessment as a power to improve student learning.

No	Items	No %	A (1)	SA (2)	D (3)	SD (4)	U (5)	Agree (1) (2)	Disagree (3) (4)
1	Formative assessment improves classroom practice and supports student learning outcomes.	Count	11	8	2	8	1	19	10
		%	36.6	26.6	6.6	26.6	3.3	63.3	33.3
2	Formative assessment is used to build self-confidence and develop student's	Count	8	7	7	7	1	15	14
		%	26.6	23.3	23.3	23.3	3.3	50.0	46.6

	responsibility for learning.								
3	Formative assessment promotes student independent learning and develops their learning autonomy.	Count	13	6	7	2	2	19	9
		%	43.3	20.0	23.3	6.6	6.6	63.3	30.0
4	Formative assessment identifies a	Count	5	9	4	4	8	14	8
		%	16.	30.	13.	13.	26.		26.6
5	Formative assessment motivates students to work and learn more efficiently.	Count	15	6	3	4	2	21	7
		%	50.0	20.0	10.0	13.3	6.6	70.0	23.3
The Average Rate of Agreement					17.6 %				

According to statistics shown in (table 2), the mean of the teachers' conceptions on formative assessment as a power to improve student learning was 17.6%. For item 1, it was clear that the majority of the teachers were agreed that formative assessment improves classroom practice and supports student-learning outcomes. Also. The next one indicates that the majority of the participants were agreed that formative assessment is used to build self-confidence and develop student's responsibility for learning. Therefore, they were very positive towards this conception. Moreover, the other item refers to the concept of formative assessment promotes student independent learning and develops their learning autonomy that was supported by most of the participants. In addition, item 4 indicates that the majority of the

participants were agreed that formative assessment identifies a lack of knowledge learned by students now and then. Besides, for the last sentence, most of the teachers were agreed that formative assessment motivates students to work and learn more efficiently. Lastly, it was clear that the teachers were very positive regarding these conceptions.

Table 3: Teachers' conceptions on formative assessment as a power to provide constructive feedback.

No	Items	No %	A (1)	SA (2)	D (3)	SD (4)	U (5)	Agree (1) (2)	Disagree (3) (4)
1	Formative assessment enables students to revise their work and correct their errors to improve their learning.	Count	14	0	5	7	4	14	12
		%	46.6	0.0	16.6	23.3	13.3	46.6	40.0
2	Formative assessment provides formative feedback to enhance both teaching and learning performance.	Count	4	14	3	9	0	18	12
		%	13.3	46.6	10.0	30.0	0.0	60.0	40.0
3	Formative assessment represents all of the activities that require feedback to engage students in their own learning.	Count	12	3	4	8	3	15	12
		%	40.0	10.0	13.3	26.6	10.0	50.0	40.0
4	Formative assessment informs students about their learning and gives them time for reflection to achieve their goals.	Count	6	9	5	5	5	15	10
		%	20.0	30.0	16.6	16.6	16.6	50.0	33.3
The Average Rate of Agreement					15.5 %				

According to the teachers' conceptions on formative assessment as a power to provide constructive feedback the average rate of agreement was 15.5 %. For item 1, most of the teachers were agreed that formative assessment helps students in revising and correcting their errors to improve their own work. In addition, statistics show that the second item was supported by most of teachers who confirm that formative assessment provides formative feedback to enhance both teaching and learning performance. Moreover, for the statement 3, the majority of the participants were agreed that formative assessment represents all of the activities that require providing assessment feedback to improve student ability. Besides, for the last item, most of the participants were agreed that formative assessment informs students about their learning and gives them a time for reflection to think deeply and achieve learning goals. Therefore, the teachers were very positive towards these conceptions.

Table 4: Teachers' conceptions on formative assessment as a power to involve students in the learning process.

No	Items	No %	A (1)	SA (2)	D (3)	SD (4)	U (5)	Agree (1) (2)	Disagree (3) (4)
1	Formative assessment helps students <i>to monitor their learning and involve them in the learning process</i>	Count	20	0	8	1	1	20	9
		%	66.6	0.0	26.6	3.3	3.3	66.6	30.0
2	Formative assessment techniques include oral questioning, homework, student presentation, quizzes and tests, etc.	Count	15	2	8	3	2	17	11
		%	50.0	6.6	26.6	10.0	6.6	56.6	36.6

3	Formative assessment represents all of the activities that require feedback to engage students in their own learning.	Count	12	3	4	8	3	15	12
		%	40.0	10.0	13.3	26.6	10.0	50.0	40.0
4	Formative assessment includes peer- and self-assessment strategies for fostering student learning.	Count	9	9	6	3	3	18	9
		%	30.0	30.0	20.0	10.0	10.0	60.0	30.0
5	Formative assessment entails setting and understanding assessment criteria and/or standard.	Count	10	7	8	4	1	17	12
		%	33.3	23.3	26.6	13.3	3.3	56.6	40.0
The Average Rate of Agreement				17.4 %					

In the light of statistics, the average rate of agreement for the following concept: formative assessment as a power to involve students in the learning process was 17.4 % and supported by the majority of the teachers. In addition, the second item - classroom assessment techniques include oral questioning, homework, student presentation, quizzes and tests, etc. was positively answered by the majority of the teachers. Moreover, item 3 indicates that most of the teachers were agreed that formative assessment represents all of the activities that formative assessment enhances interaction for learning in the classroom. Besides, the fourth sentence shows that the majority of the participants were agreed that formative assessment includes both peer- and self-assessment strategies to enhance student learning. In addition, the last item refers that the majority of the teachers were agreed that formative assessment requires establishing and understanding assessment criteria and/or standard. Finally, from

the analysis, it was clear that the teachers were very positive about these conceptions.

Table 5: Teachers' conceptions on formative assessment as a power to identify the gap in student learning.

No	Items	No %	A (1)	SA (2)	D (3)	SD (4)	U (5)	Agree (1) (2)	Disagree (3) (4)
1	Formative assessment is a powerful strategy for students to close the gap and identify their needs.	Count	10	4	7	6	3	14	13
		%	33.3	13.3	23.3	20,0	10.0	46.6	43.3
The Average Rate of Agreement					14.00 %				

Descriptive statistics show that the average rate of agreement on the teachers' conceptions on formative assessment as a power to identify the gap in student learning was just 14.00%. Based on this, most of the teachers were not agreed that formative assessment is a powerful strategy for students to close the gap and identify their needs. Accordingly, the teachers were not very positive towards this conception.

Table 6: Teachers' conceptions on formative assessment as a power to provide clear learning progressions.

No	Items	No %	A (1)	SA (2)	D (3)	SD (4)	U (5)	Agree (1) (2)	Disagree (3) (4)
1	Formative assessment helps students in achieving learning goals and progressions.	Count	5	8	7	3	7	13	10
		%	16.6	26.6	23.3	10.0	23.3	43.3	33.3
The Average Rate of Agreement					13.00 %				

Statistics indicate that the average rate of agreement about the teachers' conceptions on formative assessment as a power to provide clear learning progressions was only 13.00 and most of the teachers were disagreed that formative assessment enables students to achieve their learning goals and progressions. Therefore, the teachers were not positive towards this conception.

Generally, it was obvious that a considerable number of teachers had positive attitudes towards formative assessment as being basically good strategy for supporting students' learning and involving them in the learning process. However, some teachers explore contrasting views about formative assessment in the classroom learning.

Discussion

The results of the study indicated that teachers held positive conceptions of formative assessment in teaching and learning in the classroom. This agrees with (Fletcher et al., 2012; Thompson, 1992) who claimed that good teaching attitudes towards formative assessment would enhance assessment and learning in the learning process. This gives fascinating insights that teachers' understanding of the fundamental principles and practices of this strategy would improve students' performance and involve them in the learning process (Perumanathan, 2014). However, it is not enough that teachers have all the essential knowledge and skills needed for formative assessment unless they have a positive view about it and use its strategies in the classroom (Heritage, 2007; Postareff et al, 2012).

- ***Formative assessment and developing the educational process***

The findings of this study showed that the teachers were more positive towards the role of formative assessment (assessment for learning) in the learning process than the role of summative assessment (assessment for learning) (Biggs, 2003; Light & Cox, 2003, Taras, 2005; 2007a). Similarly, many authors appreciated the role of formative assessment through which both teachers and students would improve their performance in the classroom (Dochy & McDoweeel, 1997; Boud, 2000; Ecclestone, 2002; Atkins, 2004; James, 2006; Cowan, 2006; Heritage, 2007; Black, 1986; Taras, 2010; Black and Wiliam, 2012). Moreover, the results indicated that the teachers had a considerable response that formative assessment would be an alternative approach used to improve student learning in the learning process (Ecclestone, 1996; Postareff, Virtanen, Katajavuori & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012) and it would be used as a continuous assessment strategy in the classroom (Dessie & Heeralal, 2016). Some of teachers considered formative assessment as an integral part of the learning process (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2002; James & Pedder, 2006; Heritage, 2007) and most of them had a good attitude on learner-centered assessment tasks in the classroom (Dochy & McDowell, 1997; McCombs, 1998; Brown et al., 2011; Webber, 2012).

The teachers had a positive attitude that assessment for learning requires increasing teaching loads and doing certain tasks such as rising oral questions and making quizzes and doing tests to enable learners construct meaning and make learning took place in the classroom (Agbesanwa, 2014; Dessie & Heeralal, 2016). However, Fakeye (2016) found that simple oral questions raised

by teachers in the classroom were used for judgments and evaluations and were not used for assessment and learning improvements (Ecclestone, 1996; Gipps, 1994). And also it was thought that continuous assessment classroom learning entails all the activities performed by a teacher as a guide and a facilitator of student learning in assessment activities such as 'clues', 'hints', 'books' or 'peer cooperative activities' (Bodrova and Leog, 2007; Black et al, 2002).

• ***Formative assessment and improving student learning***

As shown in the statistical tables, many teachers realized that assessment for learning would support and develop the student learning and the assessment process (Gibbs, 1999; Ecclestone, 2002; Brophy, 2004; Cowan, 2006; Ahmedi, 2019) and it would be an important motivational factor for working and learning efficiently (Blanche, 1988) through effective interaction between teachers and students in the classroom (Dessie & Heeralal, 2016; Ikpi et al., 2019).

The teachers appreciated the formative assessment role in building student self-confidence, attracting learner attention and taking their responsibility for learning (Ecclestone, 1996; Dessie & Heeralal, 2016; Benson, 2001; Finch, 2007; Watkins et al, 2007). They held a perception that assessment for learning develops student awareness about the knowledge construction during formative practices instead of summative practices (Sadler, 1989; Black & Wiliam, 1998: 2; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008).

The teachers believed that formative assessment supports independent learning and develops learning autonomy (Blanche, 1988; Gibbs, 1999; Ecclestone, 1996) through identifying

student's strengths and weakness and willing to learn more about their own performance (Brook, 2004; Pereira & Flores, 2016).

It was recognized by the teachers that formative assessment would give an opportunity for developing classroom practice (Bould; 1991, 1995) through giving students time for rethinking and reflection for learning (Gipps, 1994; Ecclestone (2002) and providing them with critical feedback (Ecclestone, 2002, 2007; Bodrova and Leog, 2007; Perumanathan, 2014). to monitor and direct their own learning (Sadler, 1989; Pereira & Flores, 2016) and work towards the setting goals (James, 2006, Heritage, 2007; Irons, 2008; Fakeye, 2016).

- ***Formative assessment and providing constructive feedback***

The teachers showed great conception that formative assessment would be a very effective assessment form for identifying, correcting and revising student work (Benson, 2001; Ecclestone, 2002; Brophy, 2004; Bodrova and Leog, 2007; Finch, 2007; Watkins et al, 2007) to improve learning performance through receiving constructive feedback (Ecclestone, 1996; William & Marshall, 2002; Bodrova and Leog, 2007; Irons, 2008; Perumanathan, 2014; Fakeye, 2016).

- ***Formative assessment and involving students in the learning process***

The teachers showed great perception that formative assessment and its strategies - peer- and self-assessment would enhance students' learning (Bould, 1991, 1995; Ecclestone, 1996, Cowan, 2006; Heritage, 2007; Taras, 2010) and involve them in the learning process (Gibbs, 1999; Ecclestone, 2002; Ecclestone, 1996, 2007, Heritage, 2007; Fakeye, 2016) through establishing

and understanding the assessment criteria and/or using standard (Boud, 1995; Taras, 2005, 2007a; Heritage, 2007; Taras, 2010) as well as receiving constructive feedback (Ecclestone, 2003, 2007; Heritage, 2007, Perumanathan, 2014; Dessie & Heeralal, 2016; Fakeye, 2016;) through formative assessment activities (Black & Wiliam, 1998) such as asking questions, doing homework, making presentation, making quizzes and doing tests, etc. (Brook, 2004, Bodrova and Leog, 2007, Agbesanwa, 2014; Dessie & Heeralal, 2016).

- ***Formative assessment and identifying the gap in student learning***

The results of the study indicated that formative assessment actively empowered students to close the gap between the student's current state of learning and the desired potential state of learning goals (James, 2006; Heritage, 2007; Dessie & Heeralal, 2016). The results revealed that the goal of closing the gap between current understanding and the new potential one would take place and develop through formative feedback, deep thinking (Ecclestone, 1996; Ecclestone, 2002; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2002) and scaffolding learning (Gipps, 1994; Bodrova and Leog, 2007).

- ***Formative assessment and developing learning progressions***

Finally, the teachers held views that formative assessment plays a seminal role in achieving learning goals and developing learning progressions toward standards and planned goals (Ecclestone, 1996; Boud, 2000; Heritage, 2007; Irons, 2008) through setting and discussing the assessment criteria (Bould, 1991, 1995; Ecclestone, 2007; Heritage, 2007; Taras, 2005, 2010) as well as providing constructive feedback to improve learning (Ecclestone, 2002, 2007; Dessie & Heeralal, 2016, Fakeye, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendation

To sum up, the results obtained from this study would be useful for the EFL learning and assessment process particularly in university education. Expressing good attitudes towards the formative assessment role in the teaching and learning process would make it as a worthwhile process of developing students' performance and involving them in their own learning in order to be independent learners.

The results revealed that the teachers had different conceptions of formative assessment. They hold critical views on the role of formative assessment as a powerful strategy for improving both assessment and learning and enhancing students' performance in the classroom. The teachers thought that formative assessment would be actively considered as an alternative assessment form that should be used for developing students' learning rather than to be just for purpose of measurement and certification. The teachers who had positive attitudes need to shift their focus from assessment to learning perspectives adopting critical methods of formative assessment. And the teachers who had negative attitudes towards formative assessment, they should have a rethink of this strategy that involves students in their learning and helps them to take a decision about what they need to do next.

They viewed that formative assessment and learning are inseparable. They believed that formative assessment would help students to build intellectual knowledge by adopting better creative skills and selecting alternative methods of analysis, conclusion, and construction of knowledge in order to improve their learning and encourage them to be independent. And, it would help them to think and look for a better understanding

through the assessment of their own work and the participation in the classroom activities.

The teachers had good attitudes to using formative assessment as an integral part of the learning process. The teachers appreciated this role in employing the assessment activities with the aim of providing students with critical feedback, constructing new knowledge and actively involving them in such effective daily tasks.

Assessing students' performance requires practical skills and knowledge about assessment and learning as well as staff development before going to the teaching profession particularly the staff members who are inexperienced in modern methods.

Teachers are playing a leading role in the education and assessment process. Hence, they should be informed about any changes and developments in the assessment and learning disciplines. Thus, it is important to prepare and develop the skills and knowledge of teachers who lack professional developments to improve standards and keep pace with up to date alternative assessment. This leads to the fact that teachers need to receive pre-service training courses in order to employ formative assessment effectively in the classroom.

Finally, it seems that there is a mismatch between the teachers' positive attitudes towards formative assessment and its implementation in the learning process. Therefore, teachers are invited to transform their positive views about formative assessment into practice in the classroom.

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