



**University of
Sunderland**

**Assessment Methods and Factors Affecting their Use by
Libyan Tutors in Assessing Students' writing and How these
Assessment Methods are Perceived by Students**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of the University of
Sunderland for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Faculty of Education and Society

November 2016

ABSTRACT

In higher education, assessment is a fundamental in measuring students' learning and supporting teaching. The assessment of students' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing can help in identifying students' learning needs, progress and teaching. A number of studies have been conducted on assessment in the Libyan context; however, these studies have focussed on other aspects of EFL teaching and learning and not EFL writing assessment.

The study, therefore, explores the assessment methods that EFL tutors use in assessing their students' written work. It also aims to examine the factors that affect tutors' choices of assessment methods and identify how students perceive the assessment methods concerning the process and product with relation to tutors' thinking.

To understand this topic from diverse perceptions, questionnaires were distributed to 12 tutors and 207 4th year students, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the sample of 12 tutors and six students (purposive sampling). SPSS software was adopted as a means for questionnaire analysis, while grounded theory was selected to analyse the interview data.

Both data collection instruments provide a range of interesting findings as tutors have experience in summative and formative assessment whereas self and peer assessment are not performed by all students. However, there are several factors that have a potential effect on the use of a variety of methods of assessment. Both tutors and student participants believe that summative assessment is a traditional method which has little effect on EFL writing skills.

Concerning the process and product of assessment, students have a deficiency of receiving assessment criteria while tutors' feedback is valued by all students and also grades are perceived as the main product of assessment by all participants. Further results indicate that all students agree that they have a lack of involvement in discussion group-assessment, feedback, criteria, standards, learning goals, self-grading and peer-grading. This is due to several factors that limited students being involved in such concepts in relation to assessment. For example, Libyan tutors still view assessment as being under their control, which restricted the opportunity for students to be involved in assessment. The key finding is the relationship between criteria, feedback and grades, as an example, without known criteria the students do not know what is being assessed, and the feedback is too broad because it covers every aspect of assessment.

Therefore, a contribution to knowledge is made by adding and expanding the current body of knowledge about assessment methods used in the Libyan EFL context. This study is important because it offers critical interpretations of what methods are used to assess students' written work in terms of the process and product, and the knowledge gained from this study could be used to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment methods not only in the Libyan context but also other second language users (L2) learning context.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would gratefully and sincerely thank Allah, who assisted me to complete this work. I would like also to acknowledge and express my special, warm and sincere thanks to the following people who assisted me in the current study:

To my supervisors: Dr. Maddalena Taras for her constant support, guidance, cooperation, encouragement and it is a privilege to have her as my director of studies. I would like also to thank, Professor Bridget Cooper for her support, guidance and cooperation through this study which assisted in making this work complete. I am very grateful to work with them as a team because this research would not have been possible without their great cooperation.

To my wife with special deep thanks are expressed for her support and patience throughout this journey. This work is dedicated to my family with a special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents and also to my children, sisters and brothers who have an inestimable value of education. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to make you proud.

To all my friends and colleagues who supported me during my difficult times. Furthermore, thanks go directly to my friends and colleagues for all their help and support.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this thesis represents my own work. Where the works of others have been cited, they have been paraphrased and referenced according to stated academic conventions.

Signature

Date

ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
MHE&SR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
CLL	Communicative Language Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
SA	Summative Assessment
FA	Formative Assessment
SPSS	Statistical Package of Social Science
HE	Higher Education
T	Tutor
S	Student
L2	Second Language users
GPCE	General People's Committee of Education

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Coombe and Barlow (2004), the use of assessment methods is significant in gaining a dynamic picture of students' learning and linguistic improvements. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate the assessment methods employed and factors affecting their use by Libyan EFL tutors in assessing students' writing and how such assessment methods are perceived by students. The present thesis consists of seven chapters which are designed to cover all the work conducted in this study. The purpose of chapters one to three is to provide a detailed description of the theoretical and methodological background of research into assessment methods in EFL writing skills. The other chapters describe the empirical and analytical research of the study. This introductory chapter discusses the background of the research, including a statement of the problem investigated, the research aims and questions, the scope of the study, research design, and the significance of the study, as well as definitions of the terminology used in the present study. Finally, an outline of the thesis is provided as well with a short summary of the chapter.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Assessment remains among the very hottest topics in school improvement (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006:10). Assessment has also received more attention in higher education with the acknowledgment that assessment drives learning as well as teaching (Boud, 1995; Harris, 1997; Zhang and Burry-Stock, 2003; Oscarson, 2009; Mikre, 2010; Sadler, 2010; Taras, 2010; Hughes, 2011). In higher education there is wide debate about the need for more assessments and the problematic nature of present assessments methods (Cooper, 2008).

For the ten years before my PhD study I was a secondary school and then university tutor, teaching EFL modules including writing skills, listening skills, speaking skills, general English Language and grammar in Libya. This role enabled me to understand the issues about the use of assessment in EFL writing in practice. From my own experience as a university language tutor and following discussions with colleagues and students, I have noticed generally that a limited range of assessment methods are used in Libya. In other words, Libyan university tutors and learners are not fully aware of all of the assessment methods used in EFL writing. For example, assessing students' work is conducted mainly by mid and final exams, which is the default method of assessment in the Libyan HE system. This may reduce the opportunities for students to be involved in their learning and develop their learning ability because the use of several assessment methods can help students to identify their writing difficulties. Fundamentally, a wider use of assessment methods such as self- assessment and peer assessment by students could be used to develop the learning and teaching process. This means that students could potentially achieve higher grades and have increased motivation through better understanding of their writing. I wanted to verify through systematic research if my observations were shared by colleagues and students and the factors, which influence them.

Various Studies have been conducted in the Libyan context such as those by (A el-aswad,2002; Elhensheri, 2004 ;Alhmali, 2007; Aldabbus,2008; Ali, 2008; Orafi, 2008; Suwaed, 2011; Asker,2011; Shihiba, 2011; Abdurahman, 2011; Albeshar,2012; Ahmad,2012; Tantane,2012; Agill,2013; Warayet,2013), but

these studies have all focussed on other aspects of EFL teaching and learning and not EFL writing.

Hawthorne and Glenn (2011) have argued that the assessment of writing remains problematic for teachers. Also, Weigle (2007) indicated that experienced writing tutors and researchers agree that writing tests have limited value in assessing students' writing. Furthermore, Shihiba (2011) stated that in the Libyan context there is a lack of effective methods of assessment. Therefore, my personal involvement in certain educational context and academic interest motivated me to conduct this study to understand the difficulties of not using various methods of assessment.

This lack of studies about assessment methods in the Libyan context prevents conclusions or generalisations from being made about the effectiveness of assessment methods in this particular context. This study therefore, focuses only on assessment methods in EFL writing skills but does not examine the process of writing skills itself.

The reason for selecting EFL writing skills is that writing is a cyclical process including planning, prewriting, revision, editing and the final drafting of written work. This process requires assessment to monitor the progress of students' writing. Another reason is that English is the language that Libyan students learn and write at university which has become significant in foreign language teaching. For example, students are required to write assignments, reports, homework and making exams in written form. Thus, focusing on writing is the key concept in learning English language.

The process and product of assessment are associated with every step of EFL writing. Brown, (2001:355) argued that:

“Writing, unlike speaking, often includes an extensive planning stage, error treatment can begin in the drafting and revising stages, during which time it is more appropriate to consider errors among several features of the whole process of responding to student writing”.

Oscarson (2009:76) summarized the writing process as that:

“Pre-writing which includes generating and gathering ideas and facts through for example talking and reading, multiple rough drafts, sharing drafts through reading own or peer work, feedback and revision to improve content and organization on the drafts, editing for formal language errors (i.e. spelling and grammar) at the final stage and the last version to be published, posted and/or graded”.

Al-Hazmi (2006:36) explained that “writing as a process is uniquely suited to promoting the skills of critical thinking and self-reflection, since it is that very area of self-expression where ideas can be reviewed, reflected on and refined”.

Brown (2001) also stressed that correcting mistakes may begin in the drafting and revising steps.

In response, there is need for more research. Therefore, this study investigates the issues that are reported about assessment by providing a picture of the use of assessment methods. This study is also different from previous studies in that it aims to examine assessment methods that are already used by university tutors and factors that affect their use in the Libyan setting. It also identifies how students perceive these assessment methods and how they relate to tutors' thinking. Moreover, an attempt is made to understand why tutors limit and prefer to use specific methods and which other methods they reject. The present researcher's professional experience and the literature read so far motivated him to carry out this study in order to attempt to fill this gap in the literature. The

researcher is also very interested to find out about assessment in learning and teaching EFL writing in the Libyan context.

This study is also considered important to Libyan researchers and tutors as well as to other researchers of EFL writing in general. As this study examines assessment, which is very important to develop and guide tutors through the effectiveness of using assessment and developing students' work. Concerning educational professionals in Libya, this study places emphasis on some changes that may be helpful and useful for the language teaching curriculum. The shift from Libyan EFL teachers' perspectives and concerns about their teaching of writing helps students to take full responsibility for their own learning.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS

This research aims to:(1) investigate the assessment methods employed and factors affecting their use by Libyan EFL university tutors in assessing students' writing;(2) examine how such assessment methods are perceived by students in relation to tutors thinking.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To be able to meet the aims set out above, the next research questions are posed:

- 1) What assessment methods do EFL Libyan tutors use to assess university students' writing skills?
- 2) What are the factors that affect tutors' choice of assessment methods?
- 3) How do students perceive the assessment methods used by tutors in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?
- 4) How do students' perceptions relate to tutors' thinking in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study was carried out with 12 university tutors who teach English writing and 207 fourth year university students who were in the final year of

study across the six English Language departments in different sites at one university in Libya. The target university is one of the largest universities in Libya, where the researcher had access to collect the necessary data (see section 4.11). This study sets out to examine the methods of assessment used by the research participants and then proceeds to look at the factors affecting their use. Furthermore, the study focuses on investigating how such assessment methods are perceived by students with reference to the tutors' thinking.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is the foundation of any study because the success of the study is based on a good design. Appropriate methodological instruments may be selected based on the research questions and aims of the study. A mixed-methods technique is used in this study because of the nature of the research questions (see section 4.4). Therefore, an explanatory design is used, firstly collecting quantitative data by employing a questionnaire with 17 items for tutors and a questionnaire for students with 41 items (see appendices A and B).

The purpose of the questionnaires is to gain numerical data that can be used to answer the first and second research questions. This is followed by the use of qualitative methods in which 12 semi-structured interviews are conducted with tutors and six with students. The goal of the interviews is to gather in-depth information that can be used to address the remaining research questions (see section 4.7). Both qualitative and quantitative methods may complement and support each other in order to provide useful data to answer the research questions. Moreover, the researcher's standpoint plays an important role in selecting methodological instruments (see section 4.4). Purposive sampling in

selecting interviewees is used because it is considered appropriate for the target population. The specific methodological framework chosen for the analysis of the data is to use SPSS software for the quantitative data (see section 4.17), and grounded theory for the qualitative data (see section 4.18.1). The quantitative and qualitative findings are then integrated and compared with those in the literature.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Assessment is an essential component in developing the teaching and learning of the English language. Linn (2001:5) indicated that “assessments are powerful tools in the use of standards to promote educational reform and improvement”. It may be argued, therefore that assessment methods are significant for tutors and students to achieve their goals. The justification for conducting this study is to fill gaps currently existing in the literature. Moreover, the findings of this research will lead to the development of theoretical knowledge of assessment in the field of education. Additionally, this study will add some significant and pedagogical insights to the field of second language learning in Libya writing classes which may be potentially applicable elsewhere. In this regard, EFL researchers can then conduct further research in this area based on the findings from this study. Furthermore, university tutors and students will have a better understanding of different assessment methods with reference to process and product. This research may also possibly affect tutors’ and students’ perceptions and thinking about assessment.

It is important research that will help in developing systems of assessing students’ work across different educational contexts. For example, the findings from the current study can be used as evidence to guide EFL tutors and

students to employ various methods of assessment considering the factors that limited their use (see 3.31).

EFL tutors are more likely to become aware of different factors that affect their choice of assessment methods. Furthermore, this study provides a new original questionnaire that could be used as a guide to support further studies (see appendices A and B). Finally, the findings may be used as evidence to support further study regarding the relationship between assessment and teaching and learning.

1.8 DEFINITIONS OF TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS STUDY

Various terms are addressed throughout the study which may have different meanings based on the study and context. This section provides clear definitions of significant terms in order to avoid confusion. The definitions used in this study are as follows:

- ❖ **The process of assessment** refers to collection of evidence and information about people's work in order to make judgements based on specific goals, criteria and standards.
- ❖ **Product of assessment** refers to the final step of the assessment process such as feedback and grades.
- ❖ **Mid-year and final assessments** are terms used to refer to assessment events.
- ❖ **Tutors' thinking** is defined as their beliefs or opinions in reaction to the use of assessment methods in EFL writing work. In other words, tutors' thinking may refer to the ideas held by tutors about assessment methods.
- ❖ **Students' perceptions** for the purposes of this study, refers to how students view assessment.
- ❖ **Assessment methods**, the term methods of assessment is adopted to refer to a variety of meanings that are used to collect information about

students' written work in order to make judgments. The reason for this is that the term "method" is more familiar and commonly used among tutors and learners in such a context. Linn and Miller (2005: 26) confirm that by defining assessment methods as "any of a variety of procedures used to obtain information about student performance".

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis includes seven chapters and a brief overview of each chapter is provided below.

Chapter one describes the background of the study, which includes the statement of the problem investigated, the research aims and questions, the scope of the study, research design, the significance of this study, a brief introduction of the methodology used and the definitions of terms used in this study.

Chapter two describes the context in which this research is conducted. This chapter describes the learning of the English language in Libya, with a description of the education system and a special focus on the assessment in higher education.

Chapter three discusses theories of learning with focus on assessment. It also presents the concept of assessment including definitions of assessment, criteria and standards, and summative, formative self and peer-assessment and feedback. This chapter focuses on the role of assessment in language learning and teaching, factors that affect tutors' choice of assessment methods, and considers previous studies related to the assessment of writing, and the role of tutors and students in assessment.

Chapter four focuses on the research methodology used in this study in terms of the research design chosen, the research tools involved, the research population and sampling. It also deals with data collection processes in both the pilot and the main study and illustrates the data analysis procedures used and quantitative and qualitative methods employed with the aid of SPSS software and grounded theory analysis respectively.

Chapter five presents the analysis of quantitative data from the questionnaire survey conducted with students and tutors.

Chapter six presents the analysis of qualitative data obtained from the students and tutors interviewed.

Chapter seven discusses the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative data with reference to previous research on assessment. It also sums up the main findings, outlines the limitations of the study and its pedagogical implications and gives suggestions for further research.

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a brief introduction of the background of this study including the research problem and aims and the research questions. The scope and significance of the study and the research design are also described. Several definitions of terms are clarified. Finally, the structure of the thesis is presented. The following chapter describes the Libyan context where this study was carried out.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of the context of a study is an integral part of social research, providing background information about where the study is conducted. It is also important to give a full or a comprehensive picture about the context in relation to the current research. The researcher's experience and knowledge and also the lack of social science research in the Libyan context have led to this study being conducted. This research is possibly the first to address issues about the assessment methods used in EFL writing classes in Libya. Significant pedagogical insights in the field of second language learning in Libyan writing classes in particular can be gained, and the study represents a valuable contribution in the effort to develop a new policy for higher education in Libya.

This chapter describes the education system in Libya and discusses a variety of challenges that face Libyan education and the changes made over recent years. It begins with a brief discussion of the setting of the study and the educational system in Libya from basic to advanced levels. The status of the English Language is discussed and this chapter provides an overview concerning assessment at university level, including the nature of university classrooms, the culture of assessment, EFL writing skills and writing materials used. The approaches used to teach language are described with a focus on the grammar translation method. Finally, a short summary ends the chapter.

2.2 THE SETTING OF THE CURRENT STUDY

This section describes briefly the setting in which this study was undertaken. Libya is located on the Mediterranean Sea and is the fourth-largest country in

Africa. The official language used in Libya is Arabic, besides which the Berber language is spoken by a minority of the population who live in the north-west of the country. In addition, English and Italian are widely understood in Libya. The Libyan economy is mainly dependent on oil production, representing about 97% of the total national revenues. Rhema and Miliszewska(2010:425) stated that “Libya’s population of approximately 6.2 million includes around 2.7 million students; the number of university students has increased to more than 300,000, with an extra 90,000 enrolled in the higher technical and vocational sector ”. This study is conducted at a large university which includes six English language departments in different locations. This university was chosen because the researcher has good access and relationships with tutors who teach there (see section 4.11).

2.3 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN LIBYA

This section discusses the education system in the Libya context. According to Ahmed (2012:15), in line with other developing countries in the region, Libya has consistently tried to pay more attention to education and to possible ways of improving it. The purpose of Libyan education is to provide educational opportunities for all its people to support them in acquiring knowledge and skills. It also aims to help students to learn the Arabic and English languages which they may need to communicate with the world. In addition, students are to be provided with new types of education which will support them to discover their abilities and acquire knowledge through life-long learning. Moreover, it has the purpose of encouraging students to develop their capacity to interact with other cultures and to open up to the world. The Libyan education system has developed to involve students in their own learning through participation and

interaction processes (Dalala, 2014). The education system in Libya exists in two forms, namely public and private education. The government established a large number of schools and universities across the regions of the country as an essential step in improving public education. Public education is run and funded by the Libyan government and it is free to students at all stages (Ahmed, 2012). An academic year lasts from September to June and sessions or semesters each lasts three months. Greater numbers of students are in public education than in the private sector because students in private education are required to pay tuition fees. Due to high fees however, private education remains very limited and restricted only to families with high incomes (Ahmed.2012:14). Private education operates under the supervision of the administration of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHE&SR). For example, the government has started to encourage and support the private education sector (Ahmed, 2012). Some students prefer to study in private education such as independent universities and higher institutions because they are more flexible than public education. Figure 1 shows the education system in Libya starting with basic education and ending with the post-graduate level.

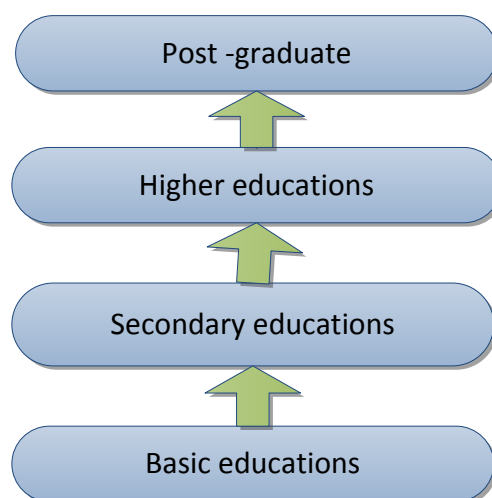


Figure 1: The form of education system in Libya.

There are various difficulties facing the education system in Libya. For example, Ebbar (2011:30) stated that “within the space of ten years (between 2000 and 2010), the school system and structure went through unplanned changes and modifications of curricula, specializations, national exams (such as years of study) all of which presented challenges for school teachers and students.” Furthermore, there is a lack of social science research and also no integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into the education system. The present study focuses on public education because it accounts for the majority of Libyan students and targets a big public university where the research is undertaken. The public education system in Libya is mainly divided into various stages which are discussed in more detail in the following sub-sections.

2.4 PRIMARY EDUCATION

This section introduces primary education in the Libyan context, which is divided into two stages lasting six and three years, both which are compulsory. "The first nine years of official education are compulsory and are known- as basic education" (Ahmed, 2012:17). There are, first, six years of primary school and then three years of secondary school, for students between the ages of six and fifteen. The general goal of primary education is to enable students to acquire the necessary of concepts and information in accordance with their ability. It also aims to develop their thinking skills in order to be successful in their future learning. Learning the English language is one of the main subjects in both stages. Therefore, students are required to study it in two classes each week of forty-five minutes. The English language curriculum is designed to help students learn the four English language skills of reading, writing, listening and

speaking. This curriculum is represented in two books, namely a subject book and a workbook. In the subject book students are taught vocabulary and simple sentences with a special emphasis on grammar. In addition, this book is accompanied by audio cassettes that provide students with opportunities to listen to native English speakers. The workbook is designed to help students to practice a range of exercises and tasks at home. In basic education, students' work is assessed by tests and exams at the middle and end of each year in order to receive a certificate. Students also need to pass examinations in each subject before they can transfer to the next level; otherwise they remain at the same level for a further year until managing to pass (Tantane, 2011). Students who successfully complete these stages have two options: to study at secondary school or to join a vocational institute. Successful completion of nine years of basic education results in the award of the Basic Education Certificate (Clark, 2004:4). Secondary education is discussed in the next section.

2.5 SECONDARY EDUCATION

This stage of Libyan education lasts about three or four years and involves learning specialised subjects such as economics, fine arts and media, basic sciences, social sciences, and engineering. Clark (2004:4) explained that the idea behind the plan is to prepare students for further specialization at university. Students who have finished secondary school can join a university in the same specialist area of study. Students begin this stage at the age of sixteen and the "fourth year is concluded with a national examination organized at the level of the whole country" (Elabbar, 2011:29). However, secondary education returned to its original form after the seventeen of February Revolution in 2011, which is three years of study. In the first year, students

study all of the modules or subjects in general. Then, in the second year they select an area of interest to study arts or science. During secondary education, assessment is carried out by quizzes and examinations which occur at the middle and end of the year in order to transfer to the subsequent year. Ahmed (2012) pointed out that students who successfully pass the exams will be able to pursue study at university. Finally, students have the option to join the university level or another higher education institution based on their grades and interests.

2.6 HIGHER EDUCATION OR UNIVERSITY LEVEL

The first Libyan college of arts and education was founded in 1955 at the University of Benghazi with 33 male students only (General Peoples' Committee of Education, 2008). However, by 2004 to 2005 the number of universities and colleges had increased to 14 with various different departments and also the number of students had increased to 279,150 by 2006-2007 (ibid,). This stage of education includes the university level in which this study is concerned. The Libyan (MHE&SR) provides higher education in the form of universities and vocational and technical institutes where there are a range of departments. The main objectives of higher education are to develop the abilities of graduate students so as to be qualified in order to support the education system in all areas of research. Nevertheless, it seems that there is a lack of social science research in Libya; therefore, the current study aims to add some significant pedagogical insights to the field of second language learning in the Libya context in order to reflect positively on the development of the education system.

Due to the increased number of students, the government established many different universities and vocational and technical institutes in different locations in the country. The number of universities increased from two in 1975 to nine in 2005 and during the academic year 1995/96 there were approximately 54 higher education institutions whereas 1999/00 the number had increased to 84 (Clark,2004:5). In 1995 several higher institutes for teacher training were established which aimed to prepare students to become secondary school teachers, offering a Bachelor's degree after obtaining the secondary school certificate. Three years or more training is required according to each department's requirements. University level education is funded by the government and each university contains a number of colleges or faculties, such as a college of teacher training, college of medicine or college of engineering. The curriculum at this level is designed and arranged by tutors, and students are required to take 10-12 courses every year. The following section presents the advanced education which is the final stage of the Libyan education system.

2.7 ADVANCED OR POST GRADUATE EDUCATION

Advanced education refers to postgraduate study where students obtain a Masters or PhD degree. This stage of education is awarded after university level and is offered in Tripoli and Gar-yunis universities. The programmes of study are limited to fields such as Arabic, Islamic studies and humanities. The admission procedure at this stage requires a placement exam or interview. In recent years, the MHE&SR has sent many students abroad in different fields of study such as science, technology, engineering, economic and languages such

as English, Arabic and French. Now, it is important to discuss the status of English language learning.

2.8 STATUS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE LIBYAN CONTEXT

The present section provides a brief discussion on the status of the learning and teaching of the English language. Teaching and learning the English language in Libya has been seen as an integral part in education since 1944, due to the British administration at that time. The English language has become a compulsory subject in secondary schools and universities. In other words, every student is required to study the English language at this stage. Ahmed (2012:14) also stated that "teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) occupied a special position in the Libyan education system throughout the 1970s until the late 1980s". From that time, the English language has received great attention among students and teachers compared to other languages. Therefore, more English language departments opened in schools and universities to teach English as a foreign language. The (MHE&SR) has also tried to change and update its curriculum many times in order to meet modern educational objectives. The English curriculum is designed to help students to learn different skills; for example, students spend most of their time studying English language through lessons in grammar, reading and writing (Shihiba, 2011).

There was a period when the teaching of the English language was suspended between 1986 until 1991 for political reasons from the entire education system in Libya. Ahmed (2012) confirmed that the situation of the teaching of English in Libya has not been stable due to certain political issues. This caused a gap in education which affected the subsequent generations of students. It was also

reflected in the process of education in different ways, for example leading to a lack of well-qualified teachers who could teach the English language. The enrolment of students at university was also limited. However, after 1991 the education authority gradually resumed encouraging the teaching of English by providing training courses in order to improve teaching skills.

The English language curriculum design is based on teaching the four English language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In fact, Libyan teachers tend to use traditional methods such as the grammar translation method to teach the four language skills (see section 2.14). "The traditional grammar-based methods were employed, with a special focus on reading and writing skills" (Suayeh, 1994, cited in Ahmed, 2012:13). Gusbi wrote a new syllabus that was used in Libyan secondary schools. Gusbi's book entitled *Further English for Libya*, revised edition, 1974 was based on the audio-lingual method. In this curriculum, more focus was placed on teaching grammar by introducing a topic, followed by drills and exercises. However, in recent years the education authorities in Libya have adopted new textbooks which were designed to be used with the communicative approach to language learning at secondary schools. Additionally, many students were sent to study the English language outside Libya to countries where English is spoken in order to have qualified teachers with more knowledge and experience. Finally, teaching and learning English language in Libya has become a vital subject throughout all the stages in the education system with a special focus on practicing the English language inside and outside educational institutions. The educational authority is now strongly encouraging the learning of the English language in all educational institutions in Libya using different concepts and theories for

teaching and learning the English Language. It is very important to develop the tutors' skills and knowledge in order to "deal with changes in the world and to keep pace with global developments in teaching new methods and in using modern educational techniques" (GPCE, 2008:10). For example, the ministry of education brought qualified tutors from abroad with different backgrounds and experiences to teach English language at university level. Libyan universities contract a number of Arab and Asian English language teachers from Iraq, Egypt, India and Pakistan (Suwaed, 2011). These countries are favoured because of their cultural similarities to Libya and/or lower salary cost. However, this range of teachers with different experiences helps to develop students' learning by adopting different ways of teaching. Consequently, this may add important insights to the context where English is taught as a foreign language. In order to understand the Libyan context in relation to assessment, the nature of the Libyan university classroom is discussed.

2.9 THE NATURE OF THE LIBYAN UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM

This section gives a brief description of the nature of the classrooms where assessment is employed. In English language classrooms students are seated in rows, with a blackboard or whiteboard and a large number of students (approximately 35 to 55). Students also sit next to each other on a single bench or sometimes at double desks throughout the academic course or year. All students are aligned in such a way that they face the blackboard. Orafi (2008:4) pointed out that "students are seated in desks which are arranged in rows facing the front of the classroom". Students who sit in front are likely to be more involved in class than those who sit at the back. Finally, in this form of classroom it appears difficult to employ certain methods of assessment. The

assessment culture at university is discussed to provide a full picture about the Libyan context in relationship to the study.

2.10 THE ASSESSMENT CULTURE IN LIBYAN UNIVERSITIES

It is important to explain the culture of assessment in the Libyan university where this study was conducted. In this context, the methods of assessment used are mainly examinations and grading. All departments in the same university run their final examinations at the same time as scheduled by committees and tutors. This assessment is established as the official formal method. Tests are given to the students by the tutors to record or summarise learning outcomes at a certain point in time and final grades given at the end of the year allow students to progress to the subsequent level in each subject. Orafi (2008) stated that exams focus on testing students' memorization of information taught by tutors and formal assessment makes use of traditional paper-and-pencil tests and are followed only by being given scores without any further feedback (Ketabi and Ketabi, 2014). These exams typically have a fixed form, for example, the student can reproduce memories information and pass the test (Suwaed, 2011). Students work also includes assignments, homework and essays which are assessed with feedback and grades given. "Tutors use this type of assessment during instruction to identify specific student misunderstandings to provide feedback to students to help them correct their errors, and to implement instructional correctives" (Cauley et al, 2010:1). The following section introduces the concept of EFL writing in relation to assessment.

2.11 EFL WRITING IN THE LIBYAN UNIVERSITY

This section discusses EFL writing because the present study is concerned with exploring the assessment methods used for students' written work. At university level, writing is one of the language skills that students are required to learn. It is considered a product skill where students produce evidence of what they have learned. Badger and White (2000:154) stated that "product-based approaches see writing as mainly concerned with knowledge about the structure of language". In the EFL writing classroom, the writing process includes composing, correcting, revising, or rewriting. Manchon et al., (2007:150) argued that "planning is a thinking process in which writers form a mental representation of the knowledge that they are going to use in their composition and of how they are going to go about the business of composing". Tutors divide writing modules into two stages, which are theoretical and practical. In the theoretical part, tutors teach their students some rules of writing such as grammatical structure and vocabulary that enable them to write a good paragraph, assignment, homework an essay. Meanwhile, in the practical phase students are required to write about a topic that is written on the board by their tutors within a specific time. The students follow the tutors' instructions in order to write a good piece of work. "Traditional writing tests and assessment of writing consequently do not take full account of the learner's prior knowledge of content or genre" (Oscarson, 2009:77). Tutors correct the students' work by using red-ink to show the mistakes that students make accompanied by comments. The students' ability in writing is influenced by the effectiveness of assessment because giving clear criteria and feedback can lead them to write a better piece of work.

2.12 UNIVERSITY EFL WRITING MATERIALS

This section describes the materials that are used in teaching English writing to fourth year Libyan university students. In this context, the English language department provides all tutors with the same syllabus for teaching EFL writing. Tutors have the option to select specific tasks, activities and topics for the teaching of writing. Suwaed (2011) explained that in Libyan universities, tutors are typically responsible for choosing their own materials and designing the courses. The purpose of writing materials is to promote students in developing their writing skills which are reflected in the quality of their written work. The following (figure 2) highlights the syllabus that tutors use as a guide to selecting and teach EFL writing materials.

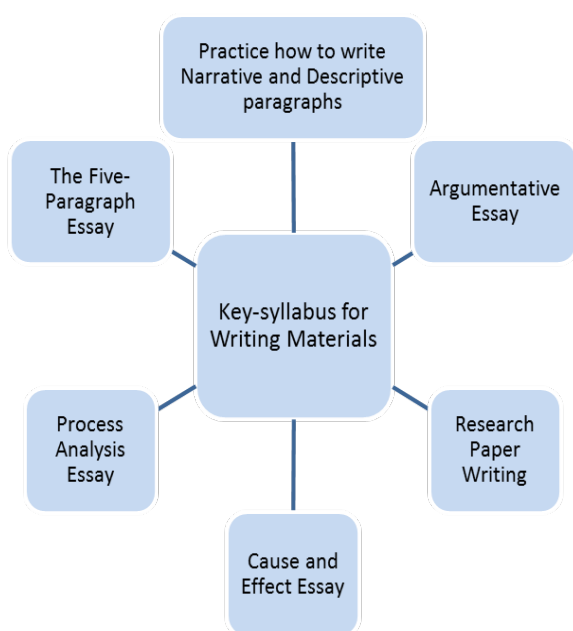


Figure 2: Syllabus for Writing Materials.

In order to understand how writing materials are taught to university students, approaches of teaching the English language are discussed below.

2.13 APPROACHES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

This section provides an overview of the language teaching approaches used and how these approaches are used to teach writing skills in relation to assessment. The central focus is on the grammar-translation method because it is the main approach used in Libyan context. "Clearly teacher-dominated and not communicatively based" (Saleh, 2002: 49). It can be acknowledged that there are several other approaches of teaching the English language, such as the direct approach, audio-lingual approach, cooperative approach and communicative language teaching. Cooperative language learning is an approach to teaching that makes strong use of cooperative activities including pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom (Wang, 2009; Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

Another approach is communicative language teaching which focuses on student centred learning. The communicative approach in language teaching uses a functional theory of language, which focuses on language as a means of communication (Richards and Rodgers, 2014:87). Students are required to communicate with each other in order to learn a language. In other words, students' exchange their learning experiences, knowledge, feelings and thoughts using language. Richards and Rodgers (2014) stressed that here learners plan, monitor and assess their own learning. In the Libyan context, some tutors still doubt the value of communicative activities because they believe that vocabulary and grammar rules must be the starting point in learning any foreign language, unlike when acquiring a first language (Aldabbus, 2008:7). As stated by Brown (2001), certain learners appear to be successful

regardless of the methods of teaching used. The next section describes the main method used to teach EFL writing skills in the Libyan context.

2.14 GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION METHOD

This method is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through a detailed analysis of its grammar followed by the application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences of texts into and out of the target language (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:5). This method focuses on teaching vocabulary and the structures of the language and requires students to translate whole texts word for word and to memorize it. The aim of this method is to support students in reading and translating literary important texts (Wang, 2009). This method also focuses on question-answer patterns and is tutor-centred that is still widely used among tutors in Libya. Suwaed (2011) explained that tutors still apply the principles of the grammar translation method rather than the communicative approach, as also stressed by Abdulhamid (2011).

Grammar translation method is a way of studying a language through a detailed analysis of its grammar (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). The grammar translation is considered a method by Richards and Rodgers (2001) and it is still widely practiced in teaching a foreign language. In the Libyan context, it is considered a common and traditional method of teaching because the English language department provides key-syllabuses of content but no suggestions and tutors follow this method. In other words, there is no specific textbook to be used at university, which could guide tutors to select and use an approach of teaching and to help them develop a communicative approach (see section 2.12). The General Peoples' Committee of Education (2008:26) stated that "the teacher is still traditionally relying on memorization and recitation and some practical

lessons". From the Libyan context it is clear that tutors use grammar translation as a default method because of class size and a lack of tutors' development. There are two factors that help to determine the use of grammar translation; the number of students per class and the teachers' knowledge of the curriculum (Suwaed, 2011). The use of the grammar translation method limits the opportunity to involve students in different methods of assessment. For example, tests and exams are appropriate for the use of grammar translation method because tutors teach students with knowledge, which helps them to pass the exams. The focus is to pass tests and exams rather than to boost students' productive abilities. In the grammar translation method, the teachers play the role of controller or examiner, who correct students' mistakes (Suwaed, 2011). Consequently, students become passive in their learning in terms of following the teaching instructions. However, all Libyan tutors try to help their students in way possible with any approaches they can. Tutors are aware that (CLT) encourages active students and helps learning.

Meanwhile, the CLT approach is one of the latest approaches used by tutors in many countries today in EFL classrooms. "The CLT uses a functional theory of language, which focuses on language as a means of communication" (Richards and Rodgers, 2014:87). This approach of language teaching focuses on student centred learning. For example, it helps students to use the language through interaction and communication, which supports the use of formative assessment, self and peer assessment. Through the daily interactions and feedback, which takes place in the communicative classroom, students could develop their learning. The communicative approach offers an opportunity for

students to exchange their learning experiences, knowledge, feelings and thoughts using a language.

2.15 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has introduced the Libyan education context in general and the university level in particular. The background of this context was discussed in order to provide a full picture of the present study with reference to assessment. All of the aspects discussed were directly related to the current study in terms of the research questions, by establishing the links between the education system, the status of the English language, the assessment culture; writing study materials and approaches of teaching. Discussing these aspects, all of which interact with and affect each other, highlight the complexity of issues concerning the use of assessment in the Libyan context. For example, discussion of assessment culture in Libyan universities helps to understand how assessment is used and issues that affect its use such as the lack of relationship with EFL writing materials used in teaching. Another example indicates that approaches to English language teaching could affect the use of several methods of assessment such as peer and self-assessment which are a regular option in CLT that is built around students' interaction but have little or no role in GTM which is tutor centred.

Moreover, these aspects helped to understand the research problem being investigated more deeply and promote confidence in the overall quality of the analysis and findings. Therefore, the present research about assessment is important because it aims to add new insights of knowledge to this context. For example, it may help to better understand the way assessment is currently used and how it might be developed to improve teaching and learning particularly at

university level and possibly other stages of education. Furthermore, research, once disseminated, will have a potential impact on tutors' thinking, possibly tutors' training and development, the curriculum and government policy, which may lead to change or shift their way of using more and more effective assessment methods in EFL writing classes to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

The next chapter presents a review of literature relevant to the current research.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In every aspect of life, there is a need for tools or techniques that can be used to assess progress. In the context of EFL, there is a wide consensus among researchers that assessment methods could play a vital role in promoting the process of teaching and learning of a second or foreign language (Ecclestone, 1996; Berry, 2006; James, 2006; Jaqus and Salmon, 2008;Oscarson, 2009; Lee and Coniam, 2013). It can be said that assessment methods may become more effective and efficient if EFL tutors and learners employ them more purposefully than at the present time. According to Stiggins and Chappuis (2002), classroom assessment is seen as a healthy part of effective teaching and successful learning. The purpose of this chapter is to look at what other authors have written about assessment methods in writing classes. This chapter also provides background information that is relevant to the research questions. Therefore, foundation can be provided for an examination of the empirical research in the methodology chapter and to fill gaps in the literature. Research in this area is very beneficial for EFL tutors and students in order to increase their awareness of the effective use of assessment methods. The findings of this study can serve as reference for other researchers in this field of learning and teaching. The goals of the research are: (1) to investigate the assessment methods used and factors affecting their use in assessing students' work and (2) examine how such assessment methods are perceived by students in relation to tutors' thinking.

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to assessment beginning with a brief discussion of theories of learning a second language in relation to assessment.

Next, the concept of assessment is described with reference to the product and function of each assessment method. Assessment criteria, standards, the integration of criteria and standards, grading and feedback, including linking feedback to learning and feedback as part of teaching are then introduced. Various important methods of assessment and their relationship are discussed. Furthermore, assessment in language learning and teaching is discussed by focusing on learning autonomy, the assessment of writing in the EFL context, the roles of tutors and students in assessment, factors affecting the tutors' choice of assessment methods. How assessment supports interaction in the classroom is also considered along with its effect on students' emotions. Previous studies related to the assessment of writing skills in the EFL context are discussed and finally, a short summary ends the chapter.

3.2 LEARNING THEORIES

Language learning theories provide a framework which describes how learners learn a language. They also explain how thinking, the environment, the first language and prior experience affect learning. "Learning theory provides coherence and big-picture understandings, especially when we're trying to change our teaching practices" (Shepard, 2005: 66). Early twentieth century attempts at regularising an approach to understanding how learning takes place were centred on what has become known as behaviourism (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010:4). This theory has developed rapidly through this century and focuses on stimulation and responses as a way to understand learning. Another learning theory which followed behaviourist theory in the twentieth century is constructivism (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010). Constructivist theory refers to learning through interaction among students and tutors. Vygotsky's social

learning theory considers “social interaction is a fundamental aspect of successful cognitive and intellectual growth” (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010:14). Learning theories provide a framework to understand how learning occurs in relationship to assessment. Therefore, the focus below is upon theories which are related to assessment methods, such as behaviourism and constructivism. The next sections discuss what learning theories imply about assessment.

3.3 BEHAVIOURISM

This section provides a brief overview of behaviourist theory. This theory is one of the most pervasive theories of learning and refers to the learning in terms of concepts of stimulus and response or imitation and repetition. It also focuses on observable behaviour rather than thinking. “Behaviourism is a movement primarily in American psychology that rejected consciousness as psychology’s subject matter and replaced it with behaviour” (Leahey, 2000:686). Behaviourists perceive learning as only observable and measurable (Bush, 2006). For behaviourists, a fair test must link exactly to what tutors have taught (Shepard, 2005). Ellis (1997) argues this theory states that learning takes place when learners have the opportunity to practice making the correct response to a given stimulus. Taras (2010:202) stated that “self-marking at its most basic can be seen as a behaviourist model of learning because it takes a model answer as a frame and compares it systematically to the learners’ work”. Thus, it can be said that assessment has a relationship to behaviourist theory because learning takes place when students exchange and respond to peer and tutor feedback. Furthermore, Rotfeld (2007:376) suggested that “psychologists ‘invented’ behaviourism itself as a basis for theoretical explanations, prediction, and testing”. The significance of behaviourist theory is that it underpins both the

grammar translation and audio lingual methods that employ both repetition and substitution drills to establish a stimulus- response approach. “The behaviourist tradition takes a very different view of the role of assessment and feedback as compared with more social constructivist perspectives” (Torrance, 2012:326).

3.4 CONSTRUCTIVISM

The constructivist theory of language learning also has relationship to assessment. Constructivism is a philosophy which claims that learners make their own knowledge based on an environment that includes their interactions with other people (Draper, 2002). This approach views “knowledge and understanding as constructed through interaction, rather than transmitted through instruction, placing emphasis on the interaction of teacher and student, student and task, and indeed student and student” (Torrance, 2012:326). In constructivist theory, assessment is viewed as a part of the learning process in which students play a greater role. As stated by Merriam et al., (2007), constructivist theory concerns the process of building meaning to show how people make sense of their own experience. Pollard et al (2005:145) also expressed that “this theory suggests that people learn through an interaction between thinking and experience and through the sequential development of more complex cognitive structures”. From a constructivist theory view tutors can use their experience of assessment to help students to be more centred in their learning. For instance, students can be encouraged or motivated to use peer and self-assessment based on practice and training. Chen (2008) stated that the use of self-assessment is supported by constructivism theory. Chan (2007) explained assessment is conducted to check one's cognitive structures and cognition. “Assessment is better conceived of as an interactive pedagogy based

on constructivist ideas about learning and integrated into a wide range of learning and support activities” (Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003:472). The use of formative assessment is also consistent with recent constructivist theories of learning and motivation (Cauley et al, 2010). Heritage (2010:8) confirmed that “formative assessment takes into consideration the role of interaction and cooperative action in the learning process”. Constructivist stresses the role of tutors-student interaction in the learning process (Torrance and Pryor, 1998). Therefore, “cooperative learning, hands-on activities, discovery learning, differentiated instruction, technology, distributed practice, critical thinking are elements that embrace the constructivist educational philosophy” (White-Clark et al., 2008:41). Vygotsky’s theory is also beneficial for assessment that both reflects and supports learning (Klenowski, 2002). To sum up, constructivist learning theory ensures that assessment supports interaction in the classroom, which can increase students’ learning of EFL writing skills (see section 3.27).

3.5 THE CONCEPT OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is seen as integral of all fields of learning and teaching. It is argued that educational development cannot progress without effectively employing processes of assessment. “Assessment is of central importance in education, and yet there is a lack of consensus in the definitions of terminology relating to it” (Taras, 2005:466). For example, Sadler (2010) defined an assessor as the teacher; but in practice, it may be a tutor, teaching assistant or other appropriately qualified person. However, further agents can be added to this definition such as classmates, the self and parents, because assessment is not only restricted to qualified people. Consequently, this study wishes to clarify the definitions of central terms used in the field of assessment. Literature on

assessment leads to look at the functions of assessment, whereas in this study the researcher focuses on the process and product of assessment.

3.6 DEFINITION AND THE PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT

This section presents several definitions of assessment as well as the process of assessment in the field of learning and teaching. In the field of education there is no complete agreement among researchers as to what is meant by assessment. The definitions which are given possibly related to varied perceptions of the functions and purposes of assessment. It could be noted that “the origins of the term “assessment” comes from the Latin “assidere”, to ‘sit beside’, and is also reflected in the French term “assayer” (Watkins et al., 2007:144).

There is a general consensus about what assessment can mean and therefore some researchers have tried to establish a definition of exactly what it might be. For example, assessment is the gathering of information on students’ language learning attainments to inform instructional decisions (Cross and Steadman, 1996; Black and William, 1998; Brindley,2001; Manogue, 2002; Stiggins, 2005; Gardner, 2006). The above definition focuses only on collecting information about students' achievements to make decisions, whereas Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless (2006:280) provided another view of the term assessment where it is “often interpreted as referring to marking, grading, measuring or ranking which are considered the products of assessment”. On the other hand, researchers have established different definitions of assessment as the process of taking a series of actions, which involve the assessor, goals, criteria and standards to make a judgment. Taras (2005) stated that the process of assessment involves the steps required to effectuate a judgment. These steps are included in every

method of assessment, and Scriven (1967) has said that assessment is a single process. The judgment is a step in the process; therefore, the judgment cannot be made without employing these items. Parr et al. (2007) indicated that it is important to understand the process of assessment and involve its functions deeply to teaching. The construction of the assessment process and its criteria need to be clear to students (Rust, 2002; Boud and Falchikov, 2006). In the current study, the researcher supports Taras' view of assessment when she refers to assessment as the collecting of evidence and information about people's work in order to make judgements based on goals, criteria and standards.

It is clear from the above definitions that there are different interpretations of the meaning of assessment (Cross and Steadman, 1996; Black and William, 1998; Brindley, 2001; Stiggins, 2005). Now, it is important to discuss the products of assessment, which are related to the research questions.

3.7 PRODUCT OF ASSESSMENT

For the purpose of this study, it is significant to discuss the possible products of assessment. It can be argued that assessment is an enormously important tool for measuring learning and support teaching. Taras (2005:467) agreed with Scriven (1967) when she referred to assessment as "a judgment which can be justified according to specific weighted set goals, yielding either comparative or numerical ratings". Assessment is often understood as referring to marking, grading, measuring or ranking (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006) which are considered to be the products of assessment. Assessment can produce feedback on students' work and then assessment becomes a learning

opportunity (Wragg and Brown, 2001; Brown, 2004; Heritage, 2007; Sadler, 2010; Tanga and Harrison, 2011; Torrance, 2012), for more detail (see section 3.12). Feedback plays an important role in developing students' learning. It is argued that "the provision of good quality feedback to students during a course on what they have achieved and how they might improve will facilitate learning and improve outcomes" (Torrance, 2012:324). The purpose of providing feedback is to improve students' performance of writing through comments and suggestions. It also aims to fill the gap between the current level of writing and the required level. "Effective feedback from teachers provides clear, descriptive, criterion-based information that indicates to the students where they are in a learning progression" (Heritage, 2007:3). "Attention has been directed to contextualisation of the feedback message, the student as the receiver of the message, and how the student makes sense of the message" (Sadler, 2010:537). Nicola and Macfarlane-Dick(2006:209) confirmed that "it has become common practice in recent years to devise feedback sheets with assessment criteria, as a way of informing students about task requirements and of providing consistent feedback in relation to goals". For further discussion, see (sections 3.12,3.13,3.14,3.15).

Grades are seen as a product of assessment in this study, which are given on students' final submission of assignments, reports, essay and exams. The process of assessment produces grades after making final judgments on students' work (Clark, 2004; Falchikov, 2007), see (section 3.16). For example, Taras (2013) stated that self-marking is an active process of judgment. However, other researchers highlighted that "students' involvement in assessment does not mean that students control decisions regarding what will

or will not be learned or tested; it does not mean that they assign their grades”(Chappuis and Stiggins, 2002:41). “After assessments, students can compare their actual grades with the criteria for higher grades and thus reflect on why their actual grade may not have been as high as they would have liked” (Biggs and Tang, 2007:196). Grades are important aspects of assessment because students value high grades and focus on marks rather than the learning (Boud and Falchikov, 2006). Learners tend to focus on grades and do not take tutor’ feedback as a learning opportunity (Falchikov, 2003; Lee, 2011). For more detail, see (section 3.16). Finally, both products of assessment which are feedback and grades are interrelated to each other.

3.8 FUNCTION OF ASSESSMENT

This section introduces the multiple functions of assessment as highlighted by Taras (2005), where these functions refer to its intended use or purpose. Assessment has generally functioned in relation to learning and teaching to report upon individual learning achievements or give marks for various audiences including students, parents, and educational institutions, employers and governments (Bell and Cowie, 2001; Chan, 2007; Harlen, 2007b; Mikre, 2010). Meanwhile others relate its function to students’ learning, which assessment can provide information to support students’ learning (e.g. Stiggins, 2006; Mikre, 2010; Earl and Giles, 2011). This can be achieved when the process of assessment is used effectively including criteria, learning goals, standards, feedback, and judgements with grades. Also, assessment can provide specific information about students’ learning. Assessment allows tutors to identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses in students’ learning (Mikre, 2010; Looney, 2011). It seems that assessment is often restricted to examining

what students have learned; but it may be better to integrated with the learning and teaching process with reference to students' involvement in assessment. Further function of assessment is to support the cooperative learning and interaction in the classroom by discussing students' work, feedback, criteria and grades. Such discussion may lead students to interact with each other and with their tutor to achieve learning goals efficiently (Chan, 2007; Looney, 2011). From the above, assessment is related to the students' needs and competence while it is other function is concerned with the goals teaching.

3.9 DEFINITION OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Assessment criteria are an essential element of the assessment process. Some researchers provide general definitions of assessment criteria as highlighted by Foxman et al (1989) where criteria are seen as a description of the knowledge and skills possessed by the learner to ensure that all students achieve learning. Others have established specific definitions of assessment criteria as characteristics or properties and required principles before a test took place, which are then used to judge individuals against those criteria (Orsmond et al., 2000; Lambert and Lines, 2000; Taras, 2001; Klenowski, 2002; Bloxham and Boyd, 2007; Sadler, 2007). In this study, the researcher refers to criteria as a set of requirements according to which the quality of work may be judged. It may be noted that assessment criteria have been viewed in different ways in the field of learning and teaching. Further element of the assessment process is discussed in the following section.

3.10 DEFINITION OF ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

Assessment standards have been defined in various ways by different scholars. In the literature, standards are statements of degrees of excellence that show

the different levels of quality of performance (Kellaghan and Greaney, 2001; Klenowski, 2002; Sadler, 2005). It may be noted that this definition refers to levels of performance while other researchers' definitions are associated with the teaching and learning. For example, Cresswell (1996:13) stated that the standards are “the value accorded to students' work by judges accepted by interested parties as competent to make such judgments”. Gardner et al., (2008) also state that standards are often taken to mean levels of achievement as measured by test scores or examination grades. In the current study, standards are defined as levels or degrees of achievement that people's work can reach to ensure specific qualities.

3.11 THE INTEGRATION OF CRITERIA AND STANDARDS WITHIN THE PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT

This section provides greater insight into how criteria and standards are integrated within the assessment process. An effective assessment process needs criteria, which are considered an essential element because “criteria are attributes or rules that are useful as levers for making judgments”(Sadler, 2005:79). Assessment criteria concern the aspects of an assignment or examination which will be assessed (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007). Assessment criteria and standards have a significant role in supporting students' learning. Therefore, understanding the meaning of assessment criteria can enhance students' understanding of their own performance (Woolf, 2004). In addition, criteria are an indication to the teacher and the student of the degree to which learning is moving toward, independent achievement (Heritage, 2010). Bloxham and Boyd (2007) also stated that assessment criteria identify what aspects of an assignment or examination are assessed and, therefore, what students need to

pay attention to. This is reflected in the process of learning and teaching, as Orsmond et al., (2000) confirmed that developing criteria may enhance the quality of assessment practice and have an impact on student learning. Bloxham (2013:65) stated that “there has been an effort to make standards transparent through explicit information such as assessment criteria, rubric (marking schema) and learning outcomes”. “Students can also participate in these processes if teachers communicate to them the lesson goals and the criteria by which they can judge their progress towards the goals” (Harlen, 2007a:19). “Active engagement in discussion and the application of criteria can help students to acquire deeper insight into the meaning of criteria in particular and assessment more generally” (Woolf, 2004:488). It seems that it is essential that criteria and standards are used in conjunction to support students’ learning. The process of assessment cannot be effective unless criteria are provided for each piece of written work in order to support students to achieve the required standards and learning goals. This study examines assessment methods, thus it would be important to understand the concept of feedback in the field of education.

3.12 FEEDBACK

According to Ferris (2003), student writers feel that feedback from tutors on their written mistakes is enormously important to their progress. In traditional classroom, tutors are responsible for providing feedback on students’ work. Suwaed (2011) stressed that tutors may play the role of the controller or examiner who corrects students’ mistakes. Taras (2013:35) explained that “much of the feedback provided by tutors is often a shot in the dark that may not be relevant or helpful to learners”. In the Libyan setting, students often adopt a

role in the classroom that is to sit quietly and to memorize information given by the tutor (Orafi, 2008). This is influenced by a "teaching and learning culture that emphasizes individual achievement to the detriment of more collaborative approaches where the potential of feedback for learning may not be fully realized"(Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006:289). Aldabbus (2008) also provided a description of feedback as delivered by Libyan educationalists which can be described as negative and de-motivating, even including physical punishment with criticism and the overt correction of errors being very common. Carless (2013) confirmed that not only rely on feedback from tutor but more involvement of students' role in assessment to produce feedback.

However, the concept of feedback has currently developed by involving students in giving feedback as additional source of information. Peer-feedback involves the ability to gain additional feedback from other learners allowing teachers to assess individual students less, but better (Vickerman, 2009). Currently, feedback from peers seems to be of interest because of the tendency of shifting from tutor-centred to student-centred methods (Wichadee and Nopakun, 2012). Feedback is seen as a matter of dialogue and negotiation between tutors and students and among students. McArthur and Huxham (2013:94) defined feedback dialogue as "an interactive exchange in which interpretations are shared, meanings negotiated and expectations clarified". To achieve this, Taras (2013:35) explained that "the only way to make feedback and FA dialogue is through self-assessment: peer assessment and tutor discussion support this". Peer-feedback is a product of the peer assessment process and a source of useful information and comments that students provide to each other, for example about draft, of written work. McArthur and Huxham

(2013:94) stated that “our conception requires active engagement with the feedback rather than passive acceptances”. Feedback seeks to provide opportunities for students to interact around notions of quality and standards. Feedback has an influence on learning and the classroom environment because it encourages cooperative learning through exchange about what constitutes good work (Spiller, 2009). Feedback in the classroom needs to be operated from teachers to pupils and from pupils to teachers (Sadler, 1989). Merry et al., (2013:204) believed that “feedback must involve on-going dialogue with students in order for it to become meaningful and to allow them fully integrate it into their learning”. In the present research, the concepts of feedback discussed above are not relevant to learners because the tutors investigated do not engage in dialogue with students. Therefore, students seek dialogue to understand tutors’ feedback and clarify it. “Feedback as dialogue means that the student not only receives initial feedback but also has the opportunity to engage the teacher in discussion about that feedback” (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006:7). It can be summarised that the concept of feedback can be seen as a possible way of dialogue. Considering the above, it is important to provide the meaning of feedback.

3.13 DEFINITION OF FEEDBACK

Feedback has been defined in various ways by different scholars. Ramaprasad (1983:4) defined it as “information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way”. Taras (2005) also used Ramaprasad’s definition of feedback. Hounsell (2003:1) similarly viewed feedback as:

“Any information, process or activity which affords or accelerates learning, whether by enabling students to achieve higher-quality learning outcomes than they might have otherwise attained, or by enabling them to attain these outcomes sooner or more rapidly”.

Further views support the above definition of feedback as any information an agent (e.g., tutor, peer, book, parent, self, experience) can provide that helps a student to understand how they could have completed the task in a better way to produce work at a higher level of quality (Sadler, 1989; Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Brandt, 2008; Hendry, 2013). It can be noted that all of the above definitions refer to feedback as information provided by tutors or peers, but in the current study the researcher focuses more on students who receive, understand and use the feedback. Therefore, feedback is viewed as information used by learners within the process of assessment based on criteria, standards and work in order to achieve better work. This stresses the relationship between learning and feedback, which is introduced in the next section.

3.14 LINKING FEEDBACK TO LEARNING

Feedback is a possible product of the assessment process, as Merry et al., (2013) stressed that providing students with effective suggestions and comments about the strengths and weaknesses of their work is useful in developing their performance in EFL writing. Consequently, students need to understand the meaning of the feedback in order to use it efficiently. They need to identify the particular aspects of their work that need attention (Sadler, 2010). Students may then adopt suggestions from their understanding of the feedback in subsequent action to improve their written work and achieve the goals of learning. Mikre (2010:102) pointed out that “assessment without feedback and comments is less likely to enhance student learning”. Brown (2004) stated that if

assessment is to be essential to learning, feedback needs to be at the heart of the process. Feedback is a crucial part of learning because its central purpose is to reduce the gap between current understandings or performance and a goal (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Students need to understand their current writing performance. Sadler (2010) argued that the function of feedback is to give a statement of performance from the tutor's assessment of students' work, with or without a grade. Sadler (2010,536) also indicated that "feedback is central to the development of effective learning, partly because assessment procedures play a key role in shaping learning behaviour, and feedback can significantly accelerate that process". Furthermore, the regular use of assessment provides feedback that tutors use in order to decide what students learn and how they could perform better in their further study (Boud and Falchikov, 2006; Popham, 2009; Tantane, 2012). To conclude, feedback on students' learning has an important effect on their quality of work.

3.15 FEEDBACK AS PART OF TEACHING

Feedback could be an important part of teaching. As highlighted by Tanga and Harrison (2011), feedback is a key component in effective teaching, and is considered to be an element of teaching because students learn when feedback on their work is provided. Taras (2003:562) confirmed that "tutor feedback is one efficient means of helping students overcome unrealistic expectations and focus on their achievement rather than on the input required to produce their work". Providing effective feedback, tutors need to understand their students' perceptions, educational background and culture. Amara (2014:2) argued that "an awareness of L2 learners' perceptions to teacher feedback can help teachers choose the relevant feedback type or strategy". Time for providing

feedback also impacts on students' response to the feedback, (see section 3.31.5). Looney (2011:9) argued that:

“Several studies have shown that feedback is most effective when it is timely, is tied to criteria regarding expectations, and includes specific suggestions for how to improve future performance and meet learning goals”.

Tutors can encourage their students to discuss feedback. Discussion of assessment creates the opportunity for developing a shared understanding of feedback (Spiller, 2009). Positive feedback has an important role in developing students' learning because students can receive multiple feedback on their work (Bell and Cowie, 2001; Nicola and Milligan, 2006; Graham et al., 2011). Simpson-Beck (2011) stressed that students who receive feedback can monitor their own quality of learning. For example, formative feedback can be used to empower learners to be self-regulated learning (Nicola and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Furthermore, summative assessment can provide beneficial feedback for students over a period of time (Harlen, 2007a). Effective tutor feedback describes why an answer is right or wrong in explicit terms that students may understand (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2002).

Other researchers indicate that negative feedback sometimes discourages students and decreases their level of confidence (Tantane, 2012). This type of feedback may de-motivate students, which will then be reflected in their writing performance. However, not all learners are demotivated by negative feedback (Hughes, 2011). Bloxham and Boyd (2007) also stressed that students express considerable dissatisfaction with much feedback because it does not always affect their learning. Sadler (2010) believed that students cannot convert feedback into actions for improvement without adequate knowledge of some

essential concepts. In order to provide positive feedback, Nicola and Macfarlane-Dick (2006:205) stated that:

“Good practice in terms of feedback consists of the following: it delivers high quality information to students about their learning; encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning; encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem; provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance; provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching”.

Feedback may be specific, identifying what has been done well and what needs improving (Armitage and Renwick, 2008). Therefore, effective feedback may have knowledge of standards which are essential to compare to one's own work and in taking action to close the gap (Taras, 2002). Tanga and Harrison (2011) similarly stressed that providing quick and constructive feedback is a key factor in supporting learning. In addition, feedback needs to be written in a language that students can understand (Armitage and Renwick, 2008). As a product of assessment, descriptive feedback with useful comments is considered as a beneficial element of assessment. A variety of assessment methods can be used to increase the sources of feedback given about students' written work.

3.16 GRADING

Grading is considered one of the possible products of the assessment process. Grades are given on students' tests, assignments, essays and Oscarson (2009) includes effort and attendance of students in the classroom. In the education context, grading can play a vital role in students' learning achievements because it determines or gives indications of their level of performance. Grading plays a prominent part in the assessment process (Falchikov, 2007), because grades are seen as a final step, allowing students to

transfer to the next learning level. Taras (2003) claimed that grades are often a means to an end, but they have serious effects on learning. Grades are also seen as a main aspect of assessment because students pay more attention to them. This is due to students' perceptions of grading, for example, students focus on marks rather than the learning (Boud and Falchikov, 2006). Students tend to focus on grades and do not take tutor feedback as a learning chance (Falchikov, 2004; Lee, 2011). It is acknowledged that grades have an effective role in motivating students to make more effort in their learning. Students can also benefit from grades as well as oral remarks from tutors, where all affect learning (Entwistle, 2009).

In contrast, grading can have a negative effect on students' learning because they tend to perceive marks as an indication of their academic ability and poor marks can have a demotivating impact and damage their self-belief (Irons, 2007). For example, assessment with grades can be problematic initially for students (Vickerman, 2009). This is mainly because a numerical grade does not inform students how to improve their learning, so an opportunity is lost (Mikre, 2010). Gibbs (2010) stressed that a poor grade may affect a student's sense of his or her ability to be successful. Significantly, students can be informed to have a clear view of the similarities and differences between assessment and grade. For instance, "after assessment, students can compare their actual grades with the criteria for higher grades and thus reflect on why their actual grade may not have been as high as they would have liked" (Biggs and Tang, 2007:196). Stiggins (2006:4) believed that "in such contexts, single scores or grades will not suffice". In summary, grades are important products of assessment which have a possible impact on students' learning. In order to

provide a clearer picture of assessment methods, the next section provides an overview of the most important methods used in teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

3.17 ASSESSMENT METHODS

A number of assessment methods are discussed below based on their relevance to this study. The main assessment methods that are used in education are summative, formative, self- and peer-assessment, and these are considered with reference to the function and product of each method. The relationship between them is discussed in order to clarify the differences and similarities. In the literature, these methods are divided into formal and informal types, for example, summative assessment is a formal method often taking the form of exams with grades, whereas formative, self- and peer-assessment are seen as informal. However, both types may be used to make judgments at different times by different people. Researchers have highlighted that these methods are important for tutors and learners. Brown et al., (1997:7) stated that “if you want to change student learning then change the methods of assessment”. Stiggins and Chappuis (2006) argued that selecting appropriate assessment methods and scoring guides which is appropriate for students. Hatzipanagos and Rochon (2010:491) agreed that there is a “need to diversify mainstream forms of assessment currently used in higher education assessment succeeds when the learner monitors, identifies and then is able to ‘bridge’ the gap between current learning achievements and agreed goals”. Therefore, different methods may have a potential impact on tutors’ thinking and students’ perceptions towards the use of assessment.

3.18 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (SA)

This section is an overview of summative assessment as a method of assessing students' work. There is a general consensus about what summative assessment can mean, and some researchers have tried to establish a definition of exactly what is. According to Nazzal (2010), summative assessment is the traditional form of testing and is widely used in the classroom. Summative assessment refers to a point of time which it takes place at the end of a unit of study or year (Torrance and Pryor, 1998; Sadler, 1989; McMillan, 2004; Lee, 2007; Wren, 2008; Taras, 2012). Other researchers have linked summative assessment with grading. As stated by Irons (2007:7), summative assessment is "any assessment activity, which results in a mark or grade which is subsequently used as a judgement on student performance". Meanwhile, Cauley et al, (2010) and Gardner (2006) refer to summative assessment as used to record and report what has been learned in the past. It appears from the above definitions that summative assessment is concerned on time and grades; however, Taras provided a more detailed definition incorporating criteria and standards. Taras (2012:3) referred to SA as a "formal assessment with shared criteria, outcomes and standards". The present researcher agrees with Taras' definition referring to summative assessment as the collecting of information about people's work in order to make judgements based on goals, criteria and standards at the middle or end of a course or year. Taras' definition of SA is explicit and implicit which could be interrelated to the current study in terms of the process and product of assessment. The process of summative assessment is made through a series of steps using assessment criteria, goals and standards. "Assessment is a complex process with all the

elements used to make the judgment in constant interplay” (Taras, 2010:126). Taras (2005) also stated that the process of summative assessment leads to a judgment which summarises all the evidence up to a given point. It seems the series steps in the process of summative assessment are interrelated and then lead to judgment.

3.18.1 PRODUCT OF SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The process of summative assessment produces judgment with feedback and grades relating to learners’ work. As stated by Brown (2004), the purpose of summative feedback is to determine students’ progression and completion. There is debate among researchers suggesting that summative feedback may not be beneficial for students due to its late arrival time and low effect on reducing students’ learning gap. For example, yearly tests provide too little information that arrives too late for the planning of instruction (Heritage, 2007; Crooks, 2011). However, summative assessment can provide feedback which can be beneficial for students over a period of time (Harlen, 2007a). Moreover, students can use summative test results to make decisions about further study (Chappuis and Chappuis, 2007). Providing summative feedback is a valuable for students’ learning as Taras (2003) stated that summative assessment without tutor feedback cannot support students to be aware of all of their mistakes. This feedback helps students to be aware of their own weaknesses in written work compared with standards and criteria.

The other product of summative assessment is a grade that represents learning achievements. Chappuis and Chappuis (2007:19) stated that summative assessment gives “results that are used to make some sort of judgment, such as to determine what grade a student will receive on a classroom assignment,

measure program effectiveness, or determine whether a school has made adequate yearly progress”. Angelo and Cross (1993) also agreed that assessment can be used to make judgments about individual student achievement and assign grades. Summative results and grades help learners to understand their capability at a certain level of learning (Bound and Falchion, 2006; Chan, 2007; Fardows, 2011). Hughes (2011:365) stressed that “the summative grade retains a privileged position in relation to the development aspect of assessment”. Considering this, feedback and grades represent the possible products of summative assessment.

3.18.2 FUNCTION OF SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

This section introduces the functions of summative assessment. SA has various important functions related to learners’ learning and time. Summative assessment has the function of reporting the achievements of individual students at a particular time to parents and teachers for purpose of certification and accountability (Sadler, 1989; Boud and Falchikov, 2006; Chan, 2007; Harlen, 2007b; Wang, 2008; Looney, 2011). On the other hand, the assessment literature highlights the fact that summative assessment has limitations. Barnett (2007) and Gibbs (2010) explained that summative assessment has the power to control, to classify students randomly, to limit their educational development. Moreover, Chan (2007) stated that summative assessment focuses on the learner’s individual ability rather than cooperative learning. This is because in summative assessment, tutors control the assessment process as the testers, whereas the learners remain passive testees (Harris, 1997; Harlen, 2007a; Al-Serhani, 2007; Lee, 2011; Crooks, 2011). In this situation, students may become inactive or passive in their learning. A number of researchers have

indicated that summative assessment is referred to or perceived as high stakes tests (Marshall, 2007; Sikka et al., 2007; Looney, 2011).

Importantly, there are ways in which summative assessment can be made to be more beneficial for learners and tutors. For instance, Chappuis and Chappuis (2007) stated that tutors can plan and allow time for students to learn from their summative assessment, followed by learning knowledge or skills they had not acquired the first time and then retaking the assessment. It can be concluded that using other methods as well as summative assessment can offer students more opportunities to develop their learning. The next section deals with the other major method of assessment, which is formative assessment.

3.19 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (FA)

The literature provides different meanings of formative assessment in the field of education. According to Boud and Falchikov (2006), formative assessment has been a topic of debate in recent years, because it has received close attention with the spread of new teaching methods (Bell and Cowie, 2001; Heritage, 2007). FA refers to a frequent, continuous method that enables students to understand their learning needs (Stiggins, 2005; Looney, 2001-2005; Chappuis and Chappuis, 2007). Similarly, FA is viewed as collecting information about students' learning. Formative assessment is a regular process of gathering evidence and information about learning (Treacher and Eills, 2002; Stiggins, 2005; Heritage, 2007; Wren, 2008). Pinchok et al., (2009:01) supported this belief, explaining that formative assessment is "a process in which teachers use various tools and strategies to determine what students know, identify gaps in understanding, and plan future instruction to improve learning". Finally, all the previously mentioned descriptions provide a

general overview of what FA means, while in the present research FA is referred to specifically as the process of making a judgment on students' assignments, essays and the classroom activities based on specific learning goals, criteria, and standards for each work to provide feedback and grades. Regarding this, formative assessment is "any task or activity, which creates feedback for students about their learning" (Irons, 2007: 7).

In the literature, there is a debate about the similarity and difference between summative and formative assessments. Some researchers link this to the functions of the different sorts of assessments. Summative and formative assessments are purposes, not events (Brown and Knight, 1994; Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Crooks,2011). This work is based on the premise that both summative and formative have a similar process, which includes an interrelated series of steps or actions such as the use of criteria, maintenance of standards, provide grading, feedback and learning goals. Assessment is seen as a single process by (Scriven,1967; Taras, 2010). There is further discussion on the similarities between summative and formative assessment (see section 3.22).

3.19.1 PRODUCT OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

This section introduces the possible products of formative assessment, which are feedback and grades. Formative assessment produces several on-going types of feedback on learners' work during their learning. "The provision of feedback on students' writing is a central pedagogical practice in higher education and much feedback takes the form of comments produced as part of assessment" (Coffin et al., 2003:102). Feedback is as a principal component in formative assessment (Sadler, 2010). The purpose of feedback is to monitor students' learning in terms of progress since the previous assessment and how

they response to it (Bell and Cowie, 2001; Popham and Stiggins, 2006; Boud and Falchikov, 2006; Heritage, 2007; Sadler, 2010; Hughes, 2011; Torrance, 2012). Other researchers focus on feedback as communication. Shute (2008:154) explained that formative feedback is “information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning”. To achieve this, students can use the feedback to produce improved work by redoing the same assignment (Boud, 2000). Considering the above, formative feedback has great value for developing students’ work during their learning and to achieve better work in the future. The second product of FA is grades, which are “symbols usually taking the form of alphanumeric characters or short verbal descriptors such as distinction, merit, credit or pass (Sadler, 2009:807), given for the final submission draft of students’ assignment essays, activities and homework”. Finally, the process of formative assessment could be more effective when feedback is given along with grades for the final draft of work.

3.19.2 FUNCTION OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The literature suggests that formative assessment has an essential influence on teaching and learning, and may play an effective role in relation to time, describing how each student's learning is progressing and enabling him/her to meet learning standards while there is still sufficient time (Stiggins, 2005; Jia et al., 2006; Oscarson, 2009; Mikre, 2010). Other views highlight the fact that formative assessment can support students to be centred in their learning by discovering their strengths and weaknesses (Rust, 2002; Cooper, 2008; Earl and Giles, 2011; Simpson-Beck, 2011). Wang (2008) stressed that formative

assessment is an essential assessment practice, which has a powerful impact on students' learning and indicates how well a student has learned.

Formative assessment can also have an important role in teaching, offering tutors a chance to identify learning needs, and when to move on or adjust teaching (Rudner and Schafer, 2002; Popham and Stiggins, 2008; Looney, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to increase the effectiveness of students' learning (Stiggins, 2002; Bartlett et al., 2006; Marshall, 2007; Ecclestone, 2007; Hernandez, 2012). Further function is concerned to enhance the interaction level among students and tutors by switching different drafts of work with feedback (see section 3.3, 3.4, 3.27). "Formative assessment, like scaffolding, is a collaborative process and involves the negotiation of meaning between teacher and learner about expectations and how best to improve performance" (Shepard, 2005:67). Jones (2010) also stated that formative assessment provides opportunities for practice, questions, discussion, thinking and feedback in the classroom. Opposing views suggest that once a formative assessment method is implemented, class time is used differently which may mean that more time is needed (Boud and Falchikov, 2005; Harlen, 2007b; Heritage, 2007; Sadler, 2010). To summarise, FA has a significant function in learning and teaching because it is known as assessment for learning in the literature. For example, James (2006: 47) argued that "effective assessment for learning is central and integral to teaching and learning".

3.20 PEER ASSESSMENT

There are a number of definitions of peer assessment. Van Den Berg et al., (2006) defined it as students assessing the quality of their classmates' written work and giving feedback to each other. Meanwhile Topping (1998:250)

described peer assessment as a process in which “individuals consider the amount, level, value, worth, quality, or success of the products or outcomes of learning of peers of similar status”.

The above definitions give a general view of what peer assessment means; whereas others relate it to specific criteria, for example Mussawy (2009) defined peer assessment as a method when students assess other students’ work using the criteria presented by tutors. Vickerman (2009) argued that students who use peer assessment need to have support from tutors so that clear criteria and guidance are given to those engaging in this process. In the current study, peer assessment is referred to as a means of students making judgments about others’ work in accordance with criteria and learning goals provided by tutors.

3.20.1 PRODUCT OF PEER ASSESSMENT

This section considers the products of peer assessment in learning, which include feedback from peers or classmates on each other’s work. In the literature, peer feedback is seen as a useful way to promote students’ learning because peers assess each other’s writing and provide feedback on what works and what still needs development (Wragg and Brown, 2001; Taras, 2001; Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006; Spiller, 2009; Vickerman, 2009; Graham et al., 2011). Also, students who receive feedback from peers may get a wider range of ideas about their work to support development and improvement (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006; Spiller, 2009). This feedback can support tutors feedback in such a way as to develop learning performance.

In peer assessment students may also “provide grades to their peers on a product, process, or performance, based on the criteria of excellence for that product or event which students may have been involved in determining”

(Falchikov, 2007:132). In the process of peer assessment, students may give grades to each other (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006). There are contrasting views about peer assessment, however, and Falchikov (2004) stated that involving students in assessment can raise a number of problems. For instance, biased grades may be given when there are social relationships among students (see section 3.31.6). Consequently, peer assessment does not involve students assigning final grades (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006; Topping, 2009). Finally, the possible products of peer assessment are in line with the process which causes effective judgments.

3.20.2 FUNCTION OF PEER ASSESSMENT

Peer assessment has a range of useful functions to help students to become more expert in assessing each other, which in turn reflects in their capability to assess their own work as well. By assessing their classmates' work, learners can also learn to assess themselves in the future (Arevalo, 2008; Vickerman, 2009). A further function of peer assessment is that it allows students to be involved in assessment, as stated by Topping (2009) and Ballantyne et al., (2002) that peer assessment supports tutors to examine, clarify, assessment goals, criteria, grading scales, which leads students to be more actively involved in the assessment experience. Arevalo (2008) found that peer assessment has a significant function in assessment where it may help and reinforce the tutor's assessment. For instance, peer assessment is not costly in terms of tutors' time (Topping, 2009; Light et al., 2009), and students may use an assessment rubric to assess the work of their classmates in order to help them to understand the assessment criteria that may be used to assess their own work (Thomas, 2011).

Moreover, students can be more engaged in their learning as peer assessment may lead to more interaction, cooperation and confidence with others (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Boud et al., 1999; Cooper, 2003; Langan et al., 2005; Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006; Arevalo, 2008; Spiller, 2009; Topping, 2009; McDowella et al., 2011; Nazzal, 2010). It appears that peer-assessment has several important functions in students' learning; however peer assessment can have some limitations. Boud et al., (1999:421) stated that "the use of peer assessment in which students make formal assessments of others within a working group can inhibit cooperation". In peer assessment, students may find it difficult to be critical when assessing their classmates' essays (Vickerman, 2009). Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless (2006) added that peer assessment is reported as being more time-consuming than traditional assessment. For instance, "with peer assessment, students are required to spend a considerable amount of time processing, comparing, contrasting and evaluating each other's work after submission" (Ballantyne et al., 2002:429). The problem of peer assessment is that it is not conducted by expert tutors (Brown and Knight, 1994). It can be concluded that peer assessment has useful functions because students may develop their educational experience and skills by editing, analysing, comparing and correcting each other's work. The following section deals with self-assessment.

3.21 SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assessment has been defined by several scholars of education. Self-assessment can be seen as a student centred assessment process (Parker, 2005; Boud and Falchikov, 2006; Taras, 2010). In the literature self-assessment is understood as a process of formative assessment (Andrade and Du, 2007;

Taras, 2008; Oscarson, 2009; Spiller, 2009). Bromilow (2004:60) provided a general view that “the process of self-assessment switches the focus to the student as assessor, which not only presents a different perspective on assessment but also a range of challenges for both student and teacher”.

A specific definition of self-assessment given by Taras (2010:200) is that it “is used to cover all judgments by learners of their work”. Oscarson (2009) and Boud (1995) supported this definition by indicating to criteria in the self-assessment process, which helps students to become more capable to measure their achievement against goals. The present researcher agrees with Taras’ definition about self-assessment because it is clear definition, which includes all the aspects that are related to self- judgement. From this, self-assessment refers to a judgment of one's own work in order to identify weaknesses or strengths and to know how much progress one has made based on a set of criteria or standards. This process is controlled by students with some guidance from their tutors. “In language learning, without the aid of a tutor or teacher, it is imperative that this skill be developed” (Oscarson, 2009:222).

3.21.1 PRODUCT OF SELF-ASSESSMNT

The possible products of self-assessment are described in this section. Taras (2010) explained that students can grade their own work and respond to feedback. Conducting self-assessment produces feedback, as stated by Spiller (2012, cited in Nicol, 2008) on examples of previous work in relation to stated criteria. This involvement in assessment enables students to produce feedback on their own work. As such, “it is just-in-time, just-for-me information delivered when and where it can do the most good” (Brookhart, 2008:1). A further product of self-assessment is self-grading which is the marking of one's own work

against a set of criteria (Brown and Knight, 1994; Cowan, 2006). Nevertheless, others indicate that self-assessment can be more effective when it does not include grading. Taras (2010: 2002) argued that students need to “understand the feedback provided by the tutors against which to compare their task, correct and grade their own performance”. “Learners need to be encouraged to assess their own work and relate its quality to that of peers and immediate superiors” (Ecclestone, 2002:38). As a final point, effective and successful self-assessment includes feedback and grades.

3.21.2 FUNCTION OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

The use of self-assessment is widespread and it is viewed as a valuable device for students' learning development (Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Oscarson, 2009). Self-assessment supports students to become more effective self-assessors, identifying their own learning needs and become independent learners (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2002; Parker, 2005; Tan, 2007; Heritage, 2007; Oscarson, 2009; Spiller, 2009; Lam, 2012). Other function is that self-assessment increases student's responsibility but it requires more trust from tutors (Harris, 1997; Stiggins, 2005; Parker, 2005; Taras, 2010). Similarly, self-assessment helps students to take responsibility for developing their own sense of control over their success (Stiggins, 2005). A further function of self-assessment is that students may have an opportunity to compare exam results with their self-assessment and reflect on how they need to develop in the future (Boud, 1995; Harris, 1997; Oscarson, 2009). In addition, self-assessment has an important role in involving learners in communication with tutors. Also, stressed by Harris (1997:19), “self-assessment can not only make students more active; it can assist them with the daunting task of learning how to

communicate in another language”. This may enable students to become metacognitive and motivationally and behaviourally active participants in their own learning (Zimmerman, 2001).

Learners are also empowered to be able to more efficiently judge their own achievements and what they need to do to learn more effectively (Boud and Falchikov, 2006). Therefore, this supports them in achieving their learning goals efficiently, and Taras (2001) agreed that in the process of self-assessment, students can understand feedback. There are various ways in which students can be encouraged and supported to become self-assessors. Students’ ability to self-assess their EFL competence seems to be dependent on the type of task and situation at hand; thus, tutors can create a classroom culture that supports self-assessment (Heritage, 2007; Oscarson, 2009). For instance, self-assessment may be integrated with everyday classroom activities in order to become a part of the writing process (Harris, 1997). This can be conducted when an appropriate rubric is provided. Nazzal (2010) explained that such rubrics can be a powerful tool for self-assessment because they provide a guide for students to assess the quality of their work. To conclude, self-assessment has important functions in learning. The relationship between formative, summative self- and peer assessment is discussed in more detail next.

3.22 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUMMATIVE, FORMATIVE, PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

This section discusses the relationship between the different methods of assessment. Assessment is seen as a single process (Scriven, 1967). Taras (2007:59) explained that “the process of assessment is the same, whereas, the functions are different”. The process of assessment includes interrelated a

series of steps or actions such as criteria, standards, grading, feedback and learning goals. In the literature, there is a debate about the difference between summative and formative assessment. As explained by Black and William (1998a), a lot of students and tutors do not fully understand the difference between them. For example, Bloxham and Boyd (2007:52) stated that there is “considerable confusion about the meaning of formative assessment, which is a term often used to describe any activity during a module which provides information to students and tutors on progress”.

It can be argued that various methods of assessment have different functions. Taras (2010) stated that it is generally accepted that the distinction between SA and FA is based on functions. Crooks (2011) also added that summative and formative assessments are purposes, not events. It is important to highlight the fact that formative and summative refer to the purposes of assessment rather than to the method used (Brown and Knight, 1994). “A basic distinction between formative and summative assessment is that formative assessment is for the purpose of regularly reviewing progress to inform a learning programme, while summative assessment is for national tests and qualifications” (Armitage and Renwick, 2008:33). However, it can be noted that formative and summative assessments are linked because formative assessment leads to summative assessment (William and Black, 1996; Black et al, 2003; Taras, 2008). In addition, information from summative assessment may be used formatively when tutors use it to improve teaching and learning later. “Formative assessment is also combined with summative assessment to assess the extent and quality of learning at a given point, often for the purposes of assessing student performance before a transition to the next key stage” (Rey, 2010:140).

Furthermore, Caffrey (2009) indicated that formative and summative assessments are managed in a comprehensive assessment system. “It is possible to use the same corpus of assessment evidence to derive both formative and summative judgments, as long as that evidence is interpreted differently for each purpose” (Newton,2007:155). Lee (2007; 181) stressed that “an assessment can be summative and formative at the same time because it can serve both summative and formative functions”. Lam (2013) indicated that summative and formative assessments are typically considered in terms of function. For instance, it is possible for an assessment to be exclusively summative if it stops at the judgment. However, it is not possible for assessment to be exclusively formative without the summative judgment having preceded it (Taras, 2005).

Self-assessment similarly has a relationship with formative assessment as a way of developing students' learning including judgment, which means summative. This is because “self-assessment is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly” (Andrade and Du, 2007:160). Taras (2010:202) stressed that “during the self-marking, learners are carrying out the same assessment process as tutors with all the process and product benefit”. Furthermore, the relationship between peer assessment and self-assessment is noticeable (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006). For example, the functions of these methods may also coincide in some stages of the assessment process such as developing students' learning. In the light of the above discussion, it seems that

all methods of assessment have a similar process while potentially carrying out different functions. The assessment used in language learning and teaching is briefly dealt with below.

3.23 ASSESSMENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

This section provides an overview of assessment in language learning and teaching. "Assessment is seen as not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement" (Jaquith and Salmon, 2008:219). In the literature a range of researchers highlight that effective assessment is central and integral to teaching and learning (James, 2006; Lee and Coniam, 2013). It can be argued that assessment has a potential impact on students' learning. Ciuza (2011) and William (2014) argued that the first priority in assessment is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning. For instance, assessment produces feedback that provides guidance on how to develop performance which has a positive impact on learning (Looney, 2011). Assessment can be more effective when students are involved in it. "Assessment is a part of everyday practice by students, teachers and peers that seeks, reflects upon and responds to information from dialogue, demonstration and observation in ways that enhance on-going learning"(Crooks, 2011:71-72). "Students can participate in these processes if teachers communicate to them the lesson goals and the criteria by which they can judge their progress towards the goals" (Harlen, 2007a:19). Chen (2008:238) also added that "when power is shared in the classroom, assessment becomes a dialogue of sharing and negotiating understanding of the assessment criteria and standards between the teacher and students". For example, Taras (2010:7) believed that "assessment developed from the desire of a community of academics to minimise the impact

of external exams and tests in the classroom and to make classroom learning in schools more creative”. Nevertheless, in an EFL context, assessment has been thought of as a separate part of the teaching and learning process (Looney, 2011). For example, “tutors who neglect to pay attention to their assessment practices are ignoring an important opportunity to enhance students’ effort, approach and outcomes” (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007:16). Alduwairi (2013) also stated that tutors use assessment to examine what their students know and can do and what confusions, preconceptions, or gaps in knowledge they might have. This is because assessment can involve regulating teaching as needed, while the learning is still taking place (William et al., 2005; Leahy et al., 2005). Crooks (2011:72) explained that “assessment includes three key components: having a clear goal, identifying gaps between what a student currently can do and the goal, and identifying steps or strategies to close the gap”. Furthermore, assessment information can be used to adapt teaching and learning to meet students’ needs (Boston, 2002; Yorke, 2003; Bloxham and Boyd, 2007). Therefore, the teaching plan and methods used can be modified in response to the information that comes from conducting assessment. To summarize assessment can be more beneficial when tutors reshape their thinking from assessment that measures learning to assessment that promotes students’ learning, as long as students are motivated to be involved in the assessment process.

3.24 ASSESSMENT AND AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Learner autonomy, self-regulated learning and independent study are similar in meaning because all of them help students take responsibility for their own learning. Learning autonomy is defined by Holec in his seminal work (1981) as

the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning. Boekaerts et al., (2005:150) referred to "self-regulation as a multi-component, multi-level, iterative self-steering process that targets one's own cognitions, affects and action, as well as features of the environment for modulation in the service of one's goals". Pintrich and Zusho (2002:64) also provided a definition of self-regulated learning as "an active constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment". It is argued that self-regulated learning skills are essential at most or all levels of education (Nückles, Hübner and Renkl, 2008). In relation to assessment, self-regulated learners seek "feedback from external sources such as peers' contributions in collaborative groups" (Butler and Winne, 1995:246). Autonomy in learning is also linked to "self-assessment tasks that are an effective way of achieving this, as are activities that encourage reflection on learning progress" (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006:8). Munoz and Alvarez (2007) also argued that self-assessment adopts autonomy and responsibility for learning. Ecclestone (2002: 34) stated that autonomy becomes both a goal and a set of processes for understanding it. Furthermore, promoting skills in self-assessment may benefit students who can develop the skills required for independent learning (Irons, 2007). However, Smith (2003:132) stated that "a weak version of pedagogy for autonomy, in which learning arrangements tend to be determined by the teacher, syllabus and/or institution rather than being negotiated with learners, can certainly be criticized". The potential weaknesses of self-assessment can be minimised with anonymity, multiple assessors and moderation by tutors (Vickerman, 2009). It

can be concluded that it is difficult to encourage learning autonomy in the Libya context because students are still passive in depending on their tutors in relation to assessment. The following sections take a closer look at the importance of the roles of tutors and learners in assessment in the field of education.

3.25 THE ROLE OF TUTORS IN ASSESSMENT

This section discusses the role of tutors in assessment. Summative assessment is under the control and administration of tutors (Stiggins, 2005). “The teacher’s responsibility is generally seen to be that of providing instruction on what and how to learn” (Oscarson, 2009:226). In the process of summative and formative assessment, tutors are responsible for providing the criteria, standards and learning goals needed to make judgments. “Formative assessment is a dynamic process in which supportive adults or classmates help learners move from what they already know to what they are able to do next, using their zone of proximal development” (Shepard, 2005:66). Moreover, tutors give feedback and grades as products of the assessment. Looney (2011:9) stated that “it is important to (scaffold) information given in feedback – that is, to provide as much or as little information as the student needs to reach the next level”.

However, assessment can be seen as “accomplished jointly by the teacher and the student, and oriented more to future development rather than measurement of past or current achievement” (Torrance and Pryor, 2001: 617). Tutors can support “the learner during problem solving in the form of reminders, suggestions, and encouragement to ensure the successful completion of a task” (Shepard, 2005:66). From this the role of tutors can be developed from just given instructions to students to make judgement to more objectives. For

instance, “when teachers engage in effective forms of assessment, they are likely to provide scaffolding, such as prompts or response structures that address learners’ difficulties and are informed by previous student responses and classroom talk” (Kang et al., 2014:676). Formative assessment is also controlled by tutors who focus on gathering information and using it to inform their teaching (Parr and Timperley, 2010).

In the process of self and peer assessment the role of the tutor still seems important in supporting students’ learning. Tutors can provide criteria, marking sheets, guidelines, learning goals and support in order to help students to make judgments. For example, the role of the tutor is to act as a guide on the side of students in order to provide them with opportunities to test the adequacy of their current understanding. The tutor is responsible for designing and implementing an effective learning environment, and the student is responsible for learning within that environment (Black and Wiliam, 2009). To achieve this in peer assessment, tutors can divide students into groups or pairs and also create differentiated teaching strategies and learning opportunities. As stated by Parr and Timperley (2010), tutors can support their students to understand the learning goals and create opportunities for them to have feedback on progress towards such goals. Stiggins (2005:11) also highlighted that the fact role of tutors can change and the teacher’s role is to complete the following progression:

“Start by clearly understanding the standard to be mastered; deconstruct it into the enabling classroom achievement targets that form the foundations of learning leading up to the standard; create a student-friendly version of those targets to share with students from the beginning of the learning; create high quality assessments

of those classroom targets, and use those in collaboration with students to track improvement over time”.

In conclusion, the role of tutors in assessment is central because any method of assessment cannot be performed effectively without them. It also noted that tutors have an important role in the development of learning through assessment.

3.26 THE ROLE OF LEARNERS IN ASSESSMENT

The literature suggests that students can play a central role in learning by participating in assessment. According to Armitage and Renwick (2008), assessment involves a range of people, including tutors and students. Assessment is part of learning if students can be active in their own assessment (Black and William, 1989). In the literature, there is still a debate among researchers about what students’ involvement in assessment can mean. Stiggins and Chappuis (2004) stated that student involvement in assessment involves students learning to use assessment evidence to manage their own learning. Boud (1995:5) added that it includes “the involvement of students in identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards”.

For example, in summative assessment, the students’ role is passive because they are testees providing material for their teachers to assess (Falchikov, 2004). The student’s traditional role is to study hard and attempt to gain the highest score and establish competence (Stiggins, 2005). In contrast, students’ role in formative assessment is active because it aims to strive to understand what success looks like and to use each assessment to try to understand how

to do better next time (Stiggins, 2005). In addition, students can receive and exchange feedback from tutors and students during their learning which helps them to have an effective role (Heritage, 2010). Students can also discuss feedback with their peers and then respond to the feedback (Boud, 1995; Vickerman, 2009; Taras, 2010). Importantly, the role of students can be more effective when they are involved in making judgments about learning and these judgments may be combined with the judgments of tutors (Lutz and Huitt, 2004). “Tutors can support students in developing their own self-monitoring skills, so that they can make adjustments to learning when needed to keep on track and achieve the learning goals” (Heritage, 2010:4). It is stressed by Jaqus and Salmon (2008:230) that “it is important that students have a chance to test and refine their judgments and marks against those of the tutor before their own marks are taken into account”. Considering the above, involving students in assessment can lead to difficulties. As stated by Vickerman (2009:221), “self-assessment is sometimes considered difficult, because students feel it is impossible to be objective when considering their own work”. Black et al., (2003:49) argued that “many who have tried to develop self-assessment skills have found that the first and most difficult task is to get students to think of their work in terms of a set of goals”.

Moreover, the engagement with criteria and standards is at the heart of students’ involvement in assessment which leads to higher quality performance in learning (Taras, 2001; Sluijsmans et al., 2004; Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006; Nicola and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Light et al, 2009; Oscarson, 2009; Bloxham, 2009; Heritage, 2010). From this, involving learners in sharing and understanding criteria and standards is beneficial for students’ learning. It also

helps students to understand the learning goals and supporting them to develop the skills to make judgments about their learning in relation to the standards (Heritage, 2010). However, Boud (1995:12) claimed that "involving students in identifying and engaging with criteria, is a stage which is both difficult and in my view, neglected".

Furthermore, students may discuss their grades with tutors or classmates, which may improve their own work (Light et al. 2009). Students can be involved in self-grading, which is useful in supporting students to become independent learners (Stiggins and Chappius, 2002; Taras, 2013). However, Yi-Ming Kao (2012) provided issues that are related to grades such as unfair results, over-marking or under-marking. This may due to several factors such as lack of confidence, doubting one's ability to mark fairly, or sometimes social effects such as friendship or hostility (see section 3.31.6). Therefore, involving students to understand grades is essential in "reducing the pressure of the graded context may be more conducive to students being less emotionally involved" (Taras, 2010:204).

From this, involving learners in assessment depends on the classroom situation. Taras (2010:201) stated that "the degree of involvement of students is often dependent on tutors perceived time pressures, co-operation of student cohorts and their size, logistical and even classroom size and lay-out". Therefore, more support from tutors is needed with an appropriate learning environment in order to provide good guidance, offer clear criteria and training for peer and self-assessment in order to develop the necessary skills (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007; Topping, 2009; Clark, 2012; Hernandez, 2012; McConlogue, 2012; Vickerman, 2009; Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006).

To sum up, it appears that more involvement of students in assessment is important for their learning. For example, involving students in assessment can increase their experiences of assessment as well as their future learning (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2004; Looney, 2011; Crooks, 2011; Jacoby et al., 2014). Finally, the greater the involvement of students in the assessment process and product, the more students' perceptions about assessment can be developed with higher levels of engagement in learning. The next sections discuss in more detail students' interaction within the use of assessment and how students' emotions are affected by assessment in the field of teaching and learning.

3.27 ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT INTERACTION

This section discusses assessment in relation to students' interaction. It is believed that assessment can play a vital role increasing the level of interaction. This collaboration can produce a supportive environment in which students explore their own ideas and assessment (Falchikov, 2007; Spiller, 2009; Mikre, 2010). A suitable context in the classroom can increase the levels of interaction when students are involved in the process and product of assessment. For example, students can exchange their assessed work among each other and tutors. Self-assessment is beneficial to offer a starting point for dialogue among students, and between students and their tutors (Irons, 2007). Feedback can lead to a dialogue where students engage in discussion with tutors (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), see (section 3.14). This interplay procedure can also enhance the opportunity for more interaction which has a potential effect on students' learning. Voerman et al. (2012) and McDowella et al (2011) argued that students also need interaction with fellow students, which provides informal

feedback. Finally, the more learners are involved in assessment, the more learning students can achieve.

3.28 STUDENTS' EMOTIONS CONCERNING ASSESSMENT

This section discusses the relationship between assessment and students' emotions in learning English as a foreign language. Students' feelings are related to assessment because assessment affects students' emotions which reflect on their action or behaviour in the classroom. According to Cooper (2003:5), "formative assessment is at the very heart of learning needs to be both emotional and cognitive, both personal and academic". The literature highlights that there is an association between assessment and students' positive and negative emotions. Positive emotions have a potential impact in increasing the students' level of achievements, engagements and interest in their learning. As stated by Ahmed (2012), emotions linked to achievement might be positive such as in the enjoyment of learning, which stimulates students to engage in further interactive activities in class. Cooper (2003) also argued that the emotional closeness of the tutor to the learner may enable the tutor to discover hidden factors which might enhance or inhibit learning. For instance, giving positive feedback will first reduce assessee anxiety and improve the subsequent acceptance of negative feedback (Topping, 2009:24). It can therefore be concluded that students with positive emotions about assessment can make more effort, which then reflects on their learning performance. This may lead to students achieving high scores in their exams.

However, Falchikov (2007) stated that the interaction between the student and the assessment event can be so negative that it has a serious emotional

impact. The negative emotion of anxiety is especially associated with summative assessment. Ketabi and Ketabi (2014) stated that summative assessment is usually done at the end of a course and is stressful for students. This may prevent students from engaging with or enjoying their learning in classroom activities, which can then affect their scores in examinations and also their perceptions towards assessment. For instance, students' emotions can be affected by assessment because they are under stress, especially before assessment takes place. The level of stress is particularly high when it comes to high-stakes assessments where stress may become unbearable for some students and cause them to lose confidence in themselves as learners (Agbeti, 2011). Negative or inadequate feedback is also a very powerful factor in demotivating students (Armitage and Renwick, 2008). However, tutors can play an important role in controlling students' emotions, for instance "students' anxiety can be reduced by asking them to focus on providing feedback against the criteria rather than trying to allocate a mark or grade for an assessment" (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007:77). From the above discussion, students' feelings and emotions are linked with assessment. Therefore, Cooper (2008) indicated that understanding the emotional state of students can be as significant to learning as any other factor. A brief review of the literature on assessing EFL writing follows in the section below.

3.29 ASSESSING EFL WRITING SKILLS

This section provides an overview of the assessment of EFL writing skills. According to James and Strickland (2000:66), "assessment gets to the heart of teaching and lets us decide how and when to offer support to writers". Hand writing is still used in the EFL context, which offers an opportunity for tutors and

students to use a range of assessment methods inside and outside the classroom. Handwriting is used commonly within the larger area of learning a language and assessment (Brown, 2004). In EFL writing, assessment traditionally focuses on written products of learning (Lee, 2011).

Assessment is the only method that tutors use to identify their students' weaknesses or strengths in writing. Tutors use assessment to identify spelling, grammar and punctuation problems in writing (Graham et al., 2011; Hawthorne and Glenn, 2011). In the EFL context tutors still focus on accountability and grades when they assess their students' written work. In the other words, as Lee (2011) indicated writing assessment carries a summative purpose. Also the methods used to assess students' writing are traditional in that they are carried out using paper and pencil (Al-Serhani, 2007; Miken, 2010). This may affect students' level or performance in writing or their ability. Brown (2004) stated that learning how to become a good writer puts the student in an almost constant stage of assessment. It can be argued that using several methods of assessment can improve students' writing performance because "assessment helps teachers to know where learners are, to locate their strengths and identify gaps in order to make teaching decisions about next steps, including what to build on or what to revisit" (Parr et al., 2007:70). Similarly, Schulz (2009) argued that when appropriate assessment is used in classrooms, English language learners can have better opportunities to improve their writing skills. Moreover, Graham et al., (2011) indicated that teachers assess writing to monitor students' progress and their teaching effectiveness. Thus, Calfee and Miller (2007) stressed that it is important to practice and assess writing tasks with clear purpose. Schulz (2009) also explained that tutors could learn more about

students' individual writing strengths and weaknesses if they conduct multiple writing assessments over time. Hurley and Blake (2000:91-92) suggested the following guiding principles for teachers to follow in order to improve learners' writing:

- ❖ Assessment activities can help teachers make instructional decisions.
- ❖ Each assessment activity needs to have a specific objective-linked purpose.
- ❖ Assessment activities can grow out of authentic learning activities.
- ❖ Assessments of student learning can be longitudinal; i.e., take place over time.
- ❖ Assessment strategies may help teachers find out what students know and can do not what they cannot do.
- ❖ The holistic context for learning need to be considered and assessed.

Furthermore, Anderson (2005) believed that good writing tutors assess students' written work every day. Condelli and Wrigley (2003) stressed that selecting an appropriate assessment method is useful to measure writing skills. Understanding a variety of assessment methods is not sufficient to assess this skill. Brown (2004) noted that teachers and students may take into consideration the fact that assessing writing skills is not a simple task. However, knowing how to fit a particular assessment method to a writing task is essential. Teachers can benefit from the use of assessment writing to build up their pedagogical knowledge (Parr et al., 2007; Schulz, 2009). Finally, using several methods of assessment in EFL writing classes is more likely to help students to become better writers in English.

The following section considers a range of previous studies conducted on assessing writing skills and narrows the focus to the assessment of writing in the context of learning English as a foreign language.

3.30 PREVIOUS STUDIES RELATED TO THE ASSESSMENT OF EFL WRITING

In the EFL context several empirical studies have investigated the assessment of writing skills, using different data collection instruments. Qinghua's (PBWA) (2010) study examined the impact of portfolio-based writing assessment on the EFL writing development of Chinese learners. Participants were two classes each consisting of 34 students, and the methodology used was comparison focusing on writing products and a case study. The findings showed that learners in class A, who were involved in the project, were not better than the control class B in every aspect. Another study conducted by Abd.Rahman (2001) investigated portfolio assessment using a case study of EFL primary school pupils in Darussalam Brunei; the case study involved two groups of students in separate schools. The study established that the majority of the pupils (about 95.6%) preferred to have their written pieces scored by the teacher. In addition, 73.3% of the students preferred the teachers to write the assessment feedback and comments on their work, and 80% claimed that they always read these comments. Daskalogiannaki (2012) conducted a study of the assessment EFL of students' writing skills via a class-blog Junior high school situated in a rural part of Crete, Greece. The participants were 12 fourteen-year old students attending English as a foreign language course twice a week. This research used observation and a questionnaire to collect data. The findings revealed that self-evaluations from the blog and comments helped students to plan their writing and elaborate on the information and ideas gathered. In addition, students were positively affected by the peer feedback from reviews of their work, which was believed to be more helpful than the traditional teacher's corrections. Arevalo (2008) also explored peer assessment in the ESL

classroom. A questionnaire study was conducted with forty students and nine presentations by students were examined. The results revealed that peer-assessment had a significant role in assessment and it was seen to reinforce the teacher's assessment. In addition, peer assessment was considered a useful tool in the classroom because it helped students to be involved in their learning and the assessment process.

Walker and Rýu (2008) studied coherence in the assessment of writing skills, using an extended writing project (EWP) designed as an alternative assessment device. Questionnaire answered by participants indicated that the EWP was preferred because the teachers could assess students' progress using a variety of methods of assessment. Lee (2011) studied formative assessment in EFL writing in exploratory case study in the Chinese University, Shatin, Hong Kong. A questionnaire, observation and interviews were used in order to gather information. The results revealed that writing assessment could be used for formative purposes to promote teaching and learning, and also students were positively motivated in their learning experience focusing on formative assessment writing in classrooms.

Considering the above previous studies in HE and secondary schools about assessment methods of writing in the EFL context, it seems that there is a need for further research. This literature reviewed so far motivated the researcher to carry out this study in order to attempt to fill this gap in the literature. Also this study will add significant pedagogical insights to the field of writing in relation to assessment in Libya and other EFL contexts. The following section describes the factors that affect the choice of assessment methods in the EFL context.

3.31 FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHOICE OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

Given that this research examines the factors that affect tutors' choice of assessment methods; it would be important to discuss factors that may impact on the use of a variety of assessment methods. Performing effective assessment requires awareness of these factors. Important factors may include: the tutor's background and experience, the tutor's views of assessment, class size, and time allowed for assessment, the students' culture and the tutor's motivation and training in assessment.

3.31.1 TUTORS' BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

This section focuses on the effect of the tutors' background and experience on their assessment practice. Tutors' knowledge is enormously significant in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. Johnston and Goettsch (2000) believed that the tutor's knowledge is central to language education. The tutor's knowledge is defined here as "all profession-related insights that are potentially relevant to the teacher's activities" (Verloop et al, 2001:445). Torney-Purta (2005) stated that the term refers not to one concept only, but rather to many overlapping constructs. It is argued that there is a relationship between knowledge and practice in terms of how knowledge can be turned into practice in the classroom. Webb and Jones (2009:166) argued that "successful implementation of formative assessment depends in the learning approach and teachers' knowledge, skills and strategies that they use to carry out complex pedagogical processes". For instance, a deficiency in practice or training may affect the tutors in translating their knowledge into action. Consequently, it is important to consider how the various components of their knowledge are linked to what they actually do in the classroom (Tantane, 2012).

In the EFL context, tutors who have sufficient knowledge about several methods of assessment are more capable of teaching efficiently than those with more limited knowledge. This is reflected in the choices made in selecting appropriate methods of assessment with reference to the nature of the classroom, students, module and context. To achieve this, “teachers may be skilled in choosing and developing assessment methods, administering and scoring tests, interpreting and communicating assessment results, grading, and meeting ethical standards in assessment” (Zhang ,2003:225). Each method of assessment requires particular knowledge. For example, to use formative assessment successfully in the classroom tutors need specific knowledge (Heritage, 2007). The lack of knowledge or experience in assessment may be due to the use of traditional assessment methods that are not appropriate for dynamic learning settings or new types of learning and teaching (Davidge and Johnston, 2007; Seeto et al., 2010; Dogan, 2011). Furthermore, the knowledge held by tutors can affect the students’ learning because it is perceived as the key to effective practice knowledge of the student and of the subject being taught (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007; Parr et al., 2007).

There is also a relationship between background knowledge and pedagogical experience with assessment training. Many colleges of education fail to provide assessment training in their programmes and only a few tutors receive official training in assessment design. It was stressed by Suwaed(2011) that Libyan universities do not deliver pre-service or in-service training for university tutors, and it remains the case that colleges of education often fail to include assessment training in their programmes (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006). Teachers rarely have the opportunity to learn how to use assessment as a

teaching and learning device (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006; Guskey, 2003; Stiggins, 2002). It would appear that EFL tutors lack knowledge about assessment. However, tutors' experience enables them to change their methods of assessment from traditional methods to a mixture of traditional and alternative types (Berry, 2006; Parr et al., 2007; Abdulrahim, 2009).

3.31.2 TUTOR'S VIEWS OF ASSESSMENT

A tutor's point of view on assessment is another factor that can affect the use of assessment methods. Researchers focus on assessment as a part of teaching rather than both learning and teaching. "Assessment is often viewed as something in competition with teaching, rather than as an integral part of teaching and learning" (Heritage, 2007:140). Others hold a traditional view of assessment as isolated from the teaching and learning process; for example, with examinations coming at the end of a study unit (Rust, 2002; Bloxham and Boyd, 2007; Looney, 2011). Another view relates to the design of courses or curricula, and Norton (2007:93) stated that "assessment is sometimes the last thing that we think about when designing our course". However, other researchers state that "assessment also can be seen as an intrinsic part of the learning process rather than something which is just "tacked on" at the end in order to get some marks" (Rust, 2002:1).

In the EFL context, tutors still view assessment as under their control. For example, formative assessment in higher education is still mainly controlled by teachers (Boud, 2000; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Taras, 2008). This is because tutors believe that they are much more effective in identifying students' errors in their work than students themselves (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). An opposing view about assessment is that learners can be empowered

to be able to more efficiently judge their own achievements and what they need to do to learn more effectively (Boud and Falchikov, 2006). To achieve this, learners can be a central part of the entire assessment process, which cannot be exclusively carried out by their teachers (Arevalo, 2008). Additionally, tutors need to understand that their own assessments of learning are not the only sources of evidence and information available. Assessment may also be seen as a source of insight and support, and not only as an occasion for handing out rewards (Shepard, 2000; Heritage, 2007). For instance, De Grez et al., (2012) pointed out that self and peer assessment can decrease the central role of the teacher in the assessment process. Finally, tutors' views about assessment can be changed from teaching for the test to teaching for better learning and development in order to add value to their teaching.

3.31.3 CLASS SIZE

Class size and its relationship to teaching and students' achievements is still a controversial topic in the field of education. There is a debate among researchers and tutors about how class size affects the teaching and learning process. Huddleston and Unwin (2007) explained that class size is an enormously significant issue. It is argued that class size has a potential influence on both students and tutors. For instance, a large number of students in a class may not be able to cooperate or interact as much with each other as well as with their tutors. Students' perceptions of a satisfying and effective teaching and learning setting are mainly influenced by class size (ibid.). Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) also argued that in large classes it is difficult for the tutors to engage in discussion with students. Another negative effect of a large class is that it is difficult for students to concentrate due to higher noise levels.

Furthermore, some classroom activities cannot be completed in the available time due to the large numbers of students, and more effort is needed in monitoring. It was confirmed by Cooper (2008) that large groups seem to generate alienation and limited opportunities for formative assessment and learning.

On the other hand, larger classes can be seen as a useful way to provide an opportunity for interaction among students in order to practice more activities in the classroom. Ahmad (2012) stressed that large classes may be seen as providing more opportunities for interaction and social activities among students. Alkadri et al., (2011:1) added that “formative assessment appears to play a larger role in increasing student's achievement than does a reduction in class size or an increase in teachers' content knowledge”. In addition, other methods of assessment like self-assessment can be applied usefully in large classes (Wilson and Scalise, 2006; Harris, 1997).

Small classes may be preferred by tutors and students due to their positive impact on teaching and learning. Horning (2007) stated that to raise the students' level of engagement in learning writing and small classes are essential. The perfect class size for a student who is learning a language is possibly to be about twelve and small class size is helpful for students' engagement and success (Horning, 2007; Jones, 2007). The use of assessment methods can lead to great success and more learning in smaller classes (ibid). It can be argued, therefore that tutors who are fully aware of assessment methods can select and use a method that fits a particular class. The assessment technique is chosen to fit the topic and the needs of the particular class (Angelo and Cross, 1993). Moreover, reducing the number of students in

the classroom may lead to use of different assessment methods but Ahmad (2012) stressed that in the Libyan context small classes are little more than a dream for tutors and students. The next section deals with motivation as another factor that influences the tutor's choice of assessment methods.

3.31.4 MOTIVATION

Motivation could play a vital role in the field of education especially in the area of assessment. Guay et al., (2010:712) defined motivation as “the reasons underlying behaviour”, and Ryan and Deci (2000:54) identified “intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation”. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing interesting or enjoyable things, and extrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something that leads to a desirable outcome (ibid). It may be argued that motivation can positively or negatively affect students' learning. For instance, students who are well-motivated to succeed in their learning are more efficient than those who are less motivated. Popham (2009) claimed that students with less motivation will typically end up being less well educated.

Motivation plays a very significant role in learning and assessment (Erwin and Wise, 2002; Stiggins, 2005; Stiggins, 2006; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Abdul-Rahim, 2009; Mikre, 2010). Similarly, assessment increases the level of motivation, dependent on learners' interest (Rust, 2002; Rudner and Schafer, 2002; Kavaliauskiene et al., 2007; Chan, 2007). Therefore, a tutor's motivation may affect a student to become involved in assessment. Wang (2008) stressed that assessment motivates learners to benefit from engaging in self-assessment. The type of feedback given is also related to the level of motivation, as positive feedback may lead students to make more effort in their learning. Qinghua (2010) indicated that assessment increases the students'

level of motivation. However, other researchers pointed out that assessment may decrease the students' motivation level. For example, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) indicated that assessment grades can have a negative influence on motivation for learning. In addition, grades can interfere with learners' judgements and prevent them from focusing on their work (Taras, 2001; Boud and Falchikov, 2006; Lee, 2011). It can be concluded that motivation can be used to help students to perceive assessment as a way for their learning to develop and not only as judgement. Also, learners can be motivated to be involved in the process and product of assessment, which would enhance their writing performance. Now it is important to look at the question of time as a factor that has an influence on using methods of assessment.

3.31.5 TIME GIVEN FOR ASSESSMENT

Time is one of the factors that affect a tutor's choice of assessment methods because some methods require specific amounts of time. Haines (2004) and Graham et al. (2011) explained that tests are time-consuming and assessment generally requires a large amount of time. For example, supporting students to improve their peer assessment and self-assessment skills requires time (Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Irons, 2007), and also the actual time spent on general testing is much smaller than the time spent on regular tests given by the tutors (Harlen, 2009). In addition, formative feedback is time-consuming, but a valuable learning opportunity for students to see feedback as criticism (Irons, 2007).

The entire process and product of assessment are affected by the time available. Haines (2004) stated that tutors focus on the quality of students' work

rather than increasing the amount of time given for assessment and feedback. Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless (2006) explained that time is also a factor in terms of teaching as a certain amount of content needs to be covered within specific modules. The scoring of tests is time-consuming, and students often have to wait months before results are available because in assessment tutors spend much of their time marking (Gibbs, 2010; Graham et al., 2011). Therefore, students may become passive and delay studying until assessment takes place. Furthermore, the structure of programmes and modules often means that there is little time for teachers to utilise formative activities, either because of very full curricula or because of the size of the modules and the short timespan available (Irons, 2007:57). "Examinations with high time constraints can give little opportunity for reflection, considering alternatives appreciating different contexts and integration" (Light et al., 2009:218).

On the other hand, some methods of assessment can save the tutor's time because students can conduct a variety of assessment tasks in ways which also bring educational benefits (Jaques and Salmon, 2008). For instance, peer and self-assessment methods can save faculty time (Light et al., 2009). "Self-grading and peer-grading also appear to be reasonable aids to saving teachers' time" (Sadler and Good, 2006:1). It is crucial to employ peer and self-assessment in order to save time, especially in large classes. This may also reduce the workload for tutors and given them time to mark and provide feedback on students' work. Consequently, it is important that assessment tasks are adaptable by students in terms of time (Biggs and Tang, 2007). Haines (2004) also indicated that it is useful to allow time before and after sessions to moderate marking. Similarly, tutors may encourage their students to

ensure that they have enough time for exam and revision (Haines, 2004). In light of the above, providing sufficient time for the assessment process and product can have an impact on learning and teaching.

3.31.6 STUDENTS' CULTURE

This section introduces the students' culture as a factor that has a possible effect on the use a wide range of assessment methods. Culture has referred to the learning environment, including tutors, peers and the classroom, and the family must also be considered that assist students in achieving their learning goals. Another meaning of "providing rich learning opportunities and social support is by involving students in assessment" (Falchikov, 2007:132). Consequently, it is important for tutors to teach all learners within a supportive environment (Schulz, 2009). In peer assessment, students find it difficult to be critical when assessing the essays or assignments of their peers (Vickerman, 2009). In one classroom, there may be close friends or relatives from an extended family in which peer assessment could be difficult to use and provide feedback because of fear of embarrassment and other social and cultural inappropriateness. Various studies highlighted that students' culture influences the use of peer assessment especially in an EFL context. For example, Miao et al., (2006) indicated that peer feedback has less impact than feedback from tutors especially in cultures which grant great authority to the teacher. Feng's study (2007:77) found that "all participants highly valued teacher feedback and would like to have more help from the teacher to understand the work better in order to improve their academic achievement". In such situations, students may have feelings of lack of trust in classmates in giving good feedback because tutors have greater experience in assessment. Ballantyne et al., (2002:429)

agreed in their study that “the findings show that students often lack confidence in both their own and their peers’ abilities as assessors”. Moreover, students may not value peer grades because of the accuracy of giving correct grades in terms of high and low. Peer-feedback is mainly about comments but without formal grades (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless,2006). Therefore, students may refuse to be involved in peer assessment, which they believe **it** reduces their opportunities to improve their learning. Consequently, students may lack the opportunity to interact, to be self-regulated learners and cooperate by exchanging peer feedback and grades because students operate in a system that is focused on grading rather than learning.

Peer grading may be affected by this factor, which can lead students to over-mark each other’s work because of friendship (Brown and Knight, 1994). For instance, in the EFL context students do not prefer to provide grades on each other’s work because of tutors point of views about assessment (see section 3.31.2). Peer-feedback is mainly about comments but without formal grades (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless,2006). Therefore, “students need an assessment environment which enables them to judge how they are doing and offers opportunities to improve” (McDowella et al., 2011:750). This factor is seen in many contexts when the teacher is perceived as the one responsible for preparing, administering and grading the assessment. As a result students are more likely to become passive recipients of knowledge who are not involved in the assessment process (Munoz and Alvarez, 2007).

Cultural factors can influence interaction among students. For example, students may lack the opportunity to interact, self-regulated learning and cooperate together by exchanging peer feedback and grades. “Teachers take

up the values, perceptions, and the socio-cultural understandings of effective writing assessment and good writing in their day-to-day interactions with students” (Peterson and McClay, 2010:87). Additionally, “collaboration between teachers and students and between students and their peers can produce a supportive environment in which students explore their own ideas, hear alternative ideas in the language of their peers, and evaluate them” (Mikre, 2010:110). Significantly, tutors need to bear in mind this factor when designing, supporting and assessing written work (Haines, 2004; Stiggins, 2004). It can be summarised that tutors need to take into their consideration cultural factor in selecting and designing assessment methods, and giving feedback or grades.

3.31.7 TUTORS’ TRAINING IN ASSESSMENT

The use of assessment methods is related to training in assessment. Frey and Schmitt (2007) stated that there is limited systematic training in assessment methods for tutors. For example, tutors can be unfamiliar with techniques which involve students in the assessment process (Sluijsmans et al., 2004). Therefore, it is important to train tutors in how to make judgements and how to design assessment (Sluijsmans et al., 2004). This can have an impact on tutors’ thinking about assessment which may reflect on the selection of assessment methods. It also helps tutors to develop their ways of assessing students’ written work. Students can similarly be prepared for assessment through encouragement to perceive their own improvement as achievers (Stiggins, 2005).

Importantly, assessment training can be directly linked to the course materials used. For example, the use of self-assessment training as part of the curriculum provides a way of laying the foundations for the kinds of skills students will need

as lifelong learners (McDonald and Boud, 2003). Bloxham and Boyd (2007:71) also explained that “preparing students for assessment is not a distinct stage in a module but may be part of an integrated cycle of guidance and feedback involving students in active ways at all stages”. This means that learners may have a chance to be trained to use peer and self-assessment, to deal with feedback and also to be aware of assessment criteria. Tutors also need to provide guidance and training and vary the demands of self-and peer-assessment according to their students’ abilities (Nunan, 1999; Falchikov, 2004; Sluismans et al., 2004; Lee, 2007). Finally, training tutors and students in assessment is useful to employ and select assessment method.

A conclusion which can be drawn from this is that all of the above factors are related and supported each other. For example, tutors’ knowledge and experience are associated with assessment training, because without training tutors may not be able to use some methods of assessment.

3.32 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Several important theoretical concepts are discussed in relationship to the research design and the research questions. The following figure shows an overview of the theoretical frameworks used in this study.

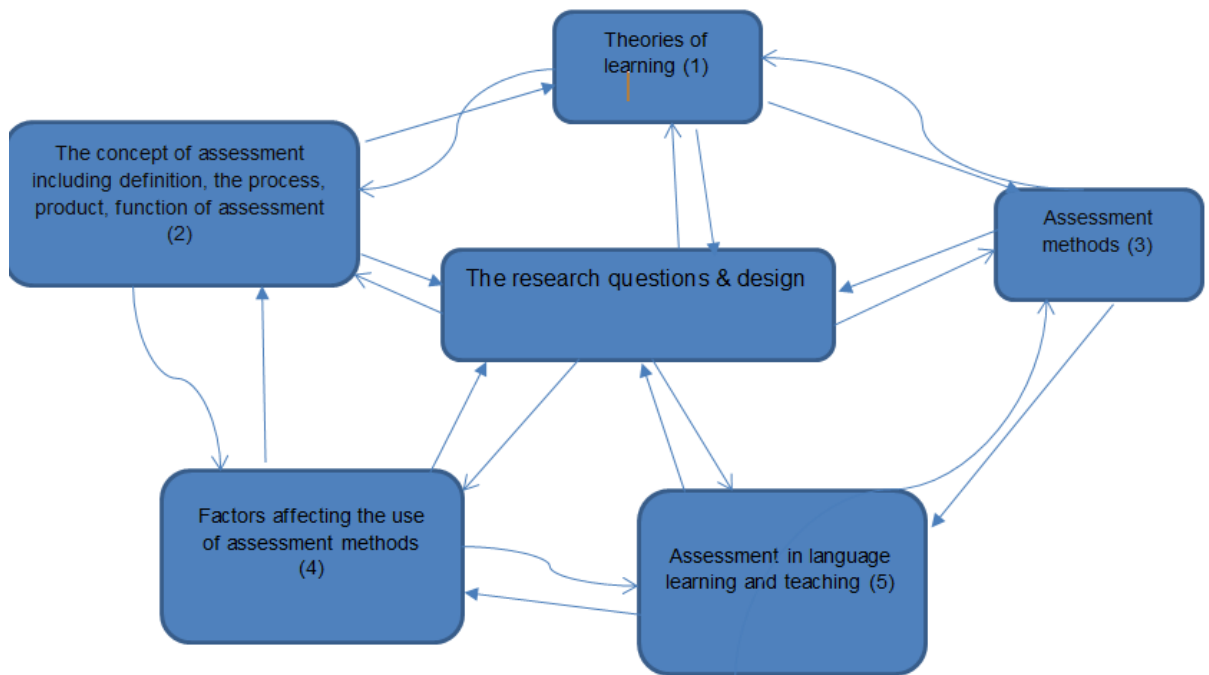


Figure 3: Theoretical frameworks for the literature review.

This figure shows how the theoretical frameworks interconnect. In the literature review, the frameworks are discussed in the numerical order of the figure. Learning theories help to understand how learning occurs in relationship to assessment. For instance, constructivist learning theory ensures that assessment supports interaction in terms of using peer and self-assessment, which can increase students' learning of EFL writing skills. Next, the concept of assessment is discussed to show the significance of the process and product of assessment. Several definitions of assessment are discussed in relationship to varied perceptions of the functions and purposes of assessment. For example, the researcher refers to assessment as the collecting of evidence and information about people's work in order to make judgements based on goals, criteria and standards. The theoretical literature review helps to establish what criteria, standards, feedback and grades already exist and the relationships

between them. It appears that it was important that criteria and standards are used to support students' learning because the process of assessment cannot be effective unless criteria are provided for each piece of written work in order to support students to achieve the required standards and learning goals. The concept of feedback in relation to teaching and learning ensured that descriptive feedback with useful comments was considered a beneficial element of assessment. Grades were also important products of assessment, which have a possible impact on students' learning.

In this study, a number of assessment methods such as summative, formative, self- and peer assessment are considered with reference to the function and product of each method. These assessment methods used in learning and teaching are discussed to highlight the relationship between them and to clarify the differences and similarities. The assessment methods can be used to increase the sources of feedback given about students' written work such as peer and self-assessment.

This study discussed several factors that affect the choice of assessment methods and these factors were interrelated to each other, which required consideration from tutors. Important factors may include: the tutor's background and experience, the tutor's views of assessment, class size, and time allowed for assessment, the students' culture and the tutor's motivation and training in assessment. For example, tutors' knowledge and experience are associated with assessment training, because without training tutors may not be able to use some methods of assessment. It is also clear from the research reviewed that understanding tutors' and students' perceptions and the difficulties behind

the lack of using several methods of assessment is important in relation to the research questions.

The literature highlights the importance of integrating the use of assessment in learning and teaching in general and EFL writing in particular. For instance, assessment supports learners to be involved in their learning rather than to receive knowledge passively. However, it seems there is a need to explore several issues concerning assessment in terms of the process and product in the Libyan context. For example, the role of Libyan learners is to receive information or instruction and observable behaviour rather than interacting. This may be related to the approaches of teaching such as the grammar translation method and the general lack of knowledge about the importance of assessment. Consequently, this study highlights the significance of using several methods of assessment in which students could be involved in peer and self-assessment, criteria, feedback and grades. For example, peer assessment and feedback support and increase the level of the interaction in the classroom. General classroom discussion of criteria, feedback and grades help students to play a greater role and be more central to their learning. Therefore, this study was conducted to develop greater understanding and provide important insights in the field of learning and teaching English as a foreign language especially in traditional contexts. Consequently, the current study used a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to provide information that could enhance the understanding of assessment methods used in the Libyan context.

The methodological framework used and the rationale behind the choices made in the present research are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a description of the methodology adopted in this study. Little research has been undertaken on assessment methods and thus this study is very important in exploring assessment methods by adopting a mixed method approach. Mears (2012) referred to educational research as the study of the world of teaching and learning in order to understand and improve practice. Creswell (2012) defined research as a procedure which involves a small set of logical steps. The central purpose of this chapter is to explain how the selected research method can address the research questions. Tuckman (1999) stressed that research is a systematic attempt to deliver answers to questions. The methods used are based on the purposes of the research and a literature review chosen. Justifications are also provided for using and the data collection instruments. The methodological framework used was designed to provide valid and truthful findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses employed in the study.

This chapter begins by discussing the research design and epistemology. The mixed-method approach used and the triangulation are then discussed with reference to the limitations of a mixed methods approach. Next, the data collection instruments are described: specifically, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Methodological issues which arose are considered including the possible disadvantages of employing observation methods in this study, and advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires and interviews. The validity and reliability of the research instruments and relevant ethical considerations are discussed and details given of the relationship between the

data collection instruments and the research questions. The relationship between the quantitative and qualitative findings and the pilot study with its effect on the main study are described. The sample selection in the questionnaire and interview and how they were accessed and sampled are then considered. An explanation is then given of the statistical software SPSS and the grounded theory method used to analyse quantitative and qualitative data respectively, and the chapter ends with a short summary.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section presents the research questions and the aims of the study. The research questions were framed concerning the aims of the investigation and the type of information required. This research was designed to explore the assessment methods used and factors affecting their use by EFL Libyan tutors when assessing students' writing. It also explores how these assessment methods are perceived by fourth year university students in relation to their tutors' thinking. To be able to meet the aims set out above, the following research questions are posed:

- 1) What assessment methods do EFL Libyan tutors use to assess university students' writing skills?
- 2) What are the factors that affect tutors' choices of assessment methods?
- 3) How do students perceive the assessment methods used by tutors in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?
- 4) How do students' perceptions relate to the tutors' thinking in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of a research study illustrates the structure of the research and how the research questions could be addressed. Designing the study is based on the topic and the research questions concerned (Robson, 2002; Henn et al.,

2006). As stated by Kumar (2011), the main purpose of a research design is to explain how answers to research questions will be found and Robson (2002:79) stated that “design is concerned with turning research questions into projects”. In this study, mixed method research was chosen for the collection of relevant data to the research questions. The design of this research was influenced by the literature review, the philosophy of the researcher, the research questions, the aims of the study and the methods available to analyse the obtained data. In other words, the research instruments were chosen taking into consideration not only the type of data required, but also the possible sources of data that would address the research questions. This study was dependent on the process of collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2009).

According to Bell (2005), decisions can be made about which methods are best for particular purposes and then data collection devices must be designed to do the job. The design of this study was to collect quantitative data first followed by qualitative data because analysis of the qualitative data could clarify and help to understand in more depth the findings from the quantitative data. Creswell (2009:211) advocated that “the straight forward nature of this design is one of its main strengths and also it is easy to implement”.

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were considered appropriate when collecting the data to provide the answers to the research questions and to achieve the aims of the study. Punch (2005) confirmed that quantitative research questions require quantitative approaches to answer them, and qualitative research questions require qualitative methods to answer them. Furthermore, the mixed methods research tools for data collection were

properly designed so as to apply valid and reliable procedures to address the research questions. Greene et al (2005) stressed that mixed-methods in social inquiry includes the planned use of two or more different kinds of data collection and analysis techniques. A brief review of the literature on research epistemology follows in the next section.

4.4 RESEARCH EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology is seen as vital in understanding the nature of any research. The philosophy of the researcher and the study were based on assumptions and paradigms found in the social sciences. Epistemology concerns the philosophical framework of study including the methodological approaches and data collection instrument used. “Epistemology relates to the study of knowledge and is concerned with how we go about knowing things and the validation of knowledge and the value of what we know” (Howitt, 2010:8). Gratton and Jones (2004) explained that there are two types of epistemological paradigm, which are positivism and interpretivism. Both use different philosophical assumptions about reality.

4.4.1 POSITIVISM

Positivism concerns a type of philosophical assumption about reality. It is an epistemological position that advocates the application of methods from the natural sciences to studies of social reality (Bryman, 2008). Cohen et al., (2007) argued that positivism suggests a particular stance regarding the social scientist as an observer of social reality. Quantitative researchers tend to be positivist because they view reality and the nature of study as facts, data, numbers and figures. “Positivists believe that reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective viewpoint” (Crabtree and Miller, 1999:223). “The

ideas of positivism really only apply to the physical sciences although many psychologists think that it applies to psychology too” (Howitt, 2010:3). Positivist approaches often “start with theory and its deductive method, as knowledge is arrived at through the gathering of facts that provide the basis for laws” (Bryman, 2008:13). Figure 4 shows the epistemological framework of the present researcher and how the data collection instruments used relate to it, and showing how the questionnaire and interviews support each other in order to address the research questions.

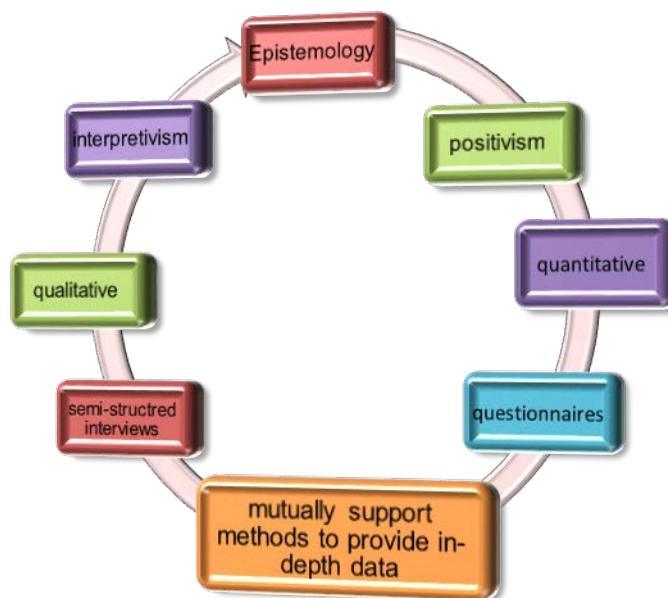


Figure 4: The research epistemology frame work.

4.4.2 INTERPRETIVISM

Interpretivists view reality as subjective, including people’s experiences, thoughts, beliefs and perceptions. “Interpretivism respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, 2008: 13). Interpretivist processes of data collection and analysis are concerned with words, deep and open discussion and understanding rather than

quantification (Cohen, 2007; Ahmed, 2012). Consequently, the study of the social world involves a different logic in the research procedure (Bryman, 2008). Wahyuni (2012) also argued that interpretivists believe that reality is constructed by social actors and people's views of it. To understand the social world from the experiences and subjective meanings that people attach to it, interpretivist researchers favour interaction and dialogue with the participants studied. Interpretivists tend to use qualitative methods because these provide them with comprehensive and in-depth data.

The above paradigms represent different ways of looking at reality; however, some researchers advocate using both in a single study. Wahyuni (2012) stated that realist researchers use quantitative and qualitative techniques because they help them to better understand social reality. In this study, the researcher has learned from both philosophical underpinnings; however, his stance is more interpretivist than positivist because he explores participants' perceptions, thoughts, views and experience about assessment methods. Additionally, the nature of the research questions led the researcher more towards interpretivism than positivism. In conclusion, mixing the analysis of quantitative with qualitative data may help the researcher to better understand the subject of study because both interpretive and positivism paradigms have been used. In light of this, the mixed methods approach is discussed in the following sections with reference to triangulation and the limitations of using this type of method.

4.5 MIXED-METHODS APPROACH

Adopting a mixed-method approach was important because it can provide rich data that could address the research questions. A mixed method is viewed as one which combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques in a single

study (Creswell, 1994; Dawson, 2002; Mertens and Mclaughlin, 2004; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Gorard and Taylor, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007). There has been an increased use of both types of data method within a single study (Denscombe, 2010a) because each has strengths and weaknesses, so that a combination of the two might be a more fruitful option (Lodico et al., 2006; Biesta, 2012).

The researcher chose a multi-method approach not because it is so widely used in social research, but due to the nature of the research questions formulated and the type of data needed in this approach. The investigation required both breadth and depth in data. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) agreed that it can be important to use more than one technique in a single enquiry because the use of many methods reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Additionally, the purpose of using mixed-methods is to fill the gaps that could occur if only quantitative or qualitative methods were used on their own with the added bonus that using both methods could increase the validity of the research findings. This is an ideal way of approaching research as it enables the researcher to counteract the weaknesses that could be found in either qualitative or quantitative methods used on their own (Creswell, 2002; Dawson, 2002; Lodico et al., 2006). Furthermore, the mixed method approach used in this study was a pragmatic option which gave equal priority to collecting data using quantitative and qualitative methods. This design provided several advantages in relation to answering the research questions. It can be summarised that using more than one data collection instrument in a single study is significant because it can provide important data about assessment from different sources considering both breadth and depth.

4.5.1 TRIANGULATION

This section considers how mixed methods can be used to triangulate findings from quantitative and qualitative analysis. According to Cohen et al (2007), there are many types of triangulation, such as time triangulation, space triangulation, combined level triangulation, theoretical triangulation and methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation was used here because of the nature of the research questions and also the multiple sources of data used which could provide verification and validity. Triangulation is a powerful method of gaining validity in research (Cohen et al., 2000; Denscombe, 2007). It was confirmed by Cohen et al (2007:115) that methodological triangulation is “used most frequently and possibly has the most to offer”. Methodological triangulation can help the researcher to look at the phenomena investigated from different angles which then provides a fuller understanding. Bogdan and Biklen (1998:104) argued that the significance of triangulation lies in the fact that “many sources of data are better in a study than a single source, because multiple sources lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena you are studying”. “This strategy reduces the risk that conclusions will reflect only systematic biases arising from the limitations of specific sources and allows a broader and more secure understanding of the issues investigated” (Maxwell, 2005:93-94). Analysis of data from multiple sources could provide conclusion, with more credibility than if the researcher is limited to one method. It may be concluded that triangulation could provide important insights in the current research by increasing the validity of the results.

4.5.2 LIMITATIONS OF A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

This section introduces the possible limitations of using a mixed-methods approach in one single study. Some researchers indicate that mixed methods research is not easy (Creswell et al, 2007; Gray, 2009). Using both types of methods had limitations in terms of being time-consuming in this study because of distance between the six English language departments. Creswell (2009:211) explained that “the main weakness of this design is the length of time involved in data collection with two separate phases”. Denscombe (2007) and Gorard et al (2004) confirmed that the use of a mixed-method approach has some limitations, for example the time and costs of the research project could be increased. Distributing questionnaires and arranging interviews with tutors and students was difficult, and other limitations were highlighted by Sarantakos (2013) for example, qualitative research may not always have a supportive, secondary role compared to quantitative research. As a further example, in the first interview one of the audio-recorders did not work properly, which led to the use of only one recorder which meant that there was a risk of losing the recording if that recorder had malfunctioned. Another issue was that conducting the interviews required a great deal of time to travel between the six English language departments in different locations. Cohen et al., (2007:349) stressed that “the researcher using interviews has to be aware that they are expensive in time”. An additional problem was of one of the participants did not arrive on the day arranged for interview, which had to be changed to another day.

The researcher also spent a great deal of time working manually on the transcripts in order to obtain themes from the data through different stages of coding. Furthermore, reading and rereading the transcriptions of interviews was

time-consuming. Finding themes and generating codes was difficult. Akbayrak (2000) pointed out that one of the main problems of understanding qualitative data is that the task quickly appears to become very complex and confusing for the researcher. Both of the quantitative and qualitative methods came from different paradigms and views, which make it difficult and time consuming. Also, undertaking research that combines methods does not always support or correlate the findings.

From 2011 the situation in Libya has not been settled because of the confrontations and disputes between different political parties which often led to violence in the streets and on university campuses. This directly influenced universities and my research in terms of the availability of the participants such as non- attendance of both tutors and students and their fear of speaking openly. Ahmed (2012) indicated that “what made matters worse was that it came in parallel with the political troubles in Libya”. Therefore, the researcher planned to collect the quantitative and qualitative data from December 2013 to the end of January 2014 because the political situation could deteriorate or become worse which may have affected the data collection. For example, it was difficult to travel between the six English language departments because sometimes roads were blocked, which led the researcher to use other long roads. Safety was not guaranteed at all times, which let the researcher to do several things in one visit to a department. This meant collecting questionnaires and interviews data in short and specific times. In such situations, the researcher contacted tutors and people in charge at each department prior to arrival to ensure that the target participants were available. “The situation of the teaching of English in Libya has not been stable due to certain political issues”

(Ahmed, 2012:11). If the political situation had been more stable then more students could have been interviewed which would have further enriched the data and also provided a larger sample size.

Dealing with such situations can enrich the researcher's experience and knowledge for further studies. For instance, collecting data from any context, the political situation needs to be considered by researchers in order to plan and prepare to adapt to the context before collecting data.

4.6 RESEARCH METHODS

This section briefly describes the research methods used in this study. The quantitative technique helps to identify a research problem based on trends in the field and explain why something occurs (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative researchers gather facts and examine the relationship of one set of facts to another (Bell, 1999; Dörnyei, 2001). Quantitative researchers are also concerned with collecting numerical data (Muiju, 2004; Neuman, 2007). A quantitative method was selected in this study to address the research questions that examined "what" or "how many" issues, such as what assessment methods Libyan EFL tutors use to assess university students' writing skills, and in addition to address answers to the question "what are the factors that affect tutors' choices of assessment methods".

A qualitative technique refers to words, meanings, concepts, explanations, and descriptions of processes. The qualitative interviews provided a method of gaining in-depth information about people's beliefs and understanding (Bell, 1999; Greene, 2005). The qualitative techniques used are subjective methods which were concerned to collect perceptions thoughts, experience and views about assessment methods in terms of the process and product from the

interviewees involved in the study. Creswell (2012) advocated that qualitative study is the best option to address the research questions and explore the research problem.

This study employed quantitative and qualitative methods as the best choices for several reasons. Firstly, both techniques were considered the most suitable methods to address the research questions. Secondly, a pilot study could reflect positively on the findings because it could help to develop the questionnaire items and interview questions. Furthermore, the nature of the investigation required such data collection instruments. Also both methods were suitable for the target population involved in this research, and the type of data to be collected was determined by the nature of the research questions. Finally, both methods could help the researcher to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

There were several reasons for not using observation in the current study. It is not a method of verbal communication that would enable perceptions, experiences and thoughts about assessment to be collected. Sarantakos (2013) claimed that observation could not directly study opinions and generalize the findings. In such situation, the present research questions may not be fully answered. Even though the observation method is useful when used in many social and scientific research projects, it appeared that the central purpose of observation is focused only on collecting data on such phenomena as actions, behaviour and, interactions, and ignores participants' perceptions, experiences and thinking. As stressed by Bell (1993:109), observation "can be particularly useful to discover whether people do what they say they do, or behave in the way they claim to behave". A further reason is that this study did not look at

oral assessment and feedback. Walliman (2001) and Cohen et al (2007) claimed that much time can be wasted waiting for things to happen, behaviour or phenomenon so it is impossible to observe it all and record it. All of the above reasons influenced the use of the observation method in the current study. The below table illustrates the timeline for the quantitative and qualitative data collection.

Table 1: The timeline for quantitative and qualitative data collection.

What	Time& date	Where	Who	Why
Quantitative data collection	December 2013 & January 2014	Libya	207 EFL students & 12 tutors	To distribute questionnaires
Qualitative data collection	Between the 23th of December 2013 to 12th of January 2014 and each lasted about 30 minutes	Libya	12 university tutors	To conduct semi-structured interviews
Qualitative data collection	From 24th December 2013 to 15th of January 2014 and each interview session lasted for about 30 minutes.	Libya	6 EFL 4 th year university students	To conduct semi-structured interviews

4.7 QUESTIONNAIRE

The use of a questionnaire is discussed in this section with reference to its advantages and disadvantages. The construction, validity, reliability and ethical issues of questionnaires are also discussed. A questionnaire contains a set of questions which could be answered by research participants (Ross and Matthews, 2010). Questionnaires are the most commonly used data collection instrument for gathering statistical data in social research (Oppenheim, 1992;

Macaro, 2001; Dornyei, 2003; Gass and Mackey, 2007; Newby, 2010). Based on the type of information required, the research questions have an influence on the selection of questionnaires with reference to the target population and the context of the study. The following sections describe the advantages and disadvantages of using questionnaires.

4.7.1 ADVANTAGES OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires have a number of advantages in social research settings. Various scholars have indicated that questionnaires are a vital way to produce and collect certain types of information quickly and cheaply (Bell, 1993,1999; Dornyei, 2003; Sarantakos, 2013). A further benefit a questionnaire is that it could be used to collect information from many people in a short time (Bell and Harris, 1994; Dornyei, 2003). There are many advantages of using questionnaires in this study. Comprehensive data could be gathered especially by employing this technique. Additionally, a questionnaire could provide a huge amount of data from participants in a short time with less effort than where other techniques such as observation and interviews are used. Bell (1999, 2005) stressed that questionnaires are used to save money, time and effort in data collection. Questionnaires are typically perceived as more objective research instruments that could provide generalizable results because of large sample sizes (Harris and Brown, 2010). Furthermore, the present researcher could use questionnaires to explore the assessment methods that EFL tutors already use and also the factors that affect their choice of methods. Well-constructed and properly designed questionnaires with appropriate analysis techniques could have a positive effect on the validity of a study. Dornyei (2003) confirmed that a well-constructed questionnaire could be fast and straightforward especially

using computer software. Finally, this technique was considered appropriate for the target population because the students were familiar with completing questionnaires at their own convenience (Muiju, 2004; Sarantakos, 2013).

4.7.2 DISADVANTAGES OF QUESTIONNAIRES

The use of questionnaires in social research also has disadvantages. The items may not be clear or difficult for respondents to understand and this may lead them to leave out some answers. In addition, participants may become bored with the questionnaire which could make them lazy in completing it or answering questions inaccurately. Thus, participants may fail to respond to all of the questions. In the current investigation, the items in the questionnaire required specific information and there were no open-ended questions. Therefore, the design and construction of questionnaires can be difficult and time-consuming. As Dornyei (2003) stated that it is easy to produce unreliable and invalid data by badly constructed questionnaires. Another disadvantage is that questionnaires do not provide an opportunity for clarification and collecting additional information (Kumar, 2011; Sarantakos, 2013). This may affect the quality of the data gathered and Mann (2001) stated that participants may leave some items in questionnaire to answer. Some of the above reasons led to the decision to use semi-structured interviews to obtain data that could not be gathered from the questionnaire. Despite the limitations of questionnaires, they are still widely used in social research and can produce significant advances in understanding assessment in higher education.

4.7.3 CONSTRUCTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Constructing effective questionnaires involves several important steps to gain data. Dornyei (2003) argued that initial steps after deciding the title include the

length, format and the main parts of the questionnaire. In addition, Sarantakos (2013) highlighted that the questionnaire needs to be constructed in a focused and systematic way. Bell (2005: 137-136) stated that the most suitable time to design and word a questionnaire is after deciding what the researcher needs to find out, because it is important to make sure “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). Various researchers have summarised the most important principles in constructing a successful questionnaire as follows:

- ❖ Long questionnaires can become counterproductive.
- ❖ Sensitive and ambiguous questions need to be avoided.
- ❖ The items need to be clear, short, direct and easy to read.
- ❖ Avoid negative questions.
- ❖ Double questions need to be avoided.
- ❖ Question structure can be well-organized and ordered.
- ❖ Embarrassing and personal questions have to be avoided (Dornyei, 2003; Kumar, 2011; Sarantakos, 2013).

Therefore, these principles were considered in constructing a questionnaire that could provide useful and sufficient information. The pilot study was also conducted to reflect on the final version of the questionnaires (see appendices E and F). Cohen et al (2007) argued that pilot testing and rewording were vital stages in the construction of a successful questionnaire. The present questionnaires incorporated an introduction explaining the aims of the study. The questionnaire items were also designed in such a way that made them easy for the respondents to complete in a short time. Furthermore, the questionnaire items were related to the aims of the research in order to ensure the validity of the research instrument. Technical terminology such as formative, summative, peer-and self-assessment was not used in the questionnaires because the participants might not understand (see appendices A and B). The questionnaire items could also be used for making Likert-type scales

judgements or selecting options from a series of statements (Gass and Mackey, 2007). Seventeen items were included in the tutors' questionnaires while 41 items were used in the students' questionnaire. The form of the items in the questionnaires was statements including a Likert-scale because this provided varied data and it was fairly easy for respondents to select from several given choices instead of writing their own ideas down. The 4-point Likert- scale was used in this questionnaire, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree and 4=strongly agree. The purpose of using this type of scale was to encourage the participants to think deeply about the options rather than to simply select a middle score. The use of midpoints in Likert scales may affect the reliability and validity the research (Tsang, 2012). The selected response items were used since they allow a degree of sensitivity and differentiation in responses (Cohen et al., 2000). Moreover, open-ended questions in the questionnaire were excluded because semi-structured interviews were used later to collect more in-depth information. As a final point, the language used for the questionnaire, and the whole of the study, was English because the participants had the ability to express their responses in this language.

4.7.4 VALIDITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This section focuses on the validity of the questionnaire, which many researchers refer to as its ability to measure what was supposed to being measured (Nick, 2000; Walliman, 2001; Sarantakos, 2005; Bell, 2005; Adams and Cox, 2008; Bell, 2010; Kumar, 2011). Validity is a significant key criterion for effective research (Cohen et al., 2007; Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2011). According to quantitative methods, validity might be enhanced through good

sampling, appropriate tools and suitable statistical treatments of the data (Gronlund, 1981; Bell, 2005; Cohen et al, 2007; Cohen et al., 2011).

In the literature, there are several types of validity in quantitative study such as predictive and concurrent validity which are not considered because they are not relevant to the objectives of this study. In the present study, some kinds of validity used which are relevant and important for the current study. The reason is based on the nature of the research questions, the type of data needed and participants involved in this study. Firstly, face validity type refers to whether or not an instrument which is intended to measure and the logical link between the questions and the objectives of the study (Sarantakos, 2005; Kumar, 2011). To ensure this type of validity, the questionnaires were distributed to colleagues who had experience of teaching in the same context. Adams and Cox (2008) stated that giving questionnaires to colleagues who understand questionnaire design can help to solve some problems. Secondly, content validity was tested by conducting a pilot study. As stated by Ary et al (1990:434), content validity “may be gathered by having some competent colleagues who are familiar with the purpose of the survey”. Consequently, it was considered appropriate to determine if each “measure is considered to have content validity if it covers all possible dimensions of the research topic” (Sarantakos, 2005: 85). Construct validity refers to measure theoretical validation of the instrument (Bryman, 2008; Sarantakos, 2013). Therefore, some of the questionnaire items were modified after receiving feedback from colleagues who were PhD students with good experience in teaching the English language. Feedback from the research supervisors concerning the questionnaires was used as well to ensure the validity and appropriateness. This measurement had an important effect in

making the questionnaire items more relevant, accurate and exact (Sarantakos, 2005). Internal validity was proved by looking at the results about the effectiveness of the questionnaires. Sarantakos (2013) confirmed that internal validity is ensured when the researcher has checked the findings of the research which are not affected by instruments or procedures. The method usually used to improve internal validity is triangulation (Burns, 2000), and also simple English terms were used to achieve this validity. Furthermore, other actions were employed to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. For example, the researcher distributed and collected the questionnaires by himself with help from tutors to explain any inquiry from participants concerning the items of the questionnaire. This technique led to obtaining a higher response rate from participants. An appropriate population was selected, which increased the validity of the questionnaire survey since Cohen et al (2007) stressed that the validity of quantitative data might be improved through the careful sampling of the target population.

4.7.5 RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Reliability refers to obtaining similar results by using the same data collection instrument under similar circumstances. O'Leary (2004: 59) stated that reliability is "the extent to which a measure, procedure or instrument provides the same result in repeated trials". Other researchers have stated that the reliability of a research instrument was to measure objectivist, consistence, accurate and stability (Hatch et al., 1991; Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2007; Kum, 2011; Cohen, 2011; Sarantakos, 2013). Various techniques were used to achieve reliability, such as piloting the questionnaire with EFL students and tutors. Triangulation provided another source of reliability. Reliability can be attained by

adopting a triangulation procedure (Sarantakos, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007; Bryman, 2008). As a final point, the questionnaires were directly relevant to the purposes of the enquiry which generate consistent results. For example, item 12 in tutors' questionnaire "do you explain assessment criteria to your students".

4.7.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section discusses the ethical issues associated with undertaking a questionnaire survey. Ethical issues are considered an essential aspect of social research, and Neuman (2007) and Cohen et al., (2007) stated that researchers protect privacy by not disclosing a participant's identity after information has been gathered. Various actions were taking to respect the confidentiality of every participant in this study. Firstly, the questionnaire was designed giving full information and instructions that helped the participants to understand the aims of the study. Secondly, it was explained to the respondents at the beginning that they had the choice to participate or not in the study. Cohen et al., (2011) stressed that participants could not be forced to complete a questionnaire. Thirdly, the respondents were informed that their data would be treated confidentially and their privacy and anonymity was guaranteed. Bell (2005: 49) suggested that "all questionnaires and records will be shredded once the research is completed". Fourthly, participants were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire papers, however, the researcher was able to contact participants at any time. This enabled him to explain the purpose of the study and clarify any questions (Kumar, 2011). The Interviews are described next, which were conducted to provide in-depth information about assessment.

4.8 INTERVIEWS

A brief discussion of interviews in general is followed by more detailed discussions of the semi-structured interviews adopted in this study. The section illustrates the advantages, disadvantages, validity, reliability, and ethical issues of semi-structured interviews as well as the power relation in interviews. Interviews are seen as one of a variety of methods of investigation in social research and are used as a means of assessing a person in some respect (Cohen and Manion, 1994). There are different kinds of interviews, including structured, standardized, semi-structured, unstructured, intensive, qualitative, in-depth, focus group and life history interviews (Dawson, 2002; Bryman, 2008; Newby, 2010). Face-to-face interviews can be seen as a conversation between an interviewer and respondent in order to obtain information related to a study. To achieve this, the participants are encouraged to take part in interviews to reveal important and in-depth information. A semi-structured interview method was chosen because this was useful in gaining information about the participants' thoughts, opinions and experiences concerning assessment.

4.8.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

This section discusses semi-structured interviews as a data collection instrument. According to Mears (2012: 170), "In-depth interviews are purposeful interactions in which an investigator attempts to learn what another person knows about a topic, to discover and record what that person has experienced". Semi-structured interviews can be in-depth and are the most widely used type for qualitative research (Dawson, 2002; Diccio-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006; Sarantakos, 2013). This is due to their flexibility when asking people about their opinions, experiences, thoughts and perceptions (Burns, 2000; Robson, 2002;

Moriarty, 2011; Dwyer et al, 2012; Mears, 2012). Due to the research questions and specific aims of the present study, this instrument was used to elicit information about tutors' and students' perceptions and thoughts about assessment methods in relation to assessment processes and products. Semi-structured interviews also offered an opportunity to discover detailed information about social world which other instruments may not be able to provide gained by in-depth interviewing (Miller and Gladdner, 1997).

4.8.2 ADVANTAGES OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews have many advantages in social research in general and in the current study in particular. The semi-structured interview can provide in-depth and insightful information about assessment. The interviews were useful for collecting in-depth information and, unlike items in questionnaires, could be re-presented in a different way if the participant did not understand (Bell, 2005; Newby, 2010; Kumar, 2011). Respondents could also describe and clarify what was important in relation to assessment. The interviews provided a situation where participants could ask for clarification, elaborate on ideas, and explain viewpoints in their own words (Bell, 2005; Harris et al., 2010). In addition, follow-up questions could be used to add to the information given. Therefore, the semi-structured interview could provide a high volume of information due to its flexibility (Bell, 2005; Sarantakos, 2013). Moreover, the semi-structured interviews could be combined with other data collection methods which added in-depth information to the study (Robson, 2002; Ross and Matthews, 2010). In addition, prompt questions were used in addition to the main questions in the interviews, and the use of prompts and probes stimulated participants to open up and deliver more detail (Bravn and Clarke, 2013).

Finally, findings from semi-structured interviews could also support the findings from the questionnaire survey but not always correlate them.

4.8.3 DISADVANTAGES OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews also have disadvantages and have various limitations as with all types of data collection instruments. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews might cause some difficulties, especially when the questions asked by the interviewer were not specific. The stage of conducting and analysing semi-structured interviews in the current study, with 18 participants was costly and time-consuming and it was a very subjective method of data capture and analysis (Wiersma, 2000; Akbayrak, 2000; Sekaran et al, 2001; Bell, 2005; Lichtman, 2006; Kumar, 2011; Mears, 2012; Sarantakos, 2013). Leading questions were avoided in the interview sessions to reduce bias. Ross and Matthews (2010) pointed out that semi-structured interviews have another disadvantage in that respondents might focus on issues that were not of concern to the researcher. However, despite limitations, this type of interview is useful, for the present study requires in-depth information about participants' experiences, views and thinking about assessment.

4.8.4 VALIDITY OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

This section discusses the validity of semi-structured interviews. According to Cohen et al (2007), qualitative validity refers to the honesty, depth, richness and range of data achieved. Denscombe (2010b) also argued that the content of interviews could be checked to see the level of consistency. In the current investigation, several strategies were used to ensure the validity of data collected from the interviews. Firstly, the interview questions were constructed in such a way that would be fully understood by the respondents. Also the

questions were designed to carry the same meaning for everyone, and the researcher could provide explanation if it was required. A triangulation technique, with the questionnaire, was employed in order to increase the validity of the data, which Cohen et al (2000) argued is a powerful technique of ensuring validity. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in a consistent manner in order to increase valid results. In addition, participants were assured that the researcher would not interfere with their responses, in order to avoid interview bias. Moreover, a pilot study was conducted to gain feedback from respondents which led to some interview questions being modified. Interview bias was avoided by giving sufficient time to listen to the interviewees, since Cohen et al (2011:204) explained that “the most practical way of achieving greater validity is to minimize the amount of bias as much as possible”. In conclusion, the interview question schedule was given to all participants after the interview so they could check their understanding of the questions with the help of their peers or the researcher.

4.8.5 RELIABILITY OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In this section the reliability of the semi-structured interviews is discussed. Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable or similar under the same conditions on all occasions (Punch, 1998; Bryman, 2008; Bell, 2010; Bernard, 2013). The content of the interview questions was examined to check the reliability of the instrument before excluding any irrelevant questions. The respondents were encouraged to produce important and reasonable data. Somekh and Lewin (2005: 348) argued that “reliability is the term used to mean that the truth of findings has been

established by ensuring that they are supported by sufficient and compelling evidence". The transcription and analysis were performed by the researcher himself to ensure the reliability of interviews. Piloting research tools of the study helps to ensure the reliability (Bell, 2010).

4.8.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section focuses on the ethical issues involved in interviews because interviewers must be "sensitive to the different values, concerns, and expectations of respondents from different cultures, ethnic groups, and religious traditions, whatever the age of the respondents" (Wenger, 2002:273). Cohen et al., (2007:382) stated that "interviews have an ethical dimension; they concern interpersonal interaction and produce information about the human condition".

Each English language department was contacted in advance for access and permission. People who are in charge expressed their interest that this study will add important insights to the field of education. A promise was given to the participants that their personal information would remain confidential and no one else could access it. Sekaran et al (2001) argued that the information given by participants may be considered to be completely confidential. Moreover, an explanation of the interview procedure was given to all participants in asking for their permission to participate in the interviews. In transcribing data codes were used to maintain the anonymity of each respondent and thereby protecting the confidentiality. Additionally, the participants were informed that participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time (Babbie, 1998; Berg, 2009; Ross and Matthews, 2010). Furthermore, all respondents were informed that their information would be recorded and then transcribed and it would be kept in a secure location to be used only by the researcher for data analysis

purposes. Religious, cultural and social constraints were taken into consideration by the researcher; for example, the use of videotape recording was avoided because image recording is a cultural taboo, whereas voice recording is acceptable. Finally, the environment and time were taken in consideration to help the participants to express their thoughts freely.

4.8.7 POWER RELATION IN THE INTERVIEWS

Effective interview sessions require good relationships between the researcher and participants. Power relations in interviews must be considered in the present study. "The relationships created with participants called "gatekeepers" who can facilitate or interfere with the study are essential part of the method" (Maxwell, 2005:82).

In any research, prospective participants might not be willing to be interviewed or to provide direct truthful responses. For example, students may not be willing to participate in interviews due to their positions as students. This may cause them to refuse to volunteer for interviewing. Consequently, "the interviewee is expected to be addressed neutrally, ideally in a way similar to that of the respondents, and unobtrusively, so that the centre of the interview is the research topic and not the interviewer" (Sarantakos, 2005:278). The researcher dealt with this issue by introducing himself as a PhD student who was conducting the interview only for the purpose of the study, therefore giving students the same status as the interviewer, reducing the power differential. Clear and simple language was employed with appropriate questions in order to make respondents more comfortable in answering the questions. The atmosphere in the interviews was relaxed in such a way that helped participants to carry on talking. The current participants were also encouraged that being

involved in interviews is a great opportunity to develop their experience and knowledge. Body language was used to motivate participants to engage in the interviews, it is known this has an important role (Hughes, 1996). For example, a table was used between interviewer and interviewee in order that personal space was not compromised in line with cultural norms. Consequently, the section below gives a detailed discussion of the relationship between the data collection tools and the research questions.

4.9 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present research was designed to ensure that the questionnaire and interview instruments could provide information that addressed the research questions. “If an inappropriate design is used to answer a research question, the quality of the research project will be fundamentally undermined” (Draper, 2004:2). It was ensured that the current collection instruments were relevant to the research topic, and Maxwell (2005:92) advocated “this selection depends on the actual research situation and on what will work most effectively in that situation to give you the data you need”. Using the quantitative data collection instrument was considered to be objective, which was appropriate for the first and second research questions. The first research question aimed to explore the assessment methods that EFL Libyan tutors used to assess university students’ writing skills, whereas the second question intended to investigate the factors that affected the choice of assessment methods. As stated by Punch (2005), the research questions have a logical priority over the methods used in the research. The questionnaire items had the specific purpose to collect information related to the research questions. Each item focused on one aspect

of the research questions. For instance, in the students' questionnaires; the item "assessments help me to know my weaknesses in writing", had the purpose to provide specific information about learning writing and assessment. Another example, in the tutors' questionnaire, the item "do you explain assessment criteria to your students" aimed to collect information linked to the process of assessment.

Qualitative research methods could answer the rest of the research questions concerning how students perceived the assessment methods used by their tutors and also the students' perceptions in relation to their tutors' thinking about assessment. Moreover, qualitative methods could provide in-depth information about all of the research questions. Both instruments were assigned to provide data on every aspect that was related to the study (see section 4.3). Sarantakos (2013) stated that each research question has a certain purpose and requires information related to a specific aspect of the research. According to Punch (2005), there is a close connection between the research questions and the conceptual framework of the research. All interview questions had a certain purpose that could help to answer a part of the research questions. For example, students were asked "what do you think of reviewing your classmates' work". This question had the specific aim of collecting students' perceptions on assessing their classmates' written work. Also, tutors were asked "would you explain the kind of feedback you provide for your students". The purpose here was to explore the kind of feedback that tutors provided. Finally, interview questions could provide useful data to cover all aspects of the students' perceptions and tutors' thinking about assessment. The data collection strategy went through "a period of focusing and revision to enable the tools used to

better provide the data needed to answer the research questions and to address any plausible threats to the validity of these answers” (Maxwell, 2005:93).

Additionally, the literature review played an important role in formulating the questionnaire items and interview questions as highlighted by Sarantakos (2013), the content of each question needs to be related to the study. Finally, the relationship between the data collection instruments and the research questions could be reflected in the findings of the study.

4.10 THE LINK BETWEEN QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This section briefly discusses the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative findings (see section 6.27). The process of collecting data was planned in two stages, where the first stage was to collect quantitative data followed by the collection of qualitative data. In the second stage the questionnaire data were analysed using SPSS software followed by an analysis of the qualitative data using grounded theory. The two kinds of findings have to be “mixed in some way so that together they form a more complete picture of the problem than they do when standing alone” (Creswell, 2007:7). This led to an understanding of the issues reported about assessment methods from different sources. Both findings could complement each other, and Robson (2002) highlighted that this method can enhance and exemplify the quantitative data gained from questionnaires. For instance, the findings from the students’ questionnaire indicated that students did not receive information about the assessment criteria for every piece of written work. This finding was supported by more in–depth data from interviews with the students saying that most tutors did not provide and explain assessment criteria because they did not think it

was important. In another example, the tutor's questionnaire showed that there were several factors which influenced their choice of assessment methods. This finding was in accordance with the interview findings, where more information was gained about how these factors affected their choice of assessment methods. The pilot studies of the questionnaires and interviews are briefly discussed below.

4.11 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study has several advantages in social research. The pilot study is seen as an initial test of the research instruments. It is a useful check for ambiguity or confusion and unnecessary or unsuitable items. Adams and Cox (2008) stated that the importance of this strategy is to identify possible problems before the expensive, time-consuming, full research study is carried out. For instance, it gives initial warning to the researcher if the data collection instruments are inappropriate or unclear and also it helps to discover any weaknesses in the methods chosen. Bell (1993: 84) argued that:

“All data-gathering instruments need to be piloted to test how long it takes recipients to complete them, to check that all questions and instructions are clear and to enable you to remove any items which do not yield usable data”.

Sarantakos (2005:256) also pointed out that a pilot study aimed to “establish whether respondents are accessible, whether the site is convenient, whether the techniques of data collection generate enough information, whether the plan is well constructed and whether any changes or adjustments are needed”. Donyei (2003) confirmed that the feedback from a pilot study could help the researcher to make a better final version of questionnaires or interviews. The pilot study also has an influence in increasing the researcher experience, often

practicing and learning how to collect data for the main study. The personal administration of a pilot study also helps to identify if there are difficulties in completing questionnaires. Bell (2005) stressed that participants can inform you how long it took to complete the questionnaire, and if they leave any questions unanswered you will be able to find out why.

4.11.1 QUESTIONNAIRE PILOT STUDY PROCESS

It is important to discuss the process of the pre-test study in questionnaires, to achieve the validity and reliability of the data. In September 2013, the pilot study was conducted with 22 EFL Libyan students who had been studying for an MA and eight tutors taking a PhD degree in the field of education in the UK. The researcher had discussions with the participants about the questionnaire items concerning any unclear or confusing items used. From the discussion and feedback several items were amended, modified and added to avoid any ambiguity or misunderstanding. For example, for question 15 the following amendment was a result of the pilot study

Original: 15. I believe that checking my own work can be a useful way to make me an independent learner.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () slightly disagree ()

According to the feedback, some words would be removed from this sentence because they have different meanings, which are not related to the answer options.

Modified: assessing my own work helps me to become an independent learner

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () slightly disagree ()

This pilot study helped to design a final version of the questionnaires that could obtain information to address the research questions (for more details see appendix E and section 4.19.5).

4.11.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PILOT STUDY

This section describes the pre-testing process for tutor and students interviews.

The same participants who volunteered in the questionnaire pilot study were asked if they were willing to participate in semi-structured interviews. The researcher arranged four semi-structured interviews with tutors who had experience in teaching writing. Interviews were also arranged with two EFL students. Before the interviews started, the participants were informed about the aims of the study and how their information would be used. All interviews were conducted in the English language because all participants had sufficient proficiency in English, which enabled them to understand the lexis and structure. The interviews with tutors were conducted on the 13th and 19th of October 2013, while those with students were on Tuesday 27th of October 2013; each interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes.

Furthermore, each participant was given the interview schedule after the interview in order to write their comments on each question that they felt was ambiguous. At the end of the interviews, there was discussion between the researcher and participants about the interview questions and the aims of the study. This discussion led to achieve further information that was useful in developing the interview questions. Oral and written feedback were received which made clear and purposeful interview questions. Some questions were modified, amended and added because it was felt important in relation to the purpose of the study and the research questions (see appendix F). For

example, for question one the following amendment was a result of the pilot study

Original: 1. what are the methods of assessment or tests do you like to use to assess your students' writing?

Modified: 1. Please explain the methods of assessment you prefer to use in assessing writing work and why.

4.11.3 ANALYSIS OF THE PILOT STUDY

This section provides a brief summary of the pilot data analysis in the UK. The purpose of analysing the pilot study was to ensure that the questionnaires and interviews could provide data that addressed the research questions. The findings from the questionnaires and interviews indicated that tests, exams and continuous assessment were generally set by the EFL tutors, while peer- and self-assessment were not widely used among students. The results provided evidence that methods of assessment were influenced by some factors such as class size, motivation and the tutors' points of view. Further analysis showed that the tutors and students had similar perceptions about the process and product of assessment. The advantages of the pilot study included that the researcher could practice and obtain useful experience before conducting the main study. Creswell (2007) argued that analysing the quantitative data can deliver a general understanding of the investigation problem. Moreover, it warned the researcher if there was any problem of analysing data.

4.11.4 REFLECTIONS ON THE PILOT STUDY

In this investigation, piloting the data collection instruments was essential because it warned the researcher of problems that might occur in the main study. Piloting the questionnaire was useful because some questionnaire items were modified and others added. Additionally, the analysis of the questionnaires could ensure that the data would be able to answer the research questions and

it helps the researcher to practice analysing data. By comparing the original interview questions with the final version, it appears that the pilot study played a significant role in developing its form, including by removing any ambiguous or unclear questions. The pilot study was considered experience and training for the researcher. Furthermore, the analysis of pilot data provided significant information that was used to develop better interview questions. The next section deals with the target population in the current study.

4.12 POPULATION

The research population is the group of people for which the researcher wants to be able to generalise the findings (Sekaran et al., 2001; Lynn, 2002; Dornyei, 2003; Muiju, 2004; Cohen et al, 2007; Babbie, 2008). Researchers such as Cohen et al., (2007) and Bryman (2008) indicated that there is no straightforward answer to the question of the correct sample size, which depends on the purpose of the study and the nature of the population under study. The existing research was conducted in one of the large universities in Libya, and the target participants were fourth year university students and tutors from six English language departments located in different sites. Sample selection was based on the fact that the researcher had access to the university due to his relationship with tutors, management and teaching staff. Cohen et al., (2007:109) stressed that "in research, accessibility is a key issue and researchers need to make sure that access to their target samples is permitted and practicable". Bryman (2004) also confirmed that using friends, contacts, and colleagues to gain access to the organization is relevant to research. In such a situation, sample selection decisions require knowledge of the context of

the study. The following section discusses the sampling techniques used for the questionnaires and interviews.

4.13 SAMPLING STRATEGY

This section describes the sampling strategy used for selecting the participants in each method. A target population is a group of people selected to participate in the study. Singh (2007:89) referred to sampling as "the process of selection of sampling units from the population to estimate population parameters in such a way that the sample truly represents the population". Researchers have highlighted the importance of the sampling technique used. Denscombe (2010b:23) stated that "the principle of sampling is that it is possible to produce accurate findings without the need to collect data from each member of the population". Graziano and Raulin (2004) also indicated that suitable sample selection improves external validity, permitting researchers to generalise their findings. There is a wide range of sampling techniques used in social research, such as stratified, random, purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was used for the interviews because it was deemed suitable for the target population in this study, where 207 questionnaires were distributed to fourth year university students and 17 to tutors. In purposive sampling, researchers select their samples on the basis of their possession of the particular characteristics being sought (Cohen et al., 2007). Berg (2009:50) argued that "when developing a purposive sample, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some groups to select subjects who represent their population".

Other sampling techniques such as snowball sampling were avoided because it begins with one or a few people and then expands. As the representativeness

of the sample could not be guaranteed because the researcher had no idea of how many questionnaires he could distribute, snowball sampling would be unreliable. The next section describes the participants involved in the questionnaire study.

4.14 PARTICIPANTS IN QUESTIONNAIRE

The target population for the questionnaire survey is discussed by varied researchers. Kumar (2011) argued that the sampling in quantitative research refers to a group of people from which you selected the sample. Creswell (2012) also claimed that when selecting participants for a study, it is significant to determine the size of the sample needed.

In quantitative methods, selecting an appropriate sample is significant in order to prevent bias occurring. Therefore, the questionnaires were given by the researcher in order to ensure that they were distributed in the best way to represent the target population. The target population was tutors and fourth year students in one particular university in Libya. The reasons behind selecting this target population were as follows. Firstly, the researcher had worked as a tutor in the same university, and secondly these students had good experience and knowledge because they had been taught the English language for three-years at this university which enabled them to understand the questionnaire items. The 12 tutors selected, from six English language departments, had qualifications in teaching. A list of students' names was obtained and assistance received from tutors in every department in distributing questionnaires at the end of their lectures. This saved time and effort and the expense of studying the whole population (Gall et al., 2007). The questionnaire survey targeted all fourth

year university students but the final sample was 207 out of 230 because some of them chose not to participate.

4.15 PARTICIPANTS IN INTERVIEWS

This section describes the participants involved in the semi-structured interviews. “Purposive sampling is used in situations in which an expert uses judgment in selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind” (Neuman, 2007:142). The interview sample is a small group from the target population who could provide information related to the study. Typically, in interview studies the number of participants is small because a large number requires more time and effort to collect and analyse the data. The number of current interviews with tutors and students were determined by theoretical saturation in grounded theory (see section 4.18.6). For example, the analysis of interview 12 with tutor did not reveal anything new; consequently saturation was deemed to be confirmed and recruitment ceased. Those interviews were conducted in the English language because the students had sufficient ability to speak good English and they had studied it for three years. The participants included 12 tutors who held different certificates in teaching EFL. Two tutors were selected from each English language department to participate in the semi-structured interviews.

Table 2: Tutors in semi-structured interviews.

Departments	Dept 1	Dept 2	Dept 3	Dept 4	Dept 5	Dept 6	12
Tutors	**	**	**	**	**	**	
Total	2	2	2	2	2	2	

For the interviewing of students, one was selected from each department. Students were selected using the purposive sampling technique aimed at

choosing who could provide the best information to achieve the aims of the study. This approach was suitable for respondents who had the necessary knowledge and experience. Sarantakos (2013) stated that in purposive sampling the researchers select subjects relevant to the project.

The students who participated in the interviews were selected based on their results in writing exams. The researcher had asked the tutors to provide lists of students who had received high, medium and low grades in their mid-term written assessments. Then, the participants were classified according to their scores in exams. The maximum score in their exams was 30. Participants were classified into three levels: high, which was between 21 to 30, medium was between 11 to 20, and low level was between 1 to 10. All participants were drawn from these lists as one student from each English language department.

For the final exam students need to obtain 50% to pass each module. “Grading is on a percentage scale, with 50 percent as minimum pass-mark” (Clark, 2004:7). Thus, the participants were drawn from the wider population but they were not selected by chance (Burns, 2000; Gall et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 2011). Berg (2009) indicated that when developing a purposive sample, researchers are required to use their special knowledge about some groups to select subjects who represent their population. The following table 3 describes the students selected for the semi-structured interviews.

Table 3: Students in semi-structured interviews

Attainment	Dept1	Dept2	Dept3	Dept4	Dept5	Dept6	Total
High	1			1			2
Mid		1			1		2
Low			1			1	2
							6

It could be concluded that all of the above participants represented the target populations in this study and could provide important information about assessment that could be used to address the research questions.

4.16 THE PROCEDURE OF INTERVIEWS

Adams and Cox (2008) stated that conducting interviews requires careful planning. Consequently, it was planned to collect qualitative data within a specific period of time, with several actions conducted before starting to interview the participants (see section 4.4.2). During data collection, some students knew that the researcher was a tutor at the university. Students that had previously been taught by the researcher were excluded from the interview process to remove the possibility of bias, which might affect the obtained data. "The interviewee is expected to be addressed neutrally, ideally in a way similar to that of the respondents, and unobtrusively, so that the centre of the interview is the research topic and not the interviewer" (Sarantakos, 2005:278). The other students were informed by their tutors about the position of the researcher who dealt with this issue by introducing himself as a PhD student (see power relationship in interviews in section (4.7.7.).

As noted, some of the target tutors had had previous discussions with the researcher about assessment. Because this might have been a problem for the integrity of the data, it was decided that these tutors would be excluded from the sample.

Firstly, the researcher visited the six English language departments in the different locations of the university. The purpose of these visits was to gain permission from the people in charge and also from tutors who teach writing skills. Secondly, prospective participants were given the choice to participate in the interviews or withdraw at any time. The following step was to obtain their agreement to record the interview and a quiet room was then arranged for each interview session. Subsequently, recording equipment was checked to ensure that it worked properly before starting the interview. A verbal introduction and a copy of an interview schedule were also provided after the interview to every participant, which contained information about the aims of the study. Interviewing people requires “the interviewer to establish an appropriate atmosphere such that the participant can feel secure to talk freely” (Cohen et al., 2007:261). Participants were also encouraged to be more comfortable and to express their feelings, ideas and thoughts. In addition, participants were informed that the interviews were part of the researcher’s own studies in order to motivate them to provide more information and also to move the interviews forward. Finally, all interviews sessions were conducted between the 14th of December 2013 to 18th of January 2014 and each lasted about 30 minutes.

4.17 PREPARING DATA FOR ANALYSIS

According to the research plan, preparing the data for analysis proceeded through several stages to reduce the difficulties that might occur. The analysis was conducted by hand to identify themes and patterns emerging from the data. The first stage was to listen carefully to the recorded interviews several times in order to write down different impressions, ideas and useful phrases. Next, the

researcher left it and returned to it with fresh eyes in order to gain a full picture of the data. This helped to gain insights and to identify possible similarities and differences in the themes that emerged from the data collected from all six departments.

Therefore, “listening to the interview for a sense of the whole: this involves listening to the entire tape several times and reading the transcription a number of times in order to provide a context for the emergence of specific units of meaning and themes later on” (Cohen et al., 2007:471-472).

Reading and rereading the transcripts revealed new understandings of the data, and important information was also highlighted using different colours (see appendices page 308). Consequently, codes, patterns, categories and themes were generated. The data collected from each tutor and student were examined and analysed individually, and then according to different issues, in order to ensure its relationship to the research questions and aims of the study. Copies of all of the original material were kept in a secure place to ensure the confidentiality of the information. Qualitative data analysis includes breaking up and then separating the raw data into elements or units in order to be brought together again in the form of meaningful construct (Ahmed, 2013). As a final stage, the data were classified, arranged and labelled according to each department of the university for each tutor and student who involved in the interview. The next section describes the techniques used in the analysis of quantitative data.

4.18 SPSS SOFTWARE

This section introduces the techniques used in analysing the quantitative data. According to De Vos (2002), data analysis is the procedure of bringing order,

structure and meaning to the mass of data gathered. In the quantitative study, the data are collected and then revised, organised in relation to the research questions. This process of clustering data made the procedure of analysis clear and efficient. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the data because it is considered appropriate for a large amount of data. Statistical computer software is widely used because it is the easiest and most effective technique to use (Cohen et al., 2011; Bryman, 2008; Sarantakos, 2005; Dawson, 2002). In addition, this software is useful in analysing a large amount of data in a short time with less effort. The present researcher took part in training-sessions on the use of this software. The data collected was coded in numerical form in order to be ready for entering into the computer. The researcher requested the help of an expert in statistics to ensure that the data was accurately entered and appropriate tests were used, such as the Chi-Squared test. To conclude, this software produced the data in the form of graphs, pie charts and tables which helped in understanding the data.

4.19 ANALYTIC APPROACHES FOR QUALITATIVE DATA

This section discusses the ways in which qualitative data can be analysed. For instance, the “thematic analysis tool involves the search for and identification of common threads that extend throughout an entire interview or set of interviews” (Bowen, 2006:2). However, this method of qualitative analysis suffers from a lack of reliability and, it is difficult to focus on a large number of concepts and categories. For the above reasons, thematic analysis was avoided.

Another possible method is content analysis, which is “performed on various forms of human communication, this may include various permutations of

written documents, photographs, motion picture or video and audio tape” (Berg, 2009:339). It seems that this technique focuses on human communication which was not considered appropriate for analysing the interview data in this study. Silverman (2011) also argued that content analysis is an accepted technique to be used in study concerns communication. One of the problems with content analysis is that it appeared to fit most neatly into a quantitative version of how to analysis data (ibid, 67). Narrative analysis was also avoided in this study, as it is concerned with action examine the activities that are performed when people talk to each other (Silverman, 2011). On the other hand, discourse analysis is “concerned with language-in-use; that is, how individuals accomplish personal, social, and political projects through language” (Starks and Trinidad, 2007:1374). Therefore, the researcher did not use any of the approaches to the analysis of qualitative data mentioned so far. The following section describes the method by which qualitative data was analysed.

4.19.1 GROUNDED THEORY (GT)

This section describes the technique selected to analysis the qualitative data in the present study. It was acknowledged that the technique of qualitative analysis could be driven by theoretical assumptions, the research questions and the aims of the study. The traditional version of grounded theory sees the researcher as a scientific observer who starts his/her study from nothing, with no existing preconceived thoughts and engaging without the relevant literature about the subject of the research. In other words, this method considered the researcher to be as receptive in terms of having a blank mind about the area of the study. Denscombe (2010b) argued that in the grounded theory, the researchers start their studies without any fixed ideas.

Grounded theory then developed when “Strauss and fellow researcher Corbin veered away from the principles of the original theory by gathering data under the influence of preconceived questions or frameworks” (Bailey and Jackson, 2003:60). Therefore, this newer version was deemed appropriate for the current research with reference to the standpoint of the researcher. Payne and Payne (2004) stated that grounded theory works with all of inductive and deductive framework. There are different standpoints and conceptual agendas to begin with inductive logic subject the data to rigorous comparative analysis, aimed to develop theoretical analysis (Charmaz, 2014:14). The present researcher’s standpoint was more interpretivist than positivist because he intended to explore the participants' perceptions, thoughts, views and experience about assessment methods. However, the researcher became positivist when the assessment methods that were used by EFL Libyan tutors and also the factors that affected their choice of assessment methods were explored. “Constructivist grounded theories engage in reflectivity throughout inquiry, engage in reflexivity and assuming relativity aids us in recognizing multiple realities positions, and standpoints, and how they shift during the research process for both the researcher and the research participants ”(wetz et al,2011:169).

Denscombe (2010a:110) indicated that in grounded theory there was a “stress on the need to approach investigation without being blinded by the concepts and theories of pervious research”. Therefore, the grounded theory method is suitable for social research that focuses on human interaction, essentially where the researchers tended to investigate the participants' point of view (Denscombe, 2010b). The present researcher selected the latest constructionist version of grounded theory as a technique for analysing the qualitative data.

This was mainly due to the flexibility of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). This method also enabled the researcher to “start the assumption that social reality was multiple and constructed”(Charmaz,2014:13). Furthermore, Denscombe (2010b) explained that this form of grounded theory accepts that previous theories and personal experience will have an influence. Grounded theory focuses on perceptions of the data collection to construct theory (Charmaz, 2014; Silverman, 2011). Grounded theory could also provide new information and insights to the study which was under-investigation because it generated ideas from the collected data.

Moreover, the flexibility of Charmaz’s version of grounded theory meant that the literature review would increase the researcher’s knowledge which could be followed in the literature. This method is currently one of the most widely used and common qualitative methods across a wide range of disciplines and areas of study (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010; Payne and Payne, 2004). Charmaz (2010) argued that grounded theory offers a set of flexible approaches. This enables the researcher to remain close to the data and interact with it. Grounded theory techniques increase the researcher’s flexibility which helps to follow up on what happening with the data (Charmaz, 2014). Bowen (2006) also stated that grounded theory is a research method that calls for a continuous relationship between data collection and analysis in order to produce theory during the research process.

Furthermore, the researcher can develop categories, concepts, codes and themes and understand the relationship between them during the process of reading transcriptions. Grounded theory gives support to discover new concepts in relation to groups and properties to generate focused data (Charmaz, 2014;

Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010). This is because interviews could produce very rich data concerning the research issues from which to build or generate theory concerning the methods used to assess written work. The present researcher had certain assumptions, ideas and thoughts about the topic of the research. Denscombe (2010a) stressed that an open mind is not a blank mind concerning the subject of the research. With a grounded theory technique, researchers can shape and reshape the obtained data and then refine it to increase the knowledge (Charmaz, 2014).

4.19.2 CODING THE INTERVIEW DATA

This section explains the coding of the interview data. Charmaz (2006) stated that coding was the essential link between gathering data and developing an emergent theory to explain it. Cohen et al.,(2007) stated that coding was the procedure of disassembling and reassembling the data, and it is the first step in analysing the qualitative data using grounded theory. Sarantakos (2013) explained that, within grounded theory, coding was the central means of building theory. Coding is the process of applying codes to pieces of text which highlight the similarities and differences within and between texts (David and Sutton, 2004). Three stages of data coding open coding, axial coding and selective coding are involved in grounded theory: The purpose of using these codes is to generate themes in the form of headings and sub-headings. The themes and sub-themes are the product of reading and rereading the transcripts or field notes that make up the data (Bryman, 2012:579). Codes arise from the researcher's interaction with the data (Wertz et al, 2011). The process of coding aims to break down the data into parts, words and phrases and then to rearrange to them into themes. This helps to give organized,

structured and reduced data which allow the researcher to narrow his focus to concepts, ideas and information that seem to be most significant for the study. David and Sutton (2004) stated that coding is the most common step in the effort to organise the data so as to allow further reduction in the process of analysis. The following figure shows the process used in grounded theory and the types used of coding.

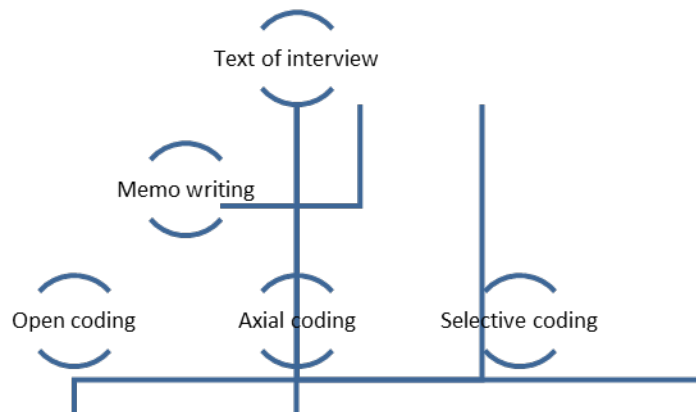


Figure 5: Coding process in grounded theory.

4.19.3 OPEN CODING

This section discusses open coding in grounded theory. According to Larossa (2005), the analysis of qualitative data begins with open coding, which is used to explore the data and identify units of analysis to code for meanings, feelings, actions and events (Cohen et al, 2007). In this study, it was considered as the initial process because it was used to select and break down the data in order to generate categories. During open coding, the data was broken down into discrete parts, closely examined and compared for similarities and differences (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:102). Vogt (2010:404) argued that open coding means “breaking down the data and identifying concepts embedded within individual statements”. Flick (2009) also confirmed that open coding aimed to state data and phenomena in the form of ideas. This process was based on a

focused reading of the interview transcriptions. A text can be coded line by line, sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph (Vogt, 2010; Flick, 2009). This helped the researcher to become familiar with the collected data. Words and phrases found in the transcripts were coded and highlighted. Different colours were used to distinguish between the concepts and phrases to identify their relation to assessment methods. Names were given to the open coding and then some codes were grouped into categories. Walker and Myrick (2006) stated that, to code interview data, it needs to be broken down, compared, and then located in a category. Similar data were placed in the same categories, and different data used to create new categories. The researcher asks different questions about the emerged concepts from the data which might lead to discover new concepts. This was also to ensure that open coding was related to all features of the phenomenon under study.

4.19.4 AXIAL CODING

Axial coding is the next stage after open coding, and the data is put together in new ways after the open coding process. Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicated that the purpose of axial coding was to begin the process of collecting together data that were broken down during open coding. Flick (2009) argued that axial coding was used to refine and distinguish the categories resulting from open coding. Furthermore, “codes are directed to what the researcher felt most accurately explained the recurring concepts that were beginning to emerge from the data (Vogt, 2010:404). Axial coding uses codes that the researcher selects to represent and to highlight what they perceive to be the core issues or themes within the text being analysed.

Open and axial coding produce large numbers of codes that could be filtered or refined. David and Sutton (2004:206) argued that “axial coding highlights large units of meaning within which there will be lower level coding”. This enables the data to be sorted into groups to identify the relationships between categories. Maxwell (2005:98) advocated that “this connection step is necessary for building theory”. Furthermore, in axial coding, the categories which are relevant to the research questions were selected from the developed codes and related code notes (Flick, 2009).

4.19.5 SELECTIVE CODING

This section introduces the selective coding used in grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that selective coding is the process of mixing and purifying categories. It involves developing and refining these categories that arise from the data. Flick (2009) stated that the purpose of this coding is to define the core categories within the other developed categories could be grouped and integrated. The term selective is used because, at this stage, the analyst deliberately selects one aspect as a core category, and focuses on it (Punch, 2005). Sarantakos (2013) agreed that the analysis now enters a higher ordering of concepts in this stage. The focused reading of interview transcriptions allows the researcher to understand a range of categories. Different themes are developed and selected to be used in analysing the interview data because this helps to identify the central categories.

4.19.6 THEORETICAL CODING

This section explains the final stage in the coding process of the semi-structured interviews. Theoretical coding is the process of analysing collected data in order to develop grounded theory (Flick, 2009). Charmaz (2006:63)

stated that theoretical coding was “a sophisticated level of coding that followed the codes you have selected during focused coding”. Theoretical coding aims to specify the possible relationships between categories that the researcher has developed in the selective coding stage.

After the 18 interviews conducted with tutors and students, it was found that no new data or further information could be gained from the participants. By this time the researcher had reached a point of diminishing returns, where no further new data occurred. This is known as the point of saturation and therefore no more interviews were needed. Charmaz (2006) stressed that categories are saturated when gaining data no longer stimulates new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of the theoretical categories. Theoretical coding refers to a stage when no more new information could be provided by the interviews. Similar data was repeated in most of the interviews and thus data collection and analysis in grounded theory continued only until theoretical saturation had been achieved.

4.19.7 MEMO WRITING

Memo writing refers to brief written notes about thoughts, ideas, and feelings which arise during collecting and analysing data. Memo-writing represents a vital technique in grounded theory because it promotes the analysis of data and codes early in the research (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). The researcher can then understand the relationships between categories, and Vogt (2010) agreed that memo writing leads the researcher to flesh out emergent concepts and also to explain emergent themes while building linkages between concepts. Consequently, these notes were used to support the study in leading to the generation of useful and appropriate codes.

Throughout the data collection and analysis, several notes, short comments and thoughts were written down. Some were reflections written immediately after each interview, others were based on listening to recordings whilst others were just thoughts that occurred throughout the process of research. These thoughts changed overtime as the critical reflections changed as the research became deeper and more structured.

Memo writing is a continual process that helps to understand the connections between categories. Corbin and Strauss (1990:10) stated that writing memos “is an integral part of doing grounded theory”. The memo writing allows the researcher to think theoretically about interviewee’s statements. After conducting interviews, the researcher wrote conceptual memos about the initial codes and focused codes, which were being developed. “Memo-writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it promotes you to analyse your data and codes early in the research” (Charmaz, 2006: 72). Memos give you a space and place for making comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes, codes and category, and category and concept and for articulating conjectures about these comparisons (Charmaz, 2006: 72-73).

4.20 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the methodological framework used in this study, which adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This framework uses the technique of triangulation that could provide quantitative data, which given an overview of beliefs and qualitative data that would address the specific research questions in greater depth. The two methods used

complement each other but make the data collection process more complex though consequently produce findings that are more trustworthy. This technique was used to explore the issues relating to assessment methods in EFL writing. Adopting the triangulation technique played a central role in supporting this investigation. "Triangulation technique: a combination of several research methodologies in one study such as the use of different data collection techniques within the same study" (Cohen, 2007:142). Despite some researchers finding this combination of different paradigms problematic, it is nevertheless a pragmatic approach. This combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry led the researchers to compare results in a complementary way and overcome the bias that may come from the data (Adams and Cox, 2008; Newby, 2010).

The quantitative data were collected using questionnaires. One questionnaire, containing 41 items was distributed to a sample of 207 Libyan EFL students and another questionnaire with 17 items for 12 tutors. Meanwhile the qualitative data were collected by conducting 12 semi-structured interviews with tutors and six with students who had completed questionnaires. All aspects relevant to the methodological framework used have been explained, including the data collection, the research questions, the link between the research tools and the research questions, the research epistemology, triangulation techniques and the questionnaires and interviews with regard to the construction and validation of the research along tools with a consideration of ethical issues. Combined, these aspects have provided high quality data with subsequent detailed analysis in order to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the importance of the pilot study was explained with reference to how the research

instruments could answer the research questions. For example, by comparing the original interview questions with the final version, it appears that the pilot study played a significant role in developing the interview questions form, including removing any ambiguous or unclear questions. Finally, the target population, sampling, research participants and analytical techniques using the SPSS software and grounded theory employed to analyse the data gathered were described with justification.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents descriptive statistics of the data from the questionnaires.

The process of analysis is conducted by presenting aspects of the data which have a relationship to the research questions and aims of the study. This is useful in developing a summary of the results and providing an understanding of students' responses to the questionnaires items.

Descriptive statistical analysis is used to display the data gathered in the form of tables and figures. Quantitative analysis techniques such as graphs, charts and statistics help to explore, present, describe and examine relationships and trends within the data (Saunders et al, 2012:472), which allows comparisons to be made between different groups. Furthermore, descriptive statistics are used to gain a better understanding for each category of questionnaires items. Therefore, the mode is used for the nine categories.

A questionnaire surveys produce large amounts of data, and therefore the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the data. It was stressed by Greasley (2008), SPSS software is the most widely used computer program for analysis the quantitative data. It helps to make sense of the quantitative data by organising and summarising it. This chapter begins by presenting the analysis data from tutors' questionnaires and subsequently a description is given. The analysis of the data from students is also presented.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF TUTORS' QUESTIONNAIRES

This section presents the analysis of data from the tutors' questionnaires. The questionnaire was given to the 12 university EFL writing tutors who also participated in semi-structured interviews. This questionnaire consisted of 17 items and each is analysed. The tutors' responses were solicited for each item using a 4-point Likert-type scale where 1= never, 2= hardly ever, 3= sometimes and 4= always. The research questions to be answered in this study are:

- 1) What assessment methods do EFL Libyan tutors use to assess university students' writing skills?
- 2) What are the factors that affect tutors' choices of assessment methods?
- 3) How do students perceive the assessment methods used by tutors in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?
- 4) How do students' perceptions relate to tutors' thinking in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?

The analysis of the data gathered begins with consideration of the background and characteristics of the tutors.

5.3 EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF TUTORS

The highest educational qualifications gained by tutors are shown in the pie chart in figure 6. Of the 12 tutors, 8 (66.7%) held MA degrees while 4 (33.3%) hold a PhD degree. The minimum requirement to teach at university level in Libya is to have MA degree.

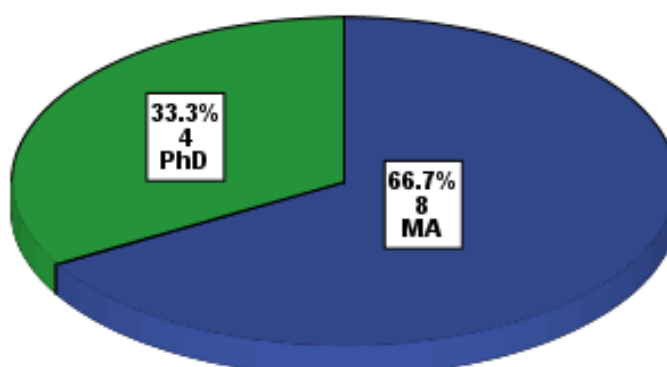


Figure 6: Educational level of tutors

5.4 TEACHING EXPERIENCE OF TUTORS

All of the tutors had taught EFL at both school and university except for one who had taught only at university level. The mode for EFL teaching experience at school is 2 years, while at university is 4 years. This means that most tutors had more teaching experience at university than at school (see table 4).

Table 4: Tutors' Teaching Experience.

Level	Mode	N
School	2	11
University	4	12

5.5 NUMBER OF WRITING LESSONS TAUGHT PER- WEEK

The results indicate that most tutors taught two EFL writing lessons per week; whereas some taught just one while others taught more than two. Two tutors (16.7%) taught more than two writing lessons, eight tutors (66.7%) taught two writing lessons per week, two (16.7%) taught just one. From this, there is an average of two EFL writing lessons taught per week(see figure 7 for details).

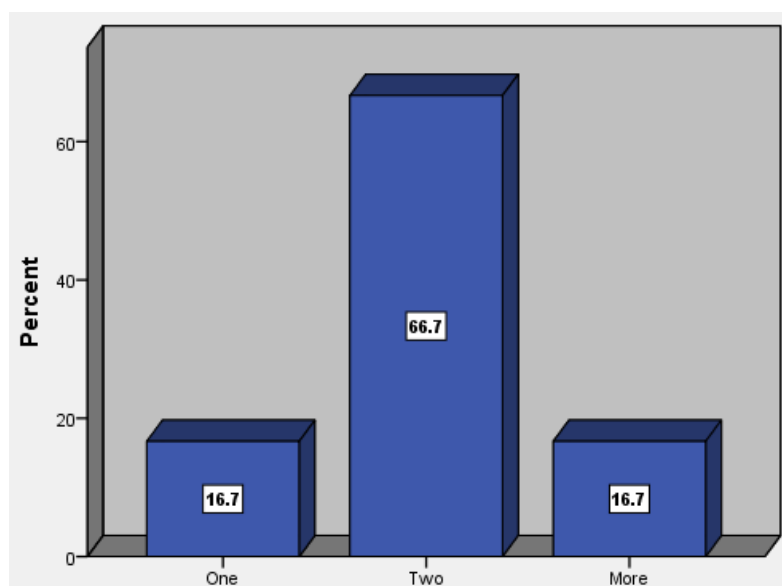


Figure 7: Number of Writing Lessons Taught Per Week.

5.6 LENGTH OF WRITING LESSONS

The analysis of data shows that writing lessons lasted for about two hours, and all tutors gave similar responses concerning this question.

5.7 PLACES OF STUDENTS' WRITTEN WORK

There are some differences among the tutors, indicating that seven out of the 12 (58.3%) tutors asked their students to complete their written work mainly in class with some completed at home as they used more summative assessment methods which are more formal exercises. While five tutors (41.7%) asked students to complete it mainly at home and some in class because they used a less formal formative assessment method. This indicates that tutors tend to ask students to conduct their written work mostly in class with some at home (see details in table 5).

Table 5: Places of students' written work

Places of written work	number of tutors	Percentage
Mainly in class with some at home	7	58.3
Mainly at home with some in class	5	41.7
Total	12	100.0

5.8 WAYS OF ASSESSING STUDENTS' WRITTEN WORK

Table 6 summarises the data concerning ways of assessing students' written work. These were multiple choice questions where tutors were allowed to select as many options as appropriate. The potential maximum response for each option is 12. The data reveal that the most common method of assessment was correction with grades at the middle and end of a year or course. All 12 tutors selected this choice, which represented (38.7%) of all the total assessment methods selected. Correction with feedback every week or every month was the second most frequent choice, which nine out of the 12 tutors selected, which

represented (75%) of potential responses and (29%) of the total cases. Furthermore, correction with feedback at the mid-term was the third most frequent choice, which (58.3%) of tutors selected representing (22.6%) of total cases of methods. The least popular method of assessment was correction with grades every week or every month which only three out of the 12 tutors (25%) selected accounting (9.7%) of total assessment methods chosen.

Table 6: Ways of Assessing Students' Written Work.

Ways of assessment	Responses		Percentage of maximum responses
	Number of tutors	Percentage	
Correction with feedback every week, every month	9	29.0	75.0
Correction with grades every week, every month	3	9.7	25.0
Correction with feedback mid-term	7	22.6	58.3
Correction with grades mid and final	12	38.7	100.0
Total	31	100.0	

5.9 ASSESSMENT TRAINING

The analysis of data shows a significant result concerning this question, revealing that none of the 12 tutors had ever received any formal training in assessing students' written work. This may indicate that tutors' knowledge about assessment is affected by the lack of tutor training.

5.10 REASONS FOR ASSESSING STUDENTS' WRITTEN WORK

This is also a multiple choice question where tutors were allowed to select some or all reasons applicable to them. The data show that one of the most common reasons for assessment was to provide grades. 12 tutors selected this choice, which represented (41.4%) of the total reasons given. The analysis also

indicates that helping students to identify their weaknesses in writing was the other most frequent reason. Again all 12 tutors selected this reason which also represented (41.4%) of the total. However, only five out of the 12 tutors selected the third reason, which was identifying the students' strengths in writing, which accounted for the total reasons given. It appears that all respondents agree that giving grades and identifying students' weaknesses are the reasons behind the use of assessment (see table 7 for details).

Table 7: Reasons for Assessing Students' Written Work.

Reason for assessment	Responses		Percentage of potential responses
	Number of tutors	Percentage of cases	
To provide grades	12	41.4	100.0
To help them identify their weaknesses in writing	12	41.4	100.0
To help them identify their strengths in writing	5	17.2	41.6
Total	29	100.0	

5.11 TYPES OF TUTORS- FEEDBACK

The results show that all 12 participants (100%) gave written feedback on students' work, while three (25%) provided both oral and written feedback. This indicates that all tutors prefer or tend to provide written feedback (see table 8).

Table 8: Type of Feedback Provided by Tutors on their Students' Work.

Type of Feedback	Number of tutors	Percentage
Written Feedback	12	100.0
Both written and oral	3	25.0

5.12 FREQUENCY QUESTIONS

For Q9, table 9 indicates that four out of the 12 tutors (33.3%) said that they hardly ever assessed their students' written work during teaching sessions,

while seven (58.3%) sometimes did and one (8.3%) always did this. This indicates that most tutors assess students' written work, during their teaching sessions.

According to the analysis of data for Q11, 9 out of 12 tutors (75%) never designed different assessment criteria for each written task, whereas one (8.33%) selected hardly ever and 2 (16.66%) sometimes did. This shows that a large number of the tutors did not design assessment criteria for each written work.

The analysis of data for Q12 reveals that nine out of 12 tutors (75%) never explained assessment criteria to their students and two participants also (16.7%) hardly ever did, whereas one tutor (8.33%) sometimes did provide explanations before written work was undertaken. This means that almost of respondents did not explain assessment criteria.

Tutors' responses to Q13 indicate that only one tutor out of the 12 (8.3%) never gave grades for each written task, while one other tutor hardly ever did meanwhile six tutors (50%) selected sometimes and four (33.3%) always gave grades written tasks. This shows that tutors have different ways of dealing with grades for writing work.

With regard to the analysis of data for Q14, eight tutors out of 12 (66.66%) never encouraged their students to check each other's written work, while two participants hardly ever did (16.60%), one tutor (8.33%) sometimes did and only one tutor did all the time. This indicates that students are usually not encouraged to check each other's written work.

Concerning Q15, the data indicate that seven out the of 12 tutors (58.3%) never asked students to discuss written feedback on their writing task with each other,

while two tutors (16.7%) hardly ever did, and another two sometimes did, and one tutor did this all the time. This means that there is a lack of encouragement for students to discuss feedback received (see table 9 for details).

Table 9: Questions Regarding Frequency of use of Assessment Methods

Question		Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Always
(9) Do you assess your students' written work, during your teaching sessions?	Number of tutors	0	4	7	1
	Percentage %	0.0	33.3	58.3	8.3
(11) Do you design different assessment criteria for each written task?	Tutors number	9	1	2	0
	Percentage %	75.0	8.33	16.66	0
(12) Do you explain assessment criteria to your students?	Tutors number	9	2	1	0
	Percentage %	75.0	16.66	8.3	0
(13) Do you give students grades for each written task?	Tutors number	1	1	6	4
	Percentage %	8.3	8.3	50.0	33.3
(14) Do you encourage your students to check each other's written work?	Tutors number	8	2	1	1
	Percentage %	66.66	16.66	8.3	8.3
(15) Do you ask your students to discuss with each other your written feedback on their writing task?	Tutors number	7	2	2	1
	Percentage %	58.3	16.7	16.7	8.3

5.13 DISTRIBUTION OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

This is a multiple choice question where the participants had the choice to select all the criteria that they used. The analysis reveals that of the 12 tutors, 11 participants' assessed grammar, representing (20.8%) of criteria selected. All 12 tutors assessed vocabulary and spelling in students' written work, each representing (22.6%) of the total. Furthermore, eight tutors assessed sentence structure, accounting to (15.1%) of all criteria selections. Finally, the results

show that ten tutors assessed content or ideas representing (18.9%) of the total criteria selected. From this, all tutors focus on vocabulary and word spelling more than other aspects of assessment criteria (see table 10 for details).

Table 10: Aspects of Assessment Criteria.

Assessment Criteria	Responses		Percentage of tutors
	N	Percentage of criteria	
Grammar	11	20.8	91.7
Vocabulary	12	22.6	100.0
Sentence structure	8	15.1	66.7
Word spelling	12	22.6	100.0
Content or ideas	10	18.9	83.3
Total	53	100.0	

5.14 FACTORS AFFECTING CHOICE OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

According to the analysis of the data, nine of the 12 tutors selected background and knowledge, representing (23.7%) of total factors selected. Similarly, nine tutors selected their views about assessment as a factor affecting their choice of assessment method. Furthermore, all 12 tutors selected class size as a factor affecting the choice of method, whereas eight tutors selected motivation as a factor. Therefore, there is evidence that the choice of assessment is affected by several factors (see table 11). The Percentage of Cases indicates what percentage of responses for each given type because each respondent can chose more than one option is the reason that it is possible to have 100%.

Table 11: Factors Affecting Choice of Assessment Methods.

Factors	Responses		Percentage of potential responses
	N	Percentage	
Tutors' background and knowledge of assessment	9	23.7	75.0
Tutors points view of assessment	9	23.7	75.0
Class size	12	31.6	100.0
Motivation	8	21.1	66.7
Total	38	100.0	

5.15 RANKING OF FACTORS AFFECTING CHOICES OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

In the second part of question 17, the respondents were asked to rank the importance of factors affecting their choice of assessment methods. The results indicate that seven out of the 12 tutors ranked background and knowledge as the most important factor, while out of the 12 ranked it second and one ranked it third. Regarding the tutors' view of assessment, three out of the 12 tutors ranked it first, whereas five tutors ranked it second and third by two tutors. The class size factor was ranked first by two tutors, while it was the second factor accounting to three tutors and third for six tutors. Finally, the motivation factor was ranked in fourth place by seven tutors. From this most tutors agree that their background knowledge about assessment is the important one among several factors (see table 12).

Table 12: Ranking of Factors Affecting Choice of Assessment.

Factors	Numbers of tutors	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Tutors' background and knowledge	Tutor numbers	7	3	1	1
	Percentage %	58.3	25.0	8.3	8.3
Tutors' views of assessment	Tutor numbers	3	5	2	2
	Percentage %	25.0	41.7	16.6	16.6
Class size	Tutor numbers	2	2	6	2
	Percentage %	16.6	16.6	50.0	16.6
Motivation	Tutor numbers	1	3	1	7
	Percentage %	8.3	25.0	8.3	58.3

5.16 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE TUTORS' QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

The analysis of tutors' questionnaires highlighted several results that are relevant to the research questions. Data were collected concerning the tutors' background information and their responses to the items of the questionnaires. The analysis showed that all tutors had teaching experience at school and university. The tutors reported that they spent approximately two hours per week teaching EFL writing skills to students.

The analysis showed that seven out of 12 tutors asked students to complete most of their written work in class and some at home (see section 5.7). The most common method of assessment was correction with grades at mid-term and end of year, whereas correction with feedback every week or month was the second most common choice. Correction with feedback at the mid-term and end of year was the third most frequent choice and the least popular method of assessment was correction with grades every week or month. Furthermore, the results showed that none of the 12 tutors had ever received any formal training

in assessing students' written work. The analysis indicated that the most common reason for assessment was to provide grades, and it was also indicated that assessment was generally used to identify students' writing weaknesses rather than strengths. All tutors gave written feedback on students' work, while only three provided oral and written feedback to their students. Further findings indicated that four out of the 12 tutors hardly ever assessed their the students' written work during teaching sessions, while seven sometimes did and one tutor always assessed students' work during teaching sessions. Another result was that nine out of the 12 tutors never designed and explained different assessment criteria for each written task. Further results showed that one of the tutors never gave grades for each written task, while another tutor hardly ever did, whereas six out of 12 tutors sometimes did this and four always claimed to give grades for written tasks. The analysis also revealed that most of the tutors did not encourage students to check each other's written work, and there was a lack of encouragement of students to discuss the feedback received. The analysis showed that tutors assessed various aspects of their students' written work such as grammar, vocabulary, sentences structure, spelling and content or ideas. Finally, the analysis showed the factors that affected tutors' choice of assessment methods and their importance as perceived by tutors. The factors were the tutors' background and knowledge, the tutors' views of assessment; class size and motivation (see Table 11). The following sections present the analysis of data from the students' questionnaires.

5.17 STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaire was divided into nine major parts and each consisted of several items as shown in Table 13. The students' questionnaire was designed in the form of 41 statements. The data gathered are organised in the form of tables and figures supported by descriptions. The views of students were solicited on each statement on a 4-point Likert type scale where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree and 4=strongly agree. The reason for using this type of 4-point Likert scale is so that students avoid selecting middle option (see section 4.6.3).

The research questions to be answered in this study are:

- 1) What assessment methods do EFL Libyan tutors use to assess university students' writing skills?
- 2) What are the factors that affect tutors' choices of assessment methods?
- 3) How do students perceive the assessment methods used by tutors in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?
- 4) How do students' perceptions relate to tutors' thinking in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?

The items in the questionnaires are shown in table 13 below followed by some of the characteristics of the students.

Table 13: Student questionnaire.

Parts	Question	Statement
Part 1: Peer assessment	Q8	I discuss my work with my fellow students in the classroom
	Q9	I discuss the work of other students with them in the classroom
	Q11	I explain to my fellow students what can be improved in their written tasks
	Q12	In the classroom, I tell my classmates which aspects of their work are good
	Q16	Assessing my own work helps me to assess other students' work
Part 2: Self-assessment	Q24	My tutor asks me to exchange my written task with classmates to check for mistakes
	Q14	Assessing my own work helps me to become an independent learner
	Q23	I prefer to find out by myself my written mistakes in assignments
Part 3: Grades	Q36	Assessing other students' work helps me to understand my own assessment
	Q6	A bad grade motivates me to put more effort into my following written assessment
	Q17	A good grade motivates me to put more effort into my next writing assessment
	Q32	Assessments motivate me to improve my writing skills
	Q37	I prefer to receive grades after each assessment
	Q38	I prefer to receive grades from my tutors
	Q39	I prefer to give grades on my classmate' written work
Part 4: Development of students' learning	Q40	I discuss my tutors' grades with my classmates in classroom
	Q3	Assessments help me to develop my writing skills
	Q4	I believe writing assessments help me in my learning
Part 5: Feedback from tutors	Q7	Doing a lot of assessment do not improve my writing skills
	Q10	I always find my tutor's feedback helps me to learn
	Q19	I prefer to receive written feedback from my tutor
	Q21	I prefer to receive oral feedback from my tutor
	Q25	I like to have feedback from my tutor, while I am still working on a task
Part 6: Feedback from peers	Q33	My tutor provides me with better feedback than my classmates
	Q20	I prefer to receive written feedback from my classmates
	Q22	I prefer to receive oral feedback from my classmates
	Q27	I prefer written feedback on my work
	Q28	I prefer oral feedback on my work
Part 7: Students' feelings of assessment	Q34	My classmates provide me with better feedback than my tutor
	Q35	I find it useful to have feedback on my assessment
	Q5	I feel stressed when I have assessment
Part 8: Assessment criteria	Q13	I prefer my writing task to be assessed by tutor/classmate/both
	Q29	I prefer to be assessed on what I have done in my written work
	Q15	My tutor provides me with assessment criteria
Part 9: Weaknesses & strengths in writing	Q18	My tutor provides me with assessment criteria before every written assessment
	Q41	I discuss assessment criteria with my fellow students in classroom
	Q26	I give written comments on my classmates' work
	Q30	Assessments help me to know my weaknesses in writing
	Q31	Assessments help me to know my strengths in writing

5.18 CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS

A total of 207 students participated in this study by completing the questionnaires designed by the researcher. The participants came from six English language departments in different geographical locations at one university as shown in table 14. The distribution of students by department as follows: The largest number of participants (59) was from department 1 followed by (32) from department 2 representing (44%) of the total, (43) students were from department 3 (20.8%) of the total, whereas 28 students were from department 5 (13.5%), 23 from department 6 (11.1%) of the total, and 22 from department 4 (10.6%).

Table 14: Distribution of students by department

English Departments	Number of students	Percentage
Department 1	59	28.5
Department 2	32	15.5
Department 3	43	20.8
Department 4	22	10.6
Department 5	28	13.5
Department 6	23	11.1
Total	207	100.0

5.19 DEPARTMENT AND AGE GROUP COMBINED

The data from tables 14 are combined in table 15 to show the distribution of age groups within each department. To determine if there are differences in age distribution in the six departments, a Chi-squared test was performed because both department and age group are categorical variables. The result indicates that there is no association between age and department, with a Chi-Squared value of 11.83, degree of freedom of 10 and p (probability) value of 0.296

(>0.05). This means that the distribution of age groups across the six departments is similar.

Table 15: Departments and Age Group Distribution (Chi-Squared=11.83, df =10 and p=0.296).

English Departments		Age group			Total
		19-21 years	22-25 years	26+ years	
Department 1	Number of students	22	24	13	59
	percentage %	37.3	40.7	22.0	100.0
Department 2	Number of students	13	10	9	32
	percentage %	40.6	31.3	28.1	100.0
Department 3	number of students	18	14	11	43
	percentage %	41.9	32.6	25.6	100.0
Department 4	number of students	12	6	4	22
	percentage %	54.5	27.3	18.2	100.0
Department 5	number of students	7	16	5	28
	percentage %	25.0	57.1	17.9	100.0
Department 6	Number of student	8	13	2	23
	percentage %	34.8	56.5	8.7	100.0
Total	Number of students	80	83	44	207
	percentage %	38.6	40.1	21.3	100.0

The analysis of data from each category in the students' questionnaires is presented in the following sections.

5.20 PEER ASSESSMENT

Six statements in the questionnaire were used to investigate the use of peer assessment in EFL writing classes by students. The data for Q8 indicate that (90%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (10%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements, which means that a large number of students did not discuss their work in the classroom with their fellow students. The students' responses concerning Q9 indicate that (82.1%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (17.9%) either agree or strongly agreed and it can

be said that a high percentage of participants did not discuss the work of other students with them in the classroom. The analysis of data for Q11 shows that (95.16%) strongly disagreed/disagreed and (4.82%) strongly agreed and agreed. This means that most of students disagree to explain to fellow students what can be improved in their written tasks.

The data for Q12 show that (92.7%) strongly disagreed/disagreed and (7.24%) strongly agreed and agreed, which means most of students did not tell their classmates which aspects of their work were good in the classroom. For Q16, (89.36%) strongly disagreed/ disagreed and (10.61%) strongly agreed or agreed. From this most students disagree that assessing their work helps them to assess other students' work.

Regarding the analysis data of Q24, for (95.64%) strongly disagreed/disagreed and (4.34%) strongly agreed or agreed; it seems that there is overwhelming agreement that their tutors did not ask them to exchange their written task with classmates to check for mistakes(see table 16).

Table 16: Peer assessment

Questions	Part 1: Peer assessment		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q8	I discuss my work with my fellow students in the classroom	number of students	92	104	6	5
		percentage %	44.44	50.24	2.89	2.41
Q9	I discuss the work of other students with them in the classroom	number of students	109	97	2	1
		percentage %	52.65	46.85	0.96	0.48
Q11	I explain to my fellow students what can be improved in their written tasks	number of students	107	90	7	3
		percentage %	51.69	43.47	3.38	1.44
Q12	In the classroom, I tell my classmates which aspects of their work are good	number of students	98	94	8	7
		percentage %	47.3	45.4	3.86	3.38
Q16	Assessing my own work helps me to assess other students' work	number of students	97	88	16	6
		percentage %	46.85	42.51	7.72	2.89
Q24	My tutor asks me to exchange my written task with classmates to check for mistakes	number of students	98	100	2	7
		percentage %	47.34	48.30	0.96	3.38

5.21 SELF-ASSESSMENT

As shown in table 17, three statements are grouped under the heading of self-assessment. The students' answers to Q14 show that (74.87%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (25.54%) either agreed or strongly agreed, which means that the majority of participants did not think that assessing their own work helped them to become independent learners. Similarly, the students' responses to Q23 indicate that (57.8%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (42.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed. This indicates that most of

students do not prefer to find their own written mistakes in assignments. Next, for Q36 (28.7%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (71.4%) either agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that a majority of students are positive about assessing other students' work because it helps them to understand their own assessment.

Table 17: Self-assessment

Questions			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q14	Assessing my own work helps me to become an independent learner	Number of students	89	66	30	22
		percentage %	42.99	31.88	14.92	10.62
Q23	I prefer to find by myself my written mistakes in assignments	number of students	61	58	46	41
		percentage %	29.6	28.2	22.3	19.9
Q36	Assessing other students' work helps me to understand my own assessment	number of students	36	23	98	49
		percentage %	17.5	11.2	47.6	23.8

5.22 GRADES

For Q6 the students' responses indicated that (25.1%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (74.9%) either agreed or strongly agreed, which means a large number of students agreed that a bad grade motivated them to put more effort into the next written assessment. Similarly, for Q17 the students' views were that (50.5%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (49.5%) either agreed or strongly agreed. The data from Q32 show that (32%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (67.9%) either agreed or strongly agreed that assessment helps them to improve their writing skills.

For Q37 (29%) of students strongly disagreed or disagreed, while the majority (71%) agreed or strongly agreed; meaning that most of the students preferred

to receive grades after each assessment. With regard to Q38, all of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they preferred to receive grades from their tutors. Next, for Q39, all students strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement and did not prefer to give grades for their classmates' written work. This may be explained by the fact that traditionally tutors give grades to students for their written work and therefore students perceive this as the role of the tutor. Finally, for Q40 (92%) of students strongly disagreed or disagreed while (7.7%) agree or strongly agree which means that most students did not prefer to discuss their grades with each other in the classroom.

From analysis, it appears that motivation has a potential impact on students' learning when linked to grades. Good grades may increase students' level of motivation which is reflected in the effort put into the next assessment. On the other hand, low grades can have a negative effect on motivation. This is not reflected in these findings where 75% of respondents were motivated by low grades to improve their next assignment. Furthermore, the students preferred to receive grades from tutors after each assessment but did not want to give grades to their classmates. Finally, discussing grades among themselves was not preferred by most of the students(see table 18).

Table 18: Motivation and Grades.

Questions	Part 3: Motivation and grades	number of students	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q6	A bad grade motivates me to put more effort into my following written assessment	number of students	18	34	73	82
		percentage %	8.7	16.4	35.3	39.6
Q17	A good grade motivates me to put more effort into my next writing assessment	number of students	28	76	49	53
		percentage %	13.6	36.9	23.8	25.7
Q32	Assessments motivate me to improve my writing skills	number of students	32	34	81	59
		percentage %	15.5	16.5	39.3	28.6
Q37	I prefer to receive grades after each assessment	number of students	23	37	69	78
		percentage %	11.1	17.9	33.3	37.7
Q38	I prefer to receive grades from my tutors	number of students	0	0	80	127
		percentage %	0.0	0.0	38.6	61.4
Q39	I prefer to give grades on my classmate's written work.	number of students	109	98	0	0
		percentage %	52.7	47.3	0.0	0.0
Q40	I discuss my tutors' grades with my classmates in classroom.	number of students	106	85	11	5
		percentage %	51.2	41.6	5.3	2.4

5.23 DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' LEARNING

From the below table Q3 indicates that (40.5%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed, while (59.4%) either agreed or strongly agreed which means that over half of the students agreed that assessment helped them to develop their writing skills. Regarding Q4, (33.8%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (66.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed meaning that two-thirds of the students were positive about written assessments helping them in their learning. Data for Q7 show that (56.5%) strongly disagreed and disagreed versus (43.5%) strongly agreed and agreed, which means that many students agreed that a lot of assessment can lead to improve writing skills (see table 19).

Table 19: Development of Students' Learning.

Questions	Part 4: Development of students' learning		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q3	Assessments help me to develop my writing skills	Number of students	39	45	65	58
		percentage %	18.8	21.7	31.4	28.0
Q4	I believe written assessments help me in my learning	number of students	41	29	88	49
		percentage %	19.8	14.0	42.5	23.7
Q7	Doing a lot of assessment do not improve my writing skills	number of students	45	72	49	41
		percentage %	21.7	34.8	23.7	19.8

5.24 FEEDBACK FROM TUTORS

The learners' responses concerning Q10 indicate that (32.8%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (67.1%) either agreed or strongly agreed; thus, there was a large number of students agreed that tutors' feedback helped them to learn. Similarly, data for Q19 show that (17.1%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while 82.6% either agreed or strongly agreed, and it seems that most of the students were positive about receiving written feedback from their tutors. The next statement Q21 shows that (79.7%) strongly disagreed/disagreed versus (20.28%) strongly agreeing or agree; this means that a majority of the students did not prefer to receive oral feedback from their tutor. Data for Q25 reveal that (37.4%) strongly disagreed/disagreed and (62.6%) strongly agreed and agreed which means that the majority of students liked to have feedback from their tutor while they were still working on a task. Similarly, data for Q33 show that (20.4%) strongly disagreed/disagreed and (79.6%) strongly agreed or agreed. This indicates that students believe that feedback from tutors is much better than feedback from classmates (for details see table 20).

Table 20: Part 5 Feedback From Tutors

Questions	Part 5: Tutors' feedback		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q10	I always find my tutor's feedback helps me to learn	number of students	28	40	65	74
		percentage %	13.5	19.3	31.4	35.7
Q19	I prefer to receive written feedback from my tutor	number of students	23	13	89	82
		percentage %	11.11	6.28	42.99	39.61
Q21	I prefer to receive oral feedback from my tutor	number of students	92	73	25	17
		percentage %	44.44	35.26	12.07	8.21
Q25	I like to have feedback from my tutor, while I am still working on a task	number of students	37	40	56	73
		percentage %	18.0	19.4	27.2	35.4
Q33	My tutor provides me with better feedback than my classmates	number of students	19	23	70	94
		percentage %	9.2	11.2	34.0	45.6

5.25 FEEDBACK FROM PEERS

Students' responses about Q20 indicate that (79.6%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (20.4%) either agreed or strongly agreed, and it appears that a large number of students did not prefer to receive written feedback from their classmates. In Q22 the analysis of data reveals that (71.9%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (28.1%) either agreed or strongly agreed; indicating that a great number of students did not prefer to receive oral feedback from their classmates either.

Data for Q28 reveal that (80.67%) strongly disagreed/disagreed versus (19.31%) strongly agreeing or agreeing which means that most of students did

not prefer oral feedback on their work. The analysis of data for Q34 shows that (76.7%) strongly disagreed/disagreed versus (23.3%) strongly agreeing or agreeing; thus a majority of students disagree with the idea that their classmates provide them with better feedback than their tutors.

Table 21: Peer Feedback.

Questions	Part 6: peer- feedback		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q20	I prefer to receive written feedback from my classmates	number of students	88	76	20	22
		percentage %	42.7	36.9	9.7	10.7
Q22	I prefer to receive oral feedback from my classmates	number of students	78	70	39	19
		percentage %	37.9	34.0	18.9	9.2
		percentage %	11.2	15.0	34.0	39.8
Q28	I prefer oral feedback on my work	number of students	79	88	22	18
		percentage %	38.16	42.51	10.62	8.69
Q34	My classmates provide me with better feedback than my tutor	number of students	84	74	27	21
		percentage %	40.8	35.9	13.1	10.2

5.26 STUDENTS' FEELINGS TOWARDS ASSESSMENT

The analysis of data Q5 shows that (14.49%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (85.5%) strongly agreed or agreed, which means that most of respondents agreed that they felt stressed when they had assessment. Similarly, for Q29 the data reveal that (27.2%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (72.8%) strongly agreed or agreed; this means that the majority of students preferred to be assessed on what they had done in their written work (see table 22).

Table 22: Students' Feelings Towards Assessment.

Questions	Part 7: Students' feeling towards assessment		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q5	I feel stressed when I have assessment	number of students	10	20	81	96
		percentage %	4.83	9.66	39.13	46.37
Q29	I prefer to be assessed on what I have done in my written work	number of students	26	30	68	82
		percentage %	12.6	14.6	33.0	39.8

5.27 ASSESSING WRITING TASKS

Students were asked who they preferred to assess their writing work: tutors, classmates or both. The analysis of data for Q13 shows that, of the 207 students 162 (78.3%) preferred to be assessed by the tutor, 16 (7.7%) preferred classmate and 29 (14%) both. This shows that a great number of participants preferred their written work to be assessed by tutors.

Table 23: Preferred Assessor.

Preferred Assessor	number of students	Percentage
Tutor	162	78.3
Classmate	16	7.7
Both	29	14.0
Total	207	100.0

5.28 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Students' responses concerning Q15 show that (89.8%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (10.1%) either agreed or strongly agreed, therefore, nearly (90%) of the students stated that their tutors did not provide them with assessment criteria. Similarly, the data for Q18 reveal that (93.4%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed while (5.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed, which means that a majority of students disagreed that their tutor provided them with criteria before every writing assessment. Furthermore, the

data for Q41 indicate that (81.1%) strongly disagreed or disagreed while (18.2%) agreed or strongly agreed. For all three statements the majority of the students either strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Table 24: Assessment Criteria

Questions	Part 8: Assessment criteria	number of Students	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q15	My tutor provides me with assessment criteria	number of students	86	100	18	3
		percentage %	41.5	48.3	8.7	1.4
Q18	My tutor provides me with assessment criteria before every written assessment	number of students	121	74	12	0
		percentage %	58	35.4	5.8	0
Q41	I discuss assessment criteria with my fellow students in classroom	number of students	93	75	22	17
		percentage%	44.9	36.2	10.6	8.2

5.29 ASSESSMENT TO IDENTIFY WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS IN WRITING

There is a great variation of students' beliefs in responding to Q26, with (85.4%) either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing versus (14.6%) strongly agreeing or agreeing which means that the majority of participants did not give written comments on their classmates' work. The data for Q30 indicate that (32.1%) strongly disagreed/disagreed versus (68%) strongly agreeing or agreeing, showing that many students were positive about assessments helping them to know their weaknesses in writing. Similarly, the data for Q31 show that (34.4%) strongly disagreed/disagreed versus (65.5%) strongly agreeing or agreeing, which means that a large number of students believed that assessments helped them to know their strengths in writing. It appears from the analysis that there is

sufficient evidence that assessment has an important role in developing students' learning.

Table 25: Assessments to Identify Weaknesses and Strengths in Writing.

Questions			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q26	I give written comments on my classmates' work	Number of Students	91	85	20	10
		percentage%	44.2	41.3	9.7	4.9
Q30	Assessments help me to know my weaknesses in writing	number of students	23	43	76	64
		percentage %	11.2	20.9	36.9	31.1
Q31	Assessments help me to know my strengths in writing	number of students	25	46	79	56
		percentage %	12.1	22.3	38.3	27.2

5.30 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ITEM CATEGORIES

Descriptive statistics are techniques for summarizing large amounts of quantitative data in a meaningful way. In this study the purpose of using descriptive statistics is to provide clear summary of the data collected from participants. Furthermore, descriptive statistics are used to gain a better understanding for each category of questionnaires items. Therefore, the mode is used for the nine categories as presented on table 26. From this it is clear that the tutors' feedback category has the highest mean rank of 2.81 indicating that students attached more importance to this compared to other categories, falling between disagree and agree and closer to agree than disagree in the original response scale. Original responses categories were:

Strongly disagree =1 disagree=2 agree=3 strongly agree= 4.

Table 26: Descriptive Statistics for Item Categories

Part	Category	Mode
Part 1	Peer assessment	2
Part 2	Self-assessment	2
Part 3	Grades	3
Part 4	Development of students' learning	3
Part 5	Feedback from tutors	3
Part 6	Feedback from peers	2
Part 7	Students' feelings towards assessment	3
Part 8	Assessment Criteria	3
Part 9	assessments identify weaknesses and strengths in writing	2

The category of students' feelings towards assessment has a mode of 3. The assessment criteria category has a mode of 3. The self-assessment category gives a mode of 2, whereas peer-assessment also gives a mode of 2. The rest of the modes are shown on the table. This indicates that students do not prefer to perform peer assessment in learning EFL writing.

5.31 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR CATEGORIES BY AGE GROUP

Mode for the nine categories according to the age of students is shown in table 28. The mode for peer-assessment according to age group are 2, 2, and 2 for 19-21 years old, 22-25 years old and 26+ years respectively. For their feelings towards assessment the modes according to age groups are 3, 3 and 3 for 19-21 years old, 22-25 years old and 26+ years respectively. The rest are shown on the table 27.

Table 27: Mode for Categories by Age Group

Part	Category	Age group	Mode
Part 1	Peer-assessment	19-21 years	2
		22-25 years	2
		26+ years	2
Part 2	Self-assessment	19-21 years	2
		22-25 years	2
		26+ years	3
Part 3	Grades	19-21 years	3
		22-25 years	2
		26+ years	3
Part 4	Development of students' learning	19-21 years	3
		22-25 years	3
		26+ years	3
Part 5	Feedback from tutors	19-21 years	3
		22-25 years	3
		26+ years	3
Part 6	Feedback from peers	19-21 years	2
		22-25 years	2
		26+ years	2
Part 7	Students' feelings towards assessment	19-21 years	3
		22-25 years	3
		26+ years	3
Part 8	Assessment criteria	19-21 years	3
		22-25 years	3
		26+ years	2
Part 9	Assessment identifying weaknesses	19-21 years	2
		22-25 years	2
		26+ years	2

5.32 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

This section provides a summary of the main findings from the analysis of the data from the students' questionnaires.

More than 60% of the students agree or strongly agree with the following statements:

- ❖ I believe written assessments help me in my learning
- ❖ Assessments help me to know my weaknesses in writing
- ❖ Assessments help me to know my strengths in writing

- ❖ Assessing other students' work helps me to understand my own assessment
- ❖ I always find my tutor's feedback helps me to learn
- ❖ I prefer to receive written feedback from my tutor
- ❖ I like to have feedback from my tutor while I am still working on a task
- ❖ My tutor provides me with better feedback than my classmates
- ❖ I find it useful to have feedback on my assessment
- ❖ A bad grade motivates me to put more effort into my following writing assessment task
- ❖ I prefer to be assessed by my tutor
- ❖ Assessments motivate me to improve my writing skills
- ❖ I prefer to receive grades after each assessment
- ❖ I prefer to receive grades from my tutors
- ❖ I feel stressed when I have assessment

Less than 60% of the students agree or strongly agree with the following statements:

- ❖ Doing a lot of assessment does not improve my writing skills
- ❖ Assessing my own work helps me to become an independent learner
- ❖ My tutor provides me with assessment criteria
- ❖ A good grade motivates me to put more effort into my next writing assessment
- ❖ I prefer to find out by myself my written mistakes in assignments
- ❖ I prefer oral feedback on my work
- ❖ I discuss my tutors' grades with my classmates in classroom

Over 70% of the students disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements:

- ❖ I discuss my work with my fellow students in the classroom
- ❖ I discuss the work of other students with them in the classroom
- ❖ I explain to my fellow students what can be improved in their writing tasks
- ❖ In the classroom, I tell my classmates which aspects of their work are good
- ❖ My tutor provides me with assessment criteria before every writing assessment
- ❖ My tutor asks me to exchange my written task with classmates to check for mistakes
- ❖ I give written comments on my classmates' work
- ❖ I prefer to receive written feedback from my classmates
- ❖ I prefer to receive oral feedback from my classmates
- ❖ My classmates provide me with better feedback than my tutor
- ❖ I discuss assessment criteria with my fellow students in classroom
- ❖ I prefer to give grades on my classmate' written work

Less than 50% of the students disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements:

- ❖ Assessments help me to develop my writing skills
- ❖ Assessing my own work helps me to assess other students' work
- ❖ I prefer written feedback on my work
- ❖ I prefer to be assessed on what I have done in my written work

5.33 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has introduced the quantitative data analysis with reference to the research questions and setting of data collection. The data were gathered from a sample of 12 tutors and 207 students. To clarify and support the analysis, figures and tables are used. The quantitative analysis has shown several concepts such as motivation, assessment criteria and feedback, which have provided a starting point for the questioning and more in-depth response for the semi-structured interviews.

The most important findings were that almost 90% of the students stated that their tutors did not provide them with assessment criteria. The tutors' results showed that nine out of the 12 tutors never designed and explained different assessment criteria for each written task. The analysis of data also showed that of the 207 students 162 78.3% preferred to be assessed by the tutor. The analysis from tutors' findings also revealed that most of the tutors did not encourage students to check each other's written work, and there was a lack of encouragement of students to discuss the written feedback received.

What was an unexpected result, contrary to the majority of literature, the students were more motivated by getting bad, rather than good grades (see section 5.22). This chapter has raised significant points in how assessments are designed, marked and the resulting effect on students' motivation, assessment understanding and learning.

CHAPTER SIX: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the process of analysing qualitative data from 12 tutors and six students across six English language departments in one university. Qualitative data were collected to answer the research questions because it is considered to have a “key role in providing insights, explanations and theories of social behaviour” (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002: 306). In the present study, the gathered qualitative data is in line with quantitative data to ensure the triangulating technique and also provides in-depth information which supports and complements the findings from the analysis of quantitative data. Robson (2002:456) stressed that “in supplementing and illustrating the quantitative data obtained from experiment or survey”, qualitative data is often gathered from smaller numbers of people, yet the data tend to be detailed and rich (Cohen et al., 2007:461). In this chapter, it is unavoidable to deal with numbers in qualitative analysis, it is likely to prove the significance of the study in a wider setting (Newby, 2010).

6.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What assessment methods do EFL Libyan tutors use to assess university students' writing skills?
- 2) What are the factors that affect tutors' choices of assessment methods?
- 3) How do students perceive the assessment methods used by tutors in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?
- 4) How do students' perceptions relate to tutors' thinking in terms of (a) the process and (b) the product?

The following sections describe the analysis of qualitative data using grounded theory (GT), firstly, considering the tutors' perceptions of and practices in assessment followed by the students' perceptions concerning assessment.

Comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings is discussed. Finally, a short summary and conclusion end the chapter.

6.3 ANALYSIS OF TUTORS' INTERVIEW DATA

This section describes the analysis of data from 12 semi-structured interviews with university writing tutors (see section 4.14). The analysis of qualitative data means “the operations by which data were broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 57). The process of analysis of data using GT produced various categories and concepts which could be developed into descriptive themes and sub-themes. Similar and different concepts were identified and joined together. The themes are interrelated and are not discrete items or categories in order to understand the data and must not be presented in a neat manner. The figure 8 below represents the framework of the tutors' perceptions and practice of assessment which emerged from the data. It also shows the developing codes into themes and sub-themes which are discussed in chapter (7) with reference to the existing literature.

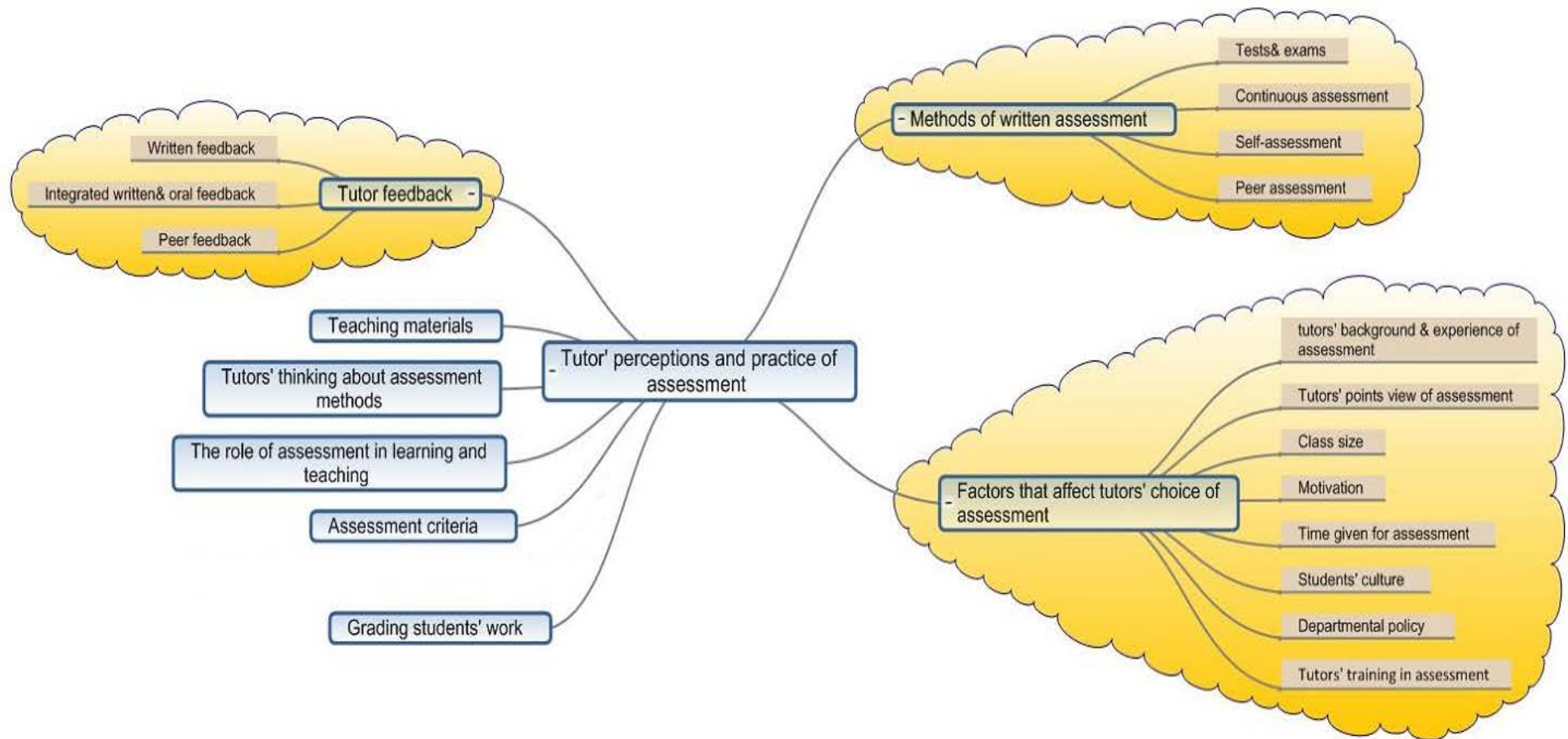


Figure 8: The framework which emerged from the data.

Now, it is important to look at the data in relation to the research questions. The findings are presented sequentially according to the four research questions. Bryman (2012:580) stressed that “a theme was that related to his/her research focus and quite possibly to the research questions”. To facilitate the analytical process, tables are used followed by a critical analysis. Anonymised labels are used to protect the data and maintain the participants’ confidentiality. For example, T1, T2, T3 and so on referred to the tutors who participated in interviews across the six English language departments. The actual data from excerpts are written in italics with quotation marks to support the analysis. As a final point, a summary of results is presented for each research question.

6.4 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

What assessment methods do Libyan EFL tutors use to assess university students’ writing skills?

The headings and sub-headings which emerged are shown below in relation to this research question.

6.5 METHODS OF WRITTEN ASSESSMENT

The collected data were analysed in terms of the methods used in assessing students’ written work. Explanations are given for the reasons behind the use of each method and why some methods are employed or not. The data showed that all tutors had experience in tests or exams and continuous assessment, while self and peer assessment were not widely performed by learners. The findings are shown in order of the method most used followed by the least used, giving more detail of tests, continuous assessment, peer and self -assessment.

6.5.1 TESTS AND EXAMS

All 12 tutors indicated that there were two occasions during a year when mid and final year exams were used to assess their students' written work. These tests focused on making judgments about what their students had learned based on certain criteria and goals in order to provide grades. The tutors reported that the examination was the official and traditional method of assessment which is most commonly used in Libya. Various reasons were given for the use of exams. For example, the tests were used to meet the requirements of Libyan education policy (see section 6.7.8). Another reason reported by T2 was that *"I used only mid and final exams because they gave me a full picture of what students learned during the year and I provided grades"*. A further reason was that the tutors had insufficient experience about other methods of assessment such as self and peer assessment. They reported that the purpose of using tests was to determine the quality of students' work against grades and standards. In addition, T6 mentioned that *"I actually assessed my students' work in the middle and at the end of the year. Each assessment was marked and the aim of this was to identify whether students have learned what they were taught or not"*. Four out of 12 tutors also reported that tests are effective in promoting EFL writing skills because they show the weak points in students' work. The data analysis showed that eight out of 12 tutors believed that tests might not be effective in developing students' EFL writing because they aimed at focusing on grades. The eight tutors also explained that this method led their students to focus more on accountability and grades rather than developing their writing performance. These tutors stated that tests focus on individual ability rather than cooperative learning and it is under the control of

tutors. From this, it seems that examinations were used and timetabled for all the English language departments across the Libyan university in order to measure achievement and to provide grades and rankings.

6.5.2 CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

The second method of assessment that EFL tutors used in assessing students' written work was continuous assessment. From the interview data, all 12 tutors had experience in this; however, five of the 12 tutors recognised it by name because they had more experience in the use of assessment methods. The tutors stated that they made decisions on their students' drafts of assignments, reports, homework and essays based on specific criteria and goals. They tended to utilize this method in their teaching because it helped them to identify areas of weaknesses in students' writing while they were teaching, which gave them an opportunity to fill gaps in the students' learning. For instance, T12 stated that:

“For me, I preferred to assess learners' work because I always looked at writing as a process not a final product. Assessment allowed me to see the process of writing, how they plan, write and edit and how they could receive more feedback during their learning”.

A further example mentioned by T7 was that *“I would like to use continuous assessment because it informed me of the extent of the progress that students achieved and also showed the area of weaknesses and strengths in students' written work. This helped me to help them achieve their learning needs”.* They reported that continuous assessment supported students' learning through on-going feedback and monitoring progress. Finally, T5 said *“assessment could be used depending on the number of lectures with homework; if I have two lectures*

a day I assessed them two times a week. I assessed my students' work every month with some quizzes and reports. This assessment helped me to provide comments and grades for each assignment or essay'. In conclusion, this method was used to assess students' work throughout the academic year.

6.5.3 PEER ASSESSMENT

In this section, tutors expressed their thinking about the use of peer assessment of writing by their students. Table 28 provides a summary of the use of peer assessment, including the reasons given.

Table 28: Peer assessment in writing classes

Peer assessment	Reasons
T3: I asked my students to correct each other's written work and give comments but no grades in the classroom. They could focus on grammar, vocabulary, spelling etc. Their assessment was based on my criteria.	Because.... they learned from the mistakes the classmates made during discussion together and have better written work. I think peer assessment reflected on both peers because they correct their work after conducting it. They might be more collaborating in their learning.
T6: in the classroom, I wanted my students to assess each other's written work as a first step and then they could give their work to me to assess it which meant the work could be assessed twice.	Because it helped them to learn from each other and also to avoid any mistakes that had been made by one of them. They could do better work next time with less mistakes.
T1: I stated that I prefer to encourage my students to use peer assessment. I sometimes asked the students to swap their work with each other or to exchange their written work with a partner to find one good element and one weak element in each work with feedback but no grades.	This helped them to improve their writing level and also to help them to interact with their classmates and tutors and become more active in their learning.

It could be seen from table 28 that three out of 12 tutors asked their students to assess each other's written work inside and outside the classroom. Students' judgments were based on criteria and learning goals provided by the tutors. They reported that students could assess their classmates' assignment or homework without giving grades. This method was important in improving students' work because they had an opportunity to assess aspects of their

written work while they were making judgments. They stated that students could benefit from peer assessment because they could learn from each other such as in ideas, the style of writing, the structure of good work and writing mistakes. The three tutors reported that this method was important in developing cooperative learning by exchanging, correcting and discussing feedback from peers. They also reported that students could have the opportunity to look at their each other's work before they gave it to the tutors for summative grades. Therefore, the use of peer assessment indicated their use of the communicative approach in teaching. Nevertheless, nine out of the 12 tutors explained that their students lacked the necessary knowledge, experience and training to do peer assessment. They also stated that there was a difficulty in employing this method because of the students' culture (see section 6.7.6). From this, it seems that peer assessment was not used by all of the students due to various difficulties that limited its use.

6.5.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT

The analysis of data is shown in the next table (29) followed by a detailed description. The data illustrate the tutors' thinking about self-assessment in learning EFL writing.

Table 29: Self-assessment and the reason behind its use in writing work

Self-assessment	Reasons
T2: I asked my students to do some sort of self-assessment at home when they had assignments or homework to check their work by themselves to find mistakes.	Because I gave them a chance to check their own work before they gave it to me. They corrected some mistakes in their assignments or homework regarding vocabulary, spelling, and grammar and sentences structure. This helped them to have good work because their work had been reviewed twice and I used it to save time and also to involve them in learning.
T6: I asked and recommend students to have a look to their homework to review it many times at home or in the classroom and try to find mistakes and correct them. I asked them to use my criteria while they were making judgment in order to give comments or suggests but not grades.	Because it helped them to know their written mistakes and learn from correcting their work during learning also providing feedback more than once. Students may interact with their tutors through feedback and criteria. Students could get benefit of self-assessment in improving their vocabulary, grammar....etc.

As could be noted that two out of the 12 tutors reported that they tended to ask their students to assess their own written work. These two participants had sufficient teaching experience – such as observing international visiting teachers - which led them to be aware of the use of self-assessment. The analysis showed that these two tutors asked students to assess their own assignments, essays, homework or reports based on the tutors’ criteria. They also reported that their students were encouraged to provide comments without giving grades for their own work. Moreover, they asked their students to assess their work and compare it to criteria in order to improve their writing. During the interviews, tutors were asked to provide reasons for asking students to perform self-assessment. In response, they reported that this method was important in enhancing and supporting students’ learning in terms of reducing the numbers of mistakes they made. Moreover, the respondents reported that self-assessment had an advantage in saving their time, because students had the opportunity to assess their work and then it was assessed by tutors. The

participants reported that self-assessment could make students more active in their learning by interacting with tutors and exchanging feedback and criteria. They said that self-assessment was useful for students in order to understand the requirements of good written work. They also stated that this strategy helped students to monitor themselves and be independent learners.

However, ten out of the 12 tutors stated that they did not ask their students to use self-assessment because they believed that students were not able to conduct such an assessment. T1 said that “ *I do not ask my students to review their written task because their ability might not help them to do it effectively*”. In addition, they reported that self-assessment was not appropriate for students because it might lead to incorrect grades or feedback because they had a lack of experience or knowledge. These two tutors suggested that conducting self-assessment required more effort from tutors through training students and creating a classroom culture that supported it. To sum up, there was a lack of the use of self-assessment of written work because most of the tutors did not ask their students to employ this method. The analysis of interviews concerning the second research question is presented in the following section.

6.6 RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

What are the factors that affect tutors' choice of assessment methods?

The tutors provided explanations of how various factors limited their use of assessment methods.

6.7 FACTORS THAT AFFECT TUTORS' CHOICE OF ASSESSMENT

Several factors that affected tutors in using different methods of assessment were found. The themes generated from the analysis of data under this heading were: tutors' lack of opportunity, assessment experience and background,

tutors' points of view about current assessment methods, university class size, motivation, the time given for assessment, students' culture, tutors' training in assessment, and university department policy. These factors are analysed by their importance for tutors. Figure 9 summaries these factors as difficulties that the tutors encountered in using various methods of assessment. The number of respondents citing each factor is shown in parentheses.

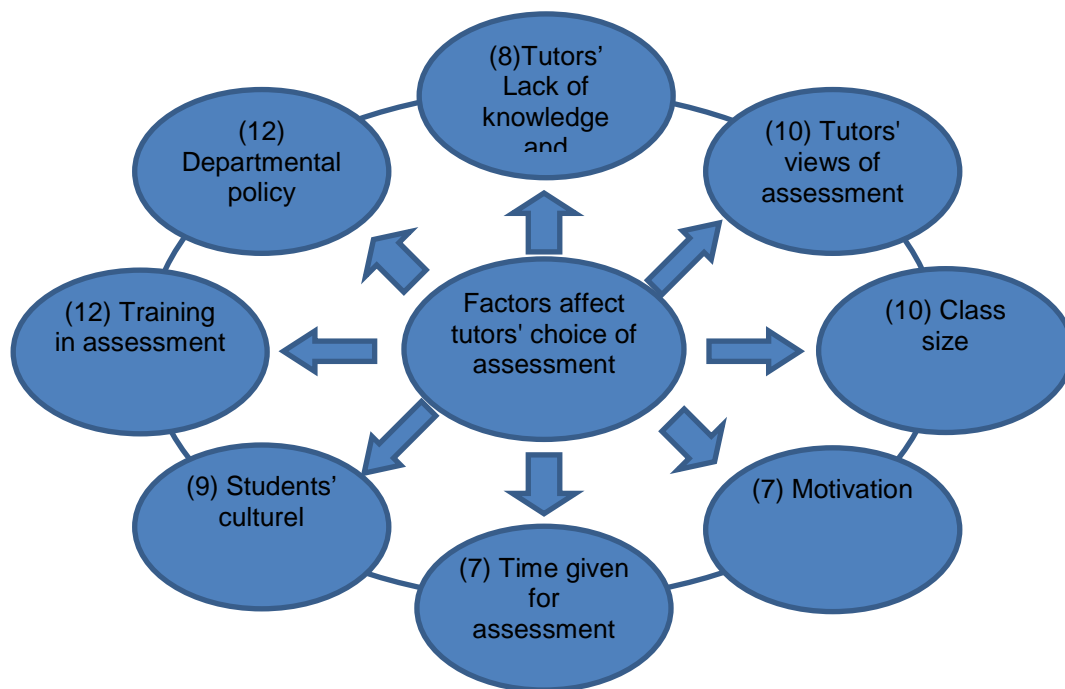


Figure9: Tutors' responses to factors affect their choice of assessment methods.

6.7.1 TUTORS LACK OF EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF ASSESSMENT

This section provides an overview of lack of experience in and knowledge of assessment among tutors. According to the data gathered, tutors' lack of experience was cited by eight out of the 12 tutors. They reported that they were not aware of different methods of assessment to use in writing classes. As one of the tutors T5 commented:

“Some tutors including me did not have experience or knowledge of using different methods of assessment. We only depend on the mid and final exams. I think because there was no specific writing text book for university, which may provide more forms of assessment”.

T7 also did not have sufficient experience, and mentioned that *“well, in fact there were many factors such as tutors’ experiences, I knew a few methods of assessment and I used them in every year with different classes”*. They also stated that they had no opportunity to select other methods of assessment and to learn about them. On the other hand, the four tutors who had most experience of teaching still used a limited number of assessment methods because there was no training in assessment. They reported that they depended on their experience and knowledge to employ assessment methods. To conclude, the above analysis provides evidence that there was a lack of experience and knowledge about assessment methods which limited their use in EFL writing classes. Tutors’ points of view about assessment were also affected by their lack of experience and knowledge, as shown below.

6.7.2 TUTORS’ POINTS OF VIEW ABOUT ASSESSMENT

From the analysis of tutors’ interviews, ten out of the 12 tutors tended to control assessment because they considered it to be part of their responsibility and also they had the ability to conduct it themselves. In this response, T 9 said that *“I preferred to control the assessment by myself because students could not correct each other’s homework or essay due to their lack of knowledge”*. They also reported that students’ ability did not enable them to assess their own or each other’s written work. For example, T12 stated that *“I think the students did not have the ability to make some sort of assessment because they were not trained to have knowledge of making judgment”*. Ten out of the 12 tutors also

indicated that they preferred to identify students' mistakes in written work more than students. T4 agreed that *"I think students could not assess each other's work because they liked their tutors to assess their work and also they trusted their tutors in terms of experience and ability to do that"*. Furthermore, T7 stated that *"my opinion was that students could not do the assessment or give grades. It was tutors' responsibility and students did not trust each other to do a good correction"*. Tutors viewed assessment as a separate part of teaching and thought that its role was just to measure students' work with grades. However, two tutors out of the 12 held view that it was important to involve students in assessment. They reported that students could make judgements which led them to discuss their comments and be independent learners. This might be reflected in their role in the classroom and they became more active, involved and independent learners. It could be seen from the above analysis that a large number of tutors' points of view affected their choice of using several methods of assessment and also reflected the role of students in the learning and teaching process.

6.7.3 CLASS SIZE

The data analysis revealed that ten tutors out of the 12 reported that class size was a factor that limited their use of a variety of assessment methods. For example, it was difficult for them to use continuous, peer and self-assessment with a large number of students throughout the year. T5 pointed out that, *"well, I believed it was the class size because in my college I had a big number of students (40+) which was difficult to use different methods of assessment as classroom work or self-assessment"*. The data analysis also revealed that they tended to use tests with large numbers of students in a class while continuous

assessment, self-and peer assessment were used in smaller classes (<15). In addition, the analysis indicated that it was difficult to provide correction with grades for a large number of students in the specific time. T3 agreed that *“especially here in my college, I had a large number of students and it was difficult for me to correct all students’ work. I just focused on the mid and final exams which were suitable for big classes”*. Further results showed that large class size could affect the amount and type of feedback given. For instance, it was difficult to provide constructive written feedback to huge numbers of students after every assessment. T4 expressed that *“it was difficult to give detailed feedback to big number of students for all their written work”*. They reported that big classes could be time-consuming and involved more teaching effort because every written task needed a great deal of time and effort to be assessed.

Two out of the 12 tutors said that large classes were appropriate in some situations. They reported that their experience enabled them to deal with this factor. For example, a big class might be divided into groups or pairs, which helped them to perform peer assessment. As mentioned above, class size played an important role in limiting tutors’ choice of assessment methods. It also had a negative effect on providing effective assessment with grades and feedback. Conducting assessment with large number of students requires a great deal of time.

6.7.4 MOTIVATION

Motivation could be a factor that had a possible influence on the use of several methods of assessment of written work. The interview data showed that eight out of the 12 tutors had not motivated their students to be involved in

assessment. For instance, their students had a lack of motivation to conduct self-and peer assessment. T10 confirmed that *“here in Libya, students were not motivated to assess their or each other’s written work because I think the students did not believe that their involvement in assessment was likely to improve their performance in writing”*. The eight tutors did not motivate students to discuss their work and from the tutor or peer feedback. It was stressed by T8 that *“I did not encourage my students to discuss their work together in the classroom and they did not share and speak to each other about feedback”*. Moreover, T 7 stated that *“I really did not motivate my students to review each other’s work and I did not think they could do it because their ability did not enable them to”*. They reported that a deficiency of motivation could lead students to become passive about the use of assessment in their learning. On the other hand, four out of 12 tutors stated that they motivated their students to be involved in assessment. They said that students with high levels of motivation could certainly engage with other students in terms of peer assessment and discussion. It was clear that this could affect EFL tutors in employing a variety of assessment methods because students with high levels of motivation could participate in the assessment process.

6.7.5 TIME GIVEN FOR ASSESSMENT

The analysis of the interviews highlighted that the time given for assessment emerged as an important factor among seven out of the 12 tutors in affecting their choice of assessment methods. For instance, continuous assessment was time-consuming because every draft of students’ written work required feedback, especially in a large class. T9 stated that *“time could be a factor because it was difficult to use assessment many times with feedback and*

students could not discuss their feedback or grades in the classroom". They also indicated that time could influence the quality of students' work when they had a short time. T1 explained that *"of course, it could be the time because I could not correct many students' work on specific or limited time, therefore, I tended to use just tests"*. T5 also mentioned that *"using many types of assessment was time-consuming; thus, I did not prefer to use different ways of assessment and also providing feedback and grades for every student"*. This might be due to the deficiency of having specific text books of writing which might have certain organised time for assessment. Nevertheless, five tutors out of the 12 said that time was not a problem because it could be controlled or organised by them. For example, the time given for final exams is organized by the tutors which is suitable for such assessment. To conclude, time for assessment was considered as a factor that limited tutors' choice of assessment methods in EFL writing skills.

6.7.6 STUDENTS' CULTURE

The students' culture also impacts on the use of different methods of assessment. For example, nine out of the 12 tutors reported that students could not perform peer assessment. T1 agreed that *"there were some factors that affected my choice of assessment methods such as culture because it affected students to correct each other's work because they were relatives or have social relationships"*. The data also revealed that students valued their tutors' assessment more than those of fellow students due to their culture. T7 confirmed that *"I would say that culture was another factor here in Libya sometimes, if I asked them to assess each other's work they did not like to do that because they preferred their tutor do this job"*. Further analysis indicated

that peer feedback was not generally provided because of culture, as T4 stressed *“I think it was clear for my society because my students refused some kinds of assessment especially correcting each other’s writing work and giving peer feedback because of friendship or close friends who were in the same class”*. On the other hand, three tutors out of 12 did not consider culture to be a factor. T5 mentioned that *“according to my teaching experience, I knew that there were some students who refused to do peer assessment thus, I advised them that learning could not be affected by friendship and you needed to support each other to develop their learning”*. As stated, there was evidence that tutors encountered this problem, especially in the use of the process of peer assessment by students. From the above analysis, students’ culture restricted and prevented using variety of assessment methods in EFL writing classes.

6.7.7 TUTORS’ TRAINING IN ASSESSMENT

The analysis of interviews showed that assessment training was a factor which affected tutors in using a variety of assessment methods. All of the tutors reported that their university did not provide them with formal training sessions in using assessment methods. For example, T10 stated that *“in fact, there was no assessment training at my university and I used assessment methods that I was aware of such as tests and assessing students’ work including assignments or essay”*. They also explained that they depended on their previous knowledge or experience in order to conduct assessment (see section 6.7.1). From this, it seems that all of the tutors lacked training in assessment which limited their use of assessment methods.

6.7.8 DEPARTMENTAL POLICY

The present section indicates that the policy of tutors' departments could affect their selection of assessment methods. All 12 writing tutors reported that this policy included rules that required tutors to use tests twice in per year with grading. All tutors followed this policy as T11 who reported that *"I just followed the policy of the department to make mid and final assessment; I did not think that I need to use several methods of assessment"*. Further data analysis revealed that this factor was associated with the teaching materials because there were no specific textbooks that might guide them to use different methods of assessment (see section 6.7.8). For example, T7 stated that, *"I assessed students' written work in mid and final term because of the Libyan university department policy or requirement. I would say that the problem is linked to writing materials because there was no specific textbook that might guide me to use other methods"*. It could be concluded that all of the EFL writing tutors followed the official policy which was only to use tests.

6.8 RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

This research question relates only to students' perceptions of assessment methods; therefore it will be covered in more detail when the students' data are reported and analysed (see section 6.18). The next sections deal with the analysis of data from the interviews in relation to research question four.

6.9 RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

How do students' perceptions relate to tutors' thinking in terms of the process and product of assessment?

In response to this question, themes emerged from the data concerning assessment criteria, the grading of students' work, feedback, the role of assessment in learning and teaching, and university writing materials.

6.10 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

This section introduces an overview from tutors' thinking concerning informing students about assessment criteria as an element of the assessment process.

Three out of the 12 tutors provided criteria for mid and final exams and some assignments. T10 agreed that *"yes, I provided criteria for a full assignment and exams, I would provide structured criteria or marking scheme to the students which helped them to get a full picture about every point in their work"*.

However, they suggested that they did not assign criteria for each writing task.

These three tutors reported that the purpose of giving criteria was to help students to gain higher grades. T1 stated that *"my opinion was that criteria were important with some oral explanations to help students to get high grades and I inform my students to focus on grammar, spelling and vocabulary in their assignments"*. They also reported that criteria could help students to understand the requirements of good work. The assessment criteria were based on the characteristics of the written work and also the distribution of grades. For instance, T8 pointed out that *"I focused on grammar, content, vocabulary, sentences structure and spelling while I was assessing students' work"*.

Meanwhile nine out of the 12 tutors did not provide and explain criteria to students because of their deficiency about the importance of giving it to students. In this respect, T9 believed that *"I did not give assessment criteria because I preferred my students to focus on all elements of writing which helped them to obtain high grades"*. They also reported that they did not ask

their students to discuss criteria because they perceived them as part of the tutors' responsibility. The above analysis shows that assessment criteria were not provided by a majority of EFL writing tutors. This indicates that these tutors lacked training or knowledge about the use of assessment criteria.

6.11 GRADING STUDENTS' WORK

This section describes the tutors' thinking about grades as a product of the assessment process, and also to represent academic achievements in written work. The analysis of data revealed that all of the tutors provided grades to students in exams. All 12 tutors reported that grades were used to classify the students' level of performance in writing. They also explained that grades were given after the submission draft of assignments, reports and essays which would be added to the exam grades. On the other hand, two of them did not provide grades for each piece of written work, such as T10 who explained that *"classroom work was assessed through comments with no marks and I did not give any marks for homework or classroom activities, only exams"*. Further analysis suggested that two out of the 12 tutors indicated that providing only grades was not effective for the further development of students' learning. They explained that grades with feedback might be more beneficial. These two tutors reported that their students might focus only on setting high grades in their assessment rather than feedback. The same two tutors stated that low grades might have a negative impact on students' learning; for example, T2 said that *"the negative side of assessment was when tutors gave low grades to their students which affected negatively on their desire to learn, so I tried to give extra grades to motivate them to make more effort"*. All of the respondents agreed that they did not ask their students to discuss grades among themselves

because they thought it might have a negative effect on them and they might not accept it because of social factors. In summary, grades were provided for different assessment events and activities and students focused more on getting higher grades than feedback or comments.

6.12 TUTOR FEEDBACK

Several types of tutors' feedback were found, which are written, integrated written, and oral feedback and peer feedback. Tutors provided their thinking about each type of feedback on students' work.

6.12.1 WRITTEN FEEDBACK

From the interview data, all tutors gave written feedback on their students' work including mid exams, assignments and essays. However, none of them gave feedback for the final exam because students did not attend any more classes. Eight out of the 12 tutors explained that feedback after exams was not useful because it arrived late and there was no chance to use it to improve students' work. All tutors reported that their feedback was an important part in the assessment process, as T4 stated *"I believed the most important part of assessment was feedback because students might get benefit from it when they corrected their written mistakes, so their level of writing could be improved and not to repeat or make the same mistakes again in their next work"*. However, all tutors believed that continuous feedback was much better in developing students' written work because they received feedback on every piece of work. They stated that their feedback helped students to develop EFL writing skills by providing suggestions and comments which could improve the quality of their work. They explained that written feedback was beneficial in developing students' learning as T8 said that:

“Generally, oral feedback was avoided because I think it was not accepted by some students, I like to give written feedback for each work because I could have space where I write some comments on their problems of grammar, structure, vocabulary and content, this would improve their writing”.

Further analysis indicated that two out of the 12 tutors provided positive written feedback but not complex because it could motivate students to use it to improve their work. They also reported that giving feedback on the strengths in their work could motivate students to make more effort in their learning. T9 said that *“I gave my students positive written feedback on their assignments or any written work in order to encourage them to get the benefit of it”*. On the other hand, ten tutors out of the 12 focused on weak points rather than strengths in their students’ written work when giving feedback. They stated that focusing on the weak points in students’ work could improve their writing performance. They also said that students preferred to receive feedback on their difficulties rather than good points in the work.

All 12 tutors did not ask students to discuss their feedback amongst themselves because students perceived it to be private. From this it seems that all of the tutors provided written feedback because it had a useful role in developing the students’ quality of work.

6.12.2 INTEGRATED WRITTEN AND ORAL FEEDBACK

General integrated feedback on students’ work was mentioned by three out of 12 tutors. They believed that written and oral feedback was important because they complement each other by offering an opportunity to explain written

feedback that might not be clear to students. T3 said that *“I think sometimes my students could not understand my comments because of the language use; therefore, I used oral feedback to close this gap”*. T4 added that *“in fact, feedback that I gave was focusing on their lack of learning and I provided both oral and written feedback, oral feedback I did it as a whole class to explain it to students about their mistakes and how they corrected them through my comments”*.

Nine out of the 12 tutors did not give oral feedback because their students preferred to receive it in written form that could be used at any time. They also stated that their students did not like to identify each other's mistakes because of their feelings and emotions. T6 stated that *“I gave written feedback all the time because my students did not prefer to receive oral feedback in front of all students in the classroom, they prefer to get it as private”*. Both written and oral feedback were not provided by all tutors; however, both had a potential impact on developing students' work because they complement each other.

6.12.3 PEER FEEDBACK

Peer feedback was cited as an additional source of feedback on students' work. From the analysis, three tutors out of the 12 asked students to provide feedback to classmates about their work. For example, T1 said that *“I sometimes asked my students to give feedback on each other's work and then discuss it together in order to improve their quality of writing”*. The tutors stated that peer feedback was a way in which students could give comments and suggestions on each other's work. They also explained that students could focus on difficulties in written work such as spelling, vocabulary and grammar to give feedback. The

three tutors emphasised that peer feedback might create a cooperative and interactive environment which was useful for their students' learning. However, nine out of the 12 tutors did not ask their students to give feedback on their peers' work. They reported that students lacked the knowledge, encouragement, skills and training to provide good feedback. T5 explained that *"it was difficult for students to provide effective feedback that focused on each written mistake because students could only find a few mistakes in their classmates' assignment or homework"*. Finally, it appears that the students lacked the skills and training to give feedback on each other's work.

6.13 THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

This section focuses on tutors' thinking concerning the role of assessment in learning and teaching. All of the tutors reported that assessment could have a vital function in improving learning and teaching. Regarding students' learning, the tutors reported that assessment helped them to identify their students' problems in learning. T5 explained that *"by assessment I might find more about a students' ability in writing and I think assessment was like a mirror reflecting the knowledge that students' learned"*. The tutors reported that assessment created cooperative and interactive learning. T2 stated that *"my experience was that assessment made the connection between students and tutors; it was a kind of interaction that improved learning"*.

Assessment was thought to have a crucial role in teaching EFL writing, and all of the tutors reported that assessment could help them to change or develop their teaching methods and materials by highlighting the deficiency in any particular part of the curriculum considering the students' level of study. T3

stated that *“I think assessment helped me to modify my teaching plan and develop the writing materials to meet students’ learning needs and goals”*.

Even though assessment had a potential influence on teaching and learning writing, ten out of the 12 tutors explained that it required more attention from tutors and HE in general in the Libyan context. T12 explained that *“my experience about assessment in Libya was that assessment was really unfair, because of not giving students complete feedback and encouraging them to use other methods of assessment; they gave just scores that made them look for pass or fail”*.

To sum up, the analysis provides evidence that all methods of assessment could have a significant role in improving students’ written work. Assessment could also help tutors to update, develop and change the teaching curriculum in order to meet the students’ learning needs.

6.14 TEACHING MATERIALS

This section concerns tutors’ thinking about teaching materials for EFL writing used in the English language to fourth year university students. The analysis showed that all 12 tutors followed the syllabus provided by the English language department. They also stated that tutors had the choice to select and design the curriculum based on the syllabus. For example, T12 confirmed that *“I did not have specific textbooks, I collected my materials from different books based on the syllabus that as provided by the department”*. It was clear that there were no specific textbooks used in Libya HE system, which might guide tutors to use several methods of assessment.

6.15 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM TUTORS' INTERVIEWS

The previous sections have presented findings from the analysis data of interviews with 12 EFL writing university tutors. Generally, the results indicated that exams were the main method of assessment used in EFL writing classes along with continuous assessment, whereas there was a lack of self-and peer assessment by students. This was due to various factors that affected the tutors' choice of assessment methods (see section 6.7). A correlation was found between these factors. For example, tutors' lack of experience of assessment methods was linked to lack of time, class size, training in assessment and departmental policy. The lack of experience of assessment is the main factor which is then affected by other factors such as class size to limit assessment options. For tutors with more knowledge and experience factors such as class size are not a barrier to multiple assessment methods. This emphasised that tutors could consider all those factors before applying any method of assessment.

Moreover, the results revealed that most of the tutors did not inform students about the criteria used for each writing assessment, while three tutors out of 12 focused on certain aspects of their students' work in order to make judgements and provide grades. Additionally, most of the tutors did not ask their students to discuss assessment criteria.

It was highlighted that grades were provided mainly for exams and for assignments, essays and some activities. Students attached greater value to gaining higher grades than to feedback or comments. In addition, the tutors felt that high grades were valued because they might motivate students to make more effort in their next assessment. Students also were not informed by their

tutors to discuss grades. Written feedback was given more often by tutors than oral feedback because it had a useful impact in developing students' EFL writing skills. However, three out of the 12 tutors used a combination of written and oral feedback because the two forms complemented and supported each other. Peer feedback was not extensively employed by students due to factors such as a lack of motivation and encouragement. Additionally, there was a lack of students' encouragement to discuss feedback. Finally, the findings showed that assessment had a useful role in learning and teaching in spite of there being no specific textbooks for tutors to use to teach EFL writing skills at this university in Libya.

The following sections present the findings of analysis data from the interviews with students.

6.16 ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' INTERVIEW DATA

The following sections present an analysis of the qualitative data collected from interviews with a total of six students in six English language departments in one university. The figure below shows the framework concerning the students' perceptions and practice of assessment, which emerged from the data. This figure also shows the developing codes into themes and sub-themes which will be discussed together in chapter (7) with reference to the literature.

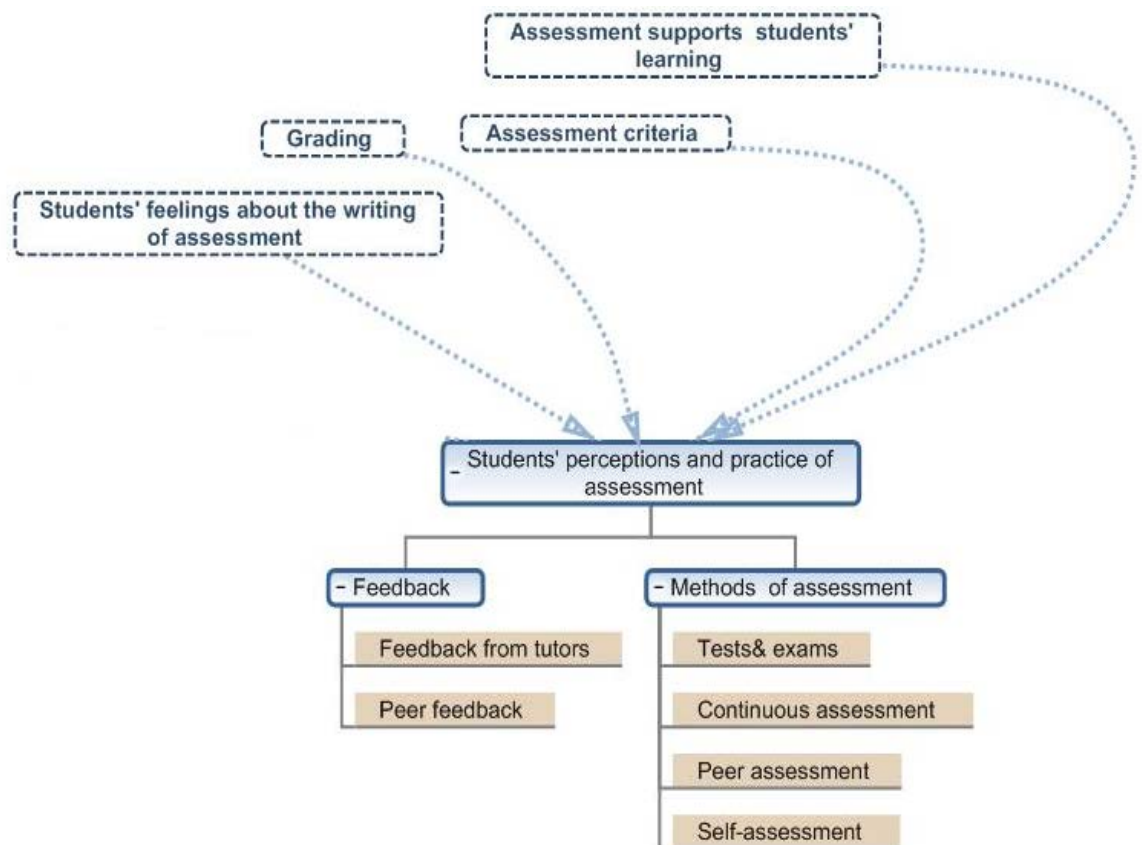


Figure10: The framework which emerged from the data.

It is important to look at the framework which emerged from the data in relation to the research questions. The process of analysis is by presenting the findings sequentially, according to the four research questions. To simplify the presentation of findings tables are used followed by critical analysis. Quotations from interviews with participants support the analysis. Codes are used instead of names to maintain participants' anonymity, for example, S1 refers to the student who was interviewed from department number one. As a final point, the summary of results is presented under each research question.

6.17 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first two research questions are related primarily to tutors and were therefore covered in more detail when the tutors' data were reported and

analysed (see section 6.2). However, the research questions three and four were related to students which are presented in the next sections.

6.18 RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

How do students perceive assessment methods used by tutors in terms of the process and product?

The central focus of this research question was to explore students' perceptions about the process and product of the assessment methods used. In relation to the above research question, students' reactions were sought for the assessment methods used, feelings on how written work and assessment supports their learning. These issues are analysed in detail below.

6.19 STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

The students had various perceptions about the methods of assessment used in EFL writing, concerning the question of: exams and tests, continuous assessment, self-and peer assessment.

6.19.1 EXAMS AND TESTS

This section describes the students' perceptions of exams as the main method of assessment. All six students viewed tests as the regular, traditional and official method. The students valued exams because they provided grades according to which their learning level was determined whether they passed or failed the course. S1 agreed that *"tutors provided grades after mid and final assessment which represented my level of attainment in writing"*.

The students viewed exams as an ineffective method in improving their writing performance, because *"this method was not effective since it occurred twice in a year which there was no final exam feedback to improve my learning between tests"* (S1). Finally, they stated that exams were under control of their tutors

which limited the opportunities to work in groups or conduct peer and self-assessment.

6.19.2 CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

From the analysis, all of the students stated that their tutors used continuous assessment; however, none of them recognise this as a method of formative assessment. All students viewed this method of assessment as a useful method which had several advantages. For example, tutors assessed drafts of their written work such as in assignments, homework, and essays during learning which offered them an opportunity to improve the quality of their work and to get higher grades. S3 also agreed that:

“I think my tutors used a good assessment because they assessed every piece of my written work such as homework or assignment. This was useful because it helped me to know my writing mistake and I corrected them using the tutors’ feedback and next time I will not make the same mistakes”.

From this students valued the continuous assessment method because it could develop their level of writing.

6.19.3 PEER ASSESSMENT

The data show that two out of the six students viewed the peer assessment positively due to it being useful and having an effective role in their learning of English writing. They stated that peer assessment is used inside and outside the classroom and their judgments focused on certain aspects of writing, such as grammar, vocabulary and spelling. S3 explained that *“when I reviewed or assessed my classmates’ work I made comments on her/his work that might be used to improve it. Peer assessment helped me to explore and I learned many new points and ideas regarding writing skills”*. The students explained that peer assessment could help them by identifying their learning difficulties in EFL

writing. However, four out of the six students did not perform peer assessment because their tutors did not value this method. In addition, they stated that their tutors did not motivate them to conduct peer assessment. Moreover, these four students reported that relationships or friendship with peers prevented them from assessing each other's work and also here was a lack of trust among students about providing good assessments. It could be concluded from this analysis that peer assessment was not widely used by students in learning EFL writing skills.

6.19.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT

According to the analysis of data, two out of the six students used self-assessment in learning EFL writing. They approved of this method because it had an effective impact on their quality of work when they made judgments on their own assignments, essays and homework. S2 reported that *"yes, I used self-assessment from time to time because I found it a useful way to review my work, make judgments in relation to the criteria and find written mistakes about grammar, vocabulary and spelling"*. Additionally, they reported that self-assessment helped them to identify their difficulties or learning needs in writing before their work was assessed by tutors. On the other hand, four out of the six students did not have experience of self-assessment in their EFL writing because they believed that it required more knowledge or experience. They also stated that they lacked training in the use of self-assessment and also that they were not encouraged or motivated by their tutors to use it. It seems that self-assessment was not generally used by EFL students.

6.20 RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

How do students' perceptions relate to tutors' thinking in terms of the process and product of assessment?

The following sections describe the students' perceptions including assessment criteria, feedback and grades.

6.21 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

From the analysis of data, two out of the six students valued the use of assessment criteria in their writing assessment. They received assessment criteria, which allowed them to obtain higher grades and to pay more attention to specific aspects of the writing task. This was confirmed by S5 *"in writing classes, tutors provided me with criteria before the event and they explained that some points need to be focused on as grammar, ideas, spelling and writing style and vocabulary"*. S6 also agreed that *"tutors provided me with assessment criteria but not all the time. They told me how certain elements of my work will be assessed and graded and they also informed me the most important aspects to focus in my work"*. Even though they reported that they received the assessment criteria; however, they were not provided for every assessment.

Four out of the six students indicated that they did not receive assessment criteria from their tutors. S3 pointed out that *"my tutors did not provide any assessment criteria for written assessment"*. The analysis showed that all of them agreed that there was deficiency of discussing assessment criteria due to lack of motivation. For instance, S4 stated that *"my tutors did not ask me to discuss assessment criteria with my fellow students and I just depended on what I had focused in my previous exam"*. From the above analysis, two students received information about assessment criteria which helped them to

achieve learning goals, while four students agreed that they did not receive assessment criteria.

6.22 FEEDBACK FROM TUTORS

From the analysis of interview data, all of the students reported that receiving feedback from tutors after conducting assessment could be useful in reducing the number of mistakes in writing. They agreed that written feedback was more effective when their tutors provided it directly after making a judgement because they could refer to it at any time and update their work. S5 stressed that *“feedback supported me to explore written mistakes and I corrected them based on the feedback which helped me not to make the same mistakes next time and also I learned from my own mistakes”*. All students expressed that continuous feedback was useful in their learning because they received multiple feedback information on their drafts of work, which helped them to improve the quality of their work. Three out of the six students reported that their tutors’ written feedback was not effective all the time because they provided only a few comments and not detailed feedback. They also explained that the feedback focused only on the weak points in their written work and not strong points.

Only one of the six students valued both written and oral feedback because it could be more effective than feedback alone. This student explained that oral feedback could clarify any unclear points in the written feedback. However, five of the six students did not value both written and oral feedback because they did not like to receive oral feedback in front of the class due to their culture. S1 explained that *“I preferred to receive written feedback not oral”*.

Students also felt that feedback from tutors was not discussed in the classroom. S5 explained that *“in fact, tutors gave me feedback on my work to correct the mistakes and returned the work back to them”*. To conclude three out of six students valued their tutors’ written feedback because it had a useful impact on their EFL writing, while others stated that their tutors’ feedback was not always effective. One of students preferred to receive both written and oral feedback. The students were not fully positive about tutors’ feedback because it was not detailed or constructive enough and also often focused only on weak points in their work.

6.23 PEER FEEDBACK

This section focuses on students’ perceptions about peer feedback in writing tasks. Two out of the six students indicated that peer feedback was useful during peer assessment because it was considered to be an additional source of information. These two students explained that they had benefited from comments from classmates about their work. They also reported that peer feedback might help them to identify weaknesses in their EFL writing. In this respect, S6 said that *“yes when I received feedback from my classmate it helped me to know my mistakes in which area that I had more mistakes and then I used his/her comments to improve my writing work to become better”*.

On the other hand, four out of the six students stated that peer feedback was not provided by their classmates due to lack of knowledge and encouragement. They believed that peer feedback required knowledge, skills and training in order to be effective. For instance, S1 stated that *“I did not think that I would like to obtain peer feedback because my fellow students could provide a few comments on whole assignment, which would not be useful”*. They did not

receive peer feedback because of their culture and the lack of trust among classmates (see section 6.12.3). All students valued feedback from their tutors rather than classmates. S3 said that *“I did not like to have feedback from my classmate because he/she just wrote one or two comments for whole assignment or work but my tutors provided good feedback”*. It could be noted that students did not employ peer feedback in their writing work. The following section considers students’ views of grading as the product of the assessment.

6.24 GRADING

The analysis shows that all of the students thought that grades were an important part in the assessment process by which they could identify their level of learning. They explained that obtaining high grades was their priority, which led them to pay more attention to exam grades which were perceived as an indication of passing or failing. For example, S2 stated that *“when I had assessment, I would like to look at my grades not feedback because it determined whether I passed or failed”*. In addition, the students valued the grades that were provided after the submission of their final drafts of assignments, essays or homework because they would be added to their total score.

Further analysis indicates that two out of the six students viewed low or bad grades as a motivating component in their learning because those grades could lead them to make more effort in their next assessment. S6 explained that *“I paid more attention to marks because I wanted to get high marks for each subject if I had low marks in my assessment then I made more effort to have a better mark next time”*. (see 6.7.6). Good grades might not lead them to make more effort in their following assessment because they had feelings of

satisfaction. Furthermore, all of the students reported that the grades were given by tutors not discussed among them because they perceived them as private and there was no need to be discussed with peers. They stated that they did not like to show their low grades to each other. They also explained that their tutors did not encourage them to discuss grades. S5 agreed that *“I did not tend to discuss my grades with fellow students because I did not like them to see my grades, it might be low or bad”*.

In conclusion, the findings show that grades were perceived as the main product of assessment by all students. They valued the grading of their written work because it helped them to identify their EFL writing performance. The participants focused more on grades rather than feedback and also grades could motivate or demotivate students in their learning. The students' feelings about assessment are analysed in the following section.

6.25 STUDENTS' FEELINGS ABOUT THE WRITING OF ASSESSMENT

The central aim of this section is to present students' opinions of their feelings towards assessment of writing. All students reported that they were nervous or stressed when exams were taken. S6 pointed out that *“I think I felt a little nervous and worried when I had assessment because I knew that I was going to do a couple of mistakes”*. They also indicated that low grades had a negative effect on their feelings especially for exams because grades were used for selection and transfer from one level to another. Furthermore, all of the students explained that the short time allowed for them to answer questions had a negative effect. S2 commented that *“I had the feeling of being nervous in the mid and final exams because the time was too limited or short which could*

affect my thinking while I was doing the assessment. I started thinking and focusing about the time rather than the questions of the exam”.

Further analysis indicated that knowledge of assessment criteria might be related to the students' feelings. Four out of the six students said that their feelings of anxiety might be reduced if their tutors provided or explained assessment criteria before the exam. From this it could be stated that assessment had a potential impact on students' feelings, especially in the case of exams. However, their anxiety could be reduced if they were informed about the assessment criteria to be used.

6.26 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM STUDENTS' INTERVIEWS

The analysis has produced significant results that can be used to answer the research questions. For instance, the majority of students were not positive about the test or exam that their tutors used for EFL writing work. They perceived the current methods of assessment as traditional methods which had little effect on their EFL writing. Moreover, the students valued continuous assessment because it was effective in developing the quality of their work. They also suggested that there was a need for the use of other methods of assessment that might enhance their learning. In addition, the students agreed that they lacked involvement in self- and peer assessment, discussion groups, discussion feedback, criteria, standards, and grading. Moreover, the findings indicate that assessment had a possible influence on students' feelings especially in exams; however, knowing the assessment criteria could reduce their anxiety about assessment. Four out of the six students agreed that they were not informed about assessment criteria.

Furthermore, the students valued their tutors' written feedback because it had a useful impact on their EFL writing skills, but three of them added that tutors' feedback was often not effective in developing their learning because it was not detailed or constructive enough and also focused only on weak points in their work. All students agreed that feedback from tutors was more effective than that from peers. The students valued receiving grades for their written work because it helped them to identify the standards of their EFL writing performance. Grades could also increase or decrease the level of motivation. For instance, low grades could motivate students to make more effort in their next assessment. Generally, the students viewed assessment as a powerful tool that helped them to identify their weaknesses and strengths in EFL writing which led to improve written work.

6.27 KEY POINTS OF COMBINED QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This section gives a brief summary comparing the findings from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The combination of methods has provided statistical findings and holistic in-depth narrative results that can be used to answer the research questions. It could be argued that the central aim of the qualitative analysis was to understand in-depth the finding from the quantitative data. "Interviews which use prompts extremely similar to questionnaire items would achieve more consistent results" (Harris and Brown, 2010:3). "Both questionnaire and interview data sets should be analysed separately using methods suitable to each; then results can be compared to see if any common messages resonate from both sets of data" (Harris and Brown, 2010:11). In this study, the analysis of questionnaire and interview data could produce similar

results because the data came from the same participants. For example, the analysis of quantitative data reveals that only a limited number of assessment methods were used to make judgments of students' written work. This result was in accordance with qualitative findings, which indicate that exams and continuous assessment were used as the main methods. The results of the qualitative analysis added that exams had little effect on the quality of learning and teaching. For example, eight tutors explained that this method led their students to focus more on accountability and grades rather than developing their writing performance. Another important finding was that most tutors did not explain the assessment criteria they used which affected the students' ability to gain higher grades and produce better work. Finally, the insights obtained from blending qualitative and quantitative methods have provided a fuller understanding of the use of assessment methods in the Libyan context concerning EFL writing at university level.

6.28 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has provided an overview of the analysis of qualitative data. This generated important findings that could add interesting insights to the study and supported the findings from the analysis of quantitative data.

Generally, the results indicated that exams were the main method of assessment used in EFL writing classes along with continuous assessment, whereas there was a lack of self-and peer assessment by students. Importantly, the results showed that the majority of tutors and students were not positive about the methods of assessment used for EFL writing work. Tutors and students perceived the current methods of assessment as traditional methods which had little effect on teaching and learning EFL writing. This was due to

various factors that affected the tutors' choice of assessment methods (see section 6.10.1). A correlation was found between these factors for example, class size and lack of tutors' training limit the choice of assessment method. The results also suggested that there was a need for the use of other methods of assessment that might enhance learners' learning such as peer and self-assessment.

Significantly, the results (section 6.11.1.1) revealed that most of the tutors did not inform students about assessment criteria or discuss them in EFL writing classes. This might be due to lack of knowledge about the importance of providing and involving students in criteria. It was highlighted that grades were provided mainly for exams and for assignments, essays and some activities. Students attached greater value to gaining higher grades than to feedback because it helped them to identify the level of their EFL writing performance. Grades could also increase or decrease the level of motivation; for instance, low grades could motivate students to make more effort in their next assessment. In addition, noteworthy results showed that students were not instructed by their tutors to discuss grades, which then limited the students' role in assessment.

Furthermore, written feedback was given more often by tutors than oral feedback because it helped in developing students' EFL writing skills. However, a combination of written and oral feedback was used by three tutors because the two forms complemented and supported each other. Students valued their tutors' written feedback because it helped them in learning EFL writing skills, but some of them added that tutors' feedback was often not effective in developing their learning because it was not detailed or constructive enough and also focused only on weak points in their work. This may be related to large

classes and the time allocated for each student to receive detailed feedback or lack of tutor training which led tutors to focus on problems rather than strengths. All interviewed students agreed that feedback from tutors was more effective than that from peers. This might be due to students' perceptions that their tutors had experience in teaching, which enabled them to provide good quality of written feedback. Significantly, peer feedback was not widely used and discussed by students because of their culture issues. For example, Libyan students did not tend to show their mistakes to each other because of potential social embarrassment (see section 3.31.6). The findings indicated that assessment had a possible negative influence on students' feelings especially in exams as students were not always clear on what was expected of them; however, if tutors shared assessment criteria could reduce their anxiety about assessment. Assessment was viewed as a powerful tool that helped learners to identify their weaknesses and strengths in learning EFL writing, which led to improved written work. The findings from all tutors and students showed that assessment had a useful role in teaching in spite of there being no specific textbooks for tutors to use to teach EFL writing skills at this university in Libya. To conclude it could be said that there is considerable room, and desire, for improvements in student participation in the area of assessment. The opportunity to use different methods of assessment is regarded by both students and tutors as an area of development, which would improve student learning and lessen the workload of tutors. The findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis are discussed in more detail in the following chapter, and a process of triangulation is used to confirm and validate the findings and answer the research questions.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the findings obtained from the analysis chapters 5 and 6. The central purpose of this chapter is to focus on answering the research questions based on the results which have emerged from a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. The results are discussed in line with those existing in the literature in relation to the framework and relevant themes emerged from the data. Assessment is underpinned by constructivist philosophy as it is reliant on interaction between tutor and student, and among students themselves. In constructivism, students could play a greater role in their learning by exchanging feedback to each other and with tutors. This discussion is followed by a review of the pedagogical implications of the main findings, the limitations of the current research and recommendations for further study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the assessment methods used and factors affecting their use by Libyan EFL tutors in assessing students' writing and how such assessment methods are perceived by students in relation to their tutors' thinking. To address the research questions and achieve the aims of the study, a framework of two stages using quantitative and qualitative methods was designed. The quantitative technique was employed to gather data from 12 tutors and 207 students, whereas a qualitative method was used to collect data from semi-structured interviews with 12 tutors and six students. SPSS software was used to analyse the quantitative data and grounded theory (GT) was employed to analyse the qualitative data.

The study sought to answer the following four research questions:

- 1) What assessment methods do EFL Libyan tutors use to assess university students' writing skills?
- 2) What are the factors that affect tutors' choice of assessment methods?
- 3) How do students perceive the assessment methods used by tutors in terms of the process and the product?
- 4) How do students' perceptions relate to the tutors' thinking in terms of the process and the product of assessment?

7.2 THE PROCEDURE OF DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Each section concentrates on a different aspect of assessment as highlighted in the study. The discussion starts by introducing the methods of assessment used in relation to research questions one and two, followed by the assessment criteria, grading, feedback from tutors and students and the support assessment offers to teaching and learning. For each subject, the discussion starts with the most important findings followed by lesser findings. Findings concerning the tutors are discussed firstly, followed by those for the students. In each section the findings from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data are discussed together unless there are differences between them, and examples may be taken from both. Quotations from participants are written in italics with quotation marks to support the discussion. Anonymised labels are used to maintain the participants' confidentiality, where "T" refers to a tutor while "S" refers to a student.

It is also important to reiterate the definitions of assessment and other relevant terms as used in this study. Assessment has been defined in many ways but the working definition in this study is the collecting of evidence and information about people's work in order to make judgements based on goals, criteria and standards. The distinction between summative and formative assessment began with Scriven (1967) and currently this distinction is still controversial and issues exist around the processes of assessment and functions in relation to

these. This study looks at these methods of assessment as a parallel process, which carry out different functions (see section 3.22). In the Libyan setting, the main form of summative assessment used is test or exam, while formative assessment is viewed as continuous assessment. In other words, Libyan tutors and students used the term test or exam, while in literature they are known as summative assessments. In addition, continuous assessment is used to refer to make judgment on learners' work including assignments and essays, whereas in the literature it is known as formative assessment. However, in this chapter the terms used in the literature can be used to support the discussion because they have similar concepts.

7.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ONE AND TWO

- 1) *What assessment methods do EFL Libyan tutors use to assess university students' writing skills?*
- 2) *What are the factors that affect tutors' choice of assessment methods?*

For the purposes of this section, research questions one and two, which relate mainly to tutors, the data from students, where it is relevant, will be discussed together. In each section the findings from tutors and students of quantitative and qualitative data are merged. The discussion will be broken down by section in order to clearly state the arguments and provide the various processes of assessment in relation to the above research questions. In the following order, sections on tests, continuous, self-assessment and peer assessment are discussed as themes emerged from the findings as the choice of assessment ultimately lies with the tutor and therefore falls under research question two.

7.4 TESTS AND EXAMS

This section discusses the findings from the analysis of quantitative(see sections 5.8,5.27,5.7,5.9,5.10) and qualitative data (see sections 6.7,6.19.1,6.19,6.11) concerning tests or exams.

The findings of this study show that all tutors and students considered a “test” as the traditional and official method of summative assessment, which is used twice a year in the form of mid-term and final exam (see section 6.7.2). This agrees with the literature, which stated that a “test” is seen as a formal assessment conducted at the end of a course or year or at particular points in time to assess learning achievements (Boud, 1995; Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Light et al, 2009; Sewell et al, 2010; Crooks, 2011). The data show the reason for using and focusing on tests by these tutors is related to the requirements of Libyan university policy, because exam results are often recorded as grades that are used for providing certification. Exams are organised by tutors of each English language department to be undertaken on specific days.

Exams appear to simply depend on students’ memory to answer the exam questions and obtain higher grades. Light et al (2009:208) stated that:

“Students perceive summative assessment as a traditional method with several limitations with too much emphasis on memory too much stress on factual knowledge; too great an element of luck; too little opportunity for course feedback”.

Wichadee and Nopakun (2012) also argued that traditional methods of assessment have not proved successful and may not be suitable for the teaching of writing because students just look at the scores. The findings from

this study would highlight alternative methods of assessment such as peer and self-assessment and therefore Libyan tutors could be aware of using a range of assessment methods. Crooks (2011) added that students' experience of assessment influences their future learning. This study could help tutors to improve students' learning by giving them the opportunity to be more involved in the process of assessment and it could potentially influence a policy change by the Libyan education system regarding examinations.

The interview with these tutors show that in large classes of students (40-60), the exam event does not offer an opportunity for cooperative learning and interaction among students because it focuses on individual ability and is controlled by the examination tutors. However, the attitude of tutors could be changed with better training and self-awareness about the size of the class which could be reduced to offer cooperative learning. Horning (2007) stated that to raise the students' level of engagement in learning writing and small classes are essential. It was stressed by Suwaed (2011) that Libyan universities do not deliver pre-service or in-service training for university tutors, and it remains the case that colleges of education often fail to include assessment training in their programmes (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006). Studies confirmed the need for assessment training in order to enhance tutors' assessment skills (Zhang and Burry-Stock, 2003; Lim, 2007; Oscarson, 2009).

The focus on testing is also associated with the approaches to teaching used by these tutors because exams are suitable for use with grammar translation method which focuses on learners being seen as passive and is prevalent in Libyan education. For example, in grammar translation approach, tutors teach the students to understand the language rather than to use it (see section 2.14).

It is therefore, easy to see why grammar translation is key method in an education system where passing the exam is more important than using the language. “Traditional approaches to instruction and assessment involve teaching some given material, and then at the end of teaching identifying who has and has not learned it” (Leahy et al., 2005:19). This could be changed in the long term by teaching tutors different teaching approaches and in the short term by tutors adopting their current teaching approaches to be more communicative. Suwaed (2011) explained that tutors still apply the principles of the grammar translation method rather than the communicative approach. The communicative language approach helps students to use the language through interaction and communication which supports the use of formative assessment, self and peer assessment rather than just pass exams. Jones(2010: 183) confirmed that “peer assessment is not just about assessing a fellow pupil’s work but about engaging in a dialogue about learning”.

In relation to students, a further finding indicates that exams have an emotional impact on students because they have feelings of stress and nervousness since the function of the exam is to determine their learning level (see section 5.26). For instance, all of the students interviewed stated that they were nervous or stressed when exams were taken. Assessing students’ work is possibly the most sensitive part of teaching because it produces emotional problems for students (Falchikov, 2007; Cooper, 2009-2008; Light et al, 2009). This study suggests that tutors could create an environment that makes students more comfortable and confident. The data also indicate that the time allocated for students to answer questions in exams has negative effects. For example, S2 said that *“I sometimes feel nervous because the time is too limited or short. This*

may affect my thinking while I am doing the assessment and I start thinking and focusing about the time rather than the questions of the exam". According to the participants, the time allowed for assessment is generally based on university policy rather than government policy and therefore tutors could have the opportunity to allocate more time to reduce students' feelings of stress. Cooper (2011:125) argued that "empathy helps teachers to see behind defensive behaviours and understand real feelings". This implies that the university policy concerning the allocated time for exams needs to be improved and tutors need to consider time as a factor that influences students' feelings. Thus, giving more time is important to make learners more relaxed in exams, which may be reflected in their answers.

To sum up, these Libyan tutors consider tests as the main assessment method. This perception may be linked to the issue of accountability in that these tutors seem to be more concerned about assessment from an administrative rather than from an educational point of view, which is not surprising given their lack of training. However, tutor and student participants both suggest that more methods of assessment could be used in EFL writing classes. Shepard (2000) also argued that a number of assessment methods need to be conducted during the teaching and learning process instead of being reserved until the end of instruction. However, in the Libyan context this is particularly difficult because exams are dictated by factors such as Libyan educational policy, the lack of assessment training, the time allocated to assessment and the tutors' own points of view concerning assessment.

7.5 CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

This section focuses on continuous assessment using the literature and the research findings from (sections 5.8,6.19.2). In the literature, formative assessment is generally believed to be one of the most powerful ways to enhance students' learning (Cauley et al, 2010). It is argued that "formative assessment is a process to continuously gather evidence and provide feedback about learning while instruction is under way" (Heritage et al., 2009:24).

The present findings indicate that seven out of the 12 tutors did not recognise the term formative assessment and no students did. Bloxham and Boyd (2007:52) stated that there is "considerable confusion about the meaning of formative assessment, which is a term often used to describe any activity during a module which provides information to students and tutors on progress". Also Black and Wiliam (1998a) stated that a lot of students and tutors do not fully understand the difference between them. It appears that Libyan tutors and students are not aware of several important terms used in the literature probably as result of the lack of formal training in assessment. Thus, more training would be useful to develop their awareness and knowledge of assessment. This research highlights the assessment terms used in the literature and in the Libyan context. Therefore, the findings from this research could be used in staff development programmes, including seminars and training sessions, with support from the university to help tutors to be aware of using a range of assessment terms.

It is found in the present research that continuous assessment is used by all of the EFL writing tutors to give feedback on students' drafts of written work such as assignments, reports, essays and homework and grades for the final

submission (see section 6.5.2). In addition, 72% of students preferred to have assessment during learning because they can update and improve their written work before final submission which means tutors need to assess more frequently to satisfy students desires. However, tutors believe that the increased work would not be possible due to time constraints and large student numbers. This implies that using peer and self-assessment in line with continuous assessment could potentially help students to have their work assessed by several ways during learning. It was confirmed by Cooper (2008) that large groups seem to generate alienation and limited opportunities for formative assessment and learning.

A further finding indicates that seven out of the 12 tutors ask their students to perform their written work mainly in the classes which last two hours per week. In such a situation, continuous assessment is hindered by large class size and time because the tutors find it difficult to assess every student's work and provide feedback (see section 6.7.3,0). It was stressed by T3, that *"especially here in my college, I have a large number of students (40 to 60) it is difficult for the teacher to correct all students' work in the classroom and sometimes I just focus on the mid and final exams"*. This agrees with the findings of Yang et al, (2006) that, in China, class sizes may reach about forty and even over 100 students in universities, which may increase the workload of tutors in assessing and giving feedback to every learner. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) argued that the workload of tutors in higher education is rising every year as student numbers and class sizes become larger. Once a formative assessment method is implemented, class time is used differently, which may mean that more time is needed (Boud and Falchikov, 2006; Harlen, 2007a; Heritage, 2007; Sadler,

2010). This study suggests that assessing students' work needs more time, which means that tutors need to have scheduled marking time or the work needs to be assessed at home rather than in the classroom or both which offers an opportunity to give detailed feedback on every piece of written work.

This study also suggests the importance of more involvement of students in peer and self-assessment because they may be suitable for large classes and limited time. For instance, students could be grouped into pairs or groups to make judgement on each other' work in which a number of students' mistakes can be reduced and therefore tutors will need less time to assess the work again. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) stressed that peer-discussion exposes students to alternative perspectives or and strategies for problems in their learning.

It can be summarised that continuous assessment is useful for students' learning; however, the greatest challenges in using such a method of assessment are time and class size. Currently, in a class of 40 to 60 students who have two hours of writing per week the opportunities for the tutors to give constructive feedback are hugely restricted. This will need a change in how tutors workload is scheduled and introduction of peer and self-assessment so as not to over burden the tutor.

7.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT

The central purpose of this section is to discuss the findings from (sections 5.21, 6.5.4, 6.19.4, 6.19.4) about self-assessment. Self-assessment is considered one of the assessment methods used in EFL writing by a few students in the Libyan context. Taras (2013:38) believed that "students cannot

be at the centre of learning unless they are at the centre of assessment". Self-assessment is "the involvement of students in identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgments about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards" (Boud, 1991:4). In self-assessment, students judge the quality of their own work against well-defined criteria and clear learning goals (Boud, 1995; Looney, 2010). Self-assessment carried out by students themselves is designed so that they measure their own performance and progress (Harris and McCann, 1994: 92).

The statistical findings in this study indicate that 11 out of the 12 tutors had teaching experience at both school and university level, but the use of self-assessment was reported by just a few students (see Table 4), which suggests that tutors do not encourage it. Students who have experience in self-assessment in the Libyan context believed that self-assessment was a useful way for them to check their own work before they gave it to tutors(see section 6.19.4). These students also explained that they could do better work because their work had been assessed many times and they could identify difficulties in their writing. This is in accordance with Liqinghua's (2010) findings that most students appreciate using self-assessment in their own learning. Students need to be able to "appraise their performance accurately for themselves so that they themselves understand what more they need to learn and so that they do not become dependent on their teachers" (Oscarson, 2009:63). From the above perspectives, it seems clear that these students perceive self-assessment as an effective method for assessing their work. Thus, more encouragement in this method could lead learners to improve their writing performance and increase independent learning. In addition, Libyan tutors could provide assessment

criteria to measure the work and guidelines to students to perform self-assessment. Oscarson (2009: 231) stated that a “shared understanding of the implications of different criteria given focus on different task needs to be developed in the classroom, in dialogue with the students”.

The other limitations of employing this method in the Libyan context are related to lack of encouragement by tutors and the fact that more students prefer to have their work assessed by tutors. This is because learners believe that their tutors have more experience in assessment than classmates. Ten out of 12 tutors also believed that their students could not use self-assessment because of their lack of ability, which would cause them to give incorrect grades or good quality of written feedback. This could be changed if tutors could be encouraged to attach more value to self-assessment and were prepared to spend the time coaching students in how to conduct assessment marking. Janssen-van Dielen (1992) stressed the importance of training students, which may have a positive influence on the quality of self-assessment. Students miss out on the value of using self-assessment and then they are likely to feel that only tutors may assess their work (Armitage and Renwick, 2008). Nevertheless, although learning from mistakes has its benefits, there can be problems introducing self-assessment into an unprepared classroom (Light et al., 2009). It appears that tutors need to be aware of the importance of self-assessment in order to help students to perform it in their learning. Students must be taught self-assessment in order to share their learning goals (Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006). This research highlights the importance of using self-assessment in order to reduce the tutors’ sole responsibility for assessment. Taras (2013) stated that self-marking is an active process of judgment.

Thus, the current research suggests that providing students with assessment criteria could help them to assess their work effectively. This implies that Libyan tutors could fully involve students in the process of self-assessment with their guidelines used to make effective judgments. Taras (2005:467) explained this as “the mechanics or steps required effectuating a judgement”.

To summarise, self-assessment can be used to develop the independence of students to be able to judge themselves (Butler and Winne, 1995; Taras, 2001; Stiggins, 2005). Students are found to learn more when they are involved in self-assessment (Mooko, 1996; Taras, 2001; Munoz and Alvarez, 2007; Oscarson, 2009). Self-assessment is not widely used among these Libyan students due to several factors such as tutors’ lack of experience and the educational context in Libya and therefore the students’ lack of training. The implication is that learners need to be trained to be involved in the process of self-assessment including the criteria, giving feedback and self-grading. Trained students could then effectively use self-assessment in their learning and in EFL writing classes.

7.7 PEER ASSESSMENT

This section discusses peer assessment using findings from the quantitative data (see sections 5.12,5.14,5.20) and qualitative data (see sections 6.5.3,6.7,6.19.3,6.19). The results show that only a few students performed peer assessment. This is a way for students to assess each other’s work guided by criteria given by tutors which may or may not including grading. The findings indicate that in written work, students focus on the assessment of grammar, vocabulary and spelling (see Table 10), and Norton (2007) confirmed that the

tutor's role in peer assessment is to provide assessment criteria. S3 explained that *"in my opinion, when I reviewed or assessed my classmates' work I made comments on her/his work that might be used to improve it. Peer assessment helped me to explore and I learned many new points and ideas regarding writing skills"*. McConlogue (2012) believed that learning in peer assessment occurs by reading and making judgements of peers' work, and it can be a crucial element helping students to learn from assessment (Brown and Knight, 1994; Black et al., 2003; Bloxham and Boyd, 2007). Jones (2010:183) in her research found that *"through developing the detachment required to assess a fellow pupil's work, pupils learned to evaluate the quality of their own work better"*.

However, Falchikov (2004) stated that involving students in assessment can raise a number of problems. For instance, the current qualitative findings indicate that performing peer assessment in the EFL writing classroom in Libya can be difficult if the student is not able to provide effective correction and may provide incorrect suggestions. This is due to tutors' lack of encouragement for instance, T8, *"I do not encourage my students to discuss their work together in the classroom. They do not share and speak to each other"*. Therefore, students may become passive recipients of knowledge and do not participate in assessment (Munoz and Alvarez, 2007). In peer assessment, students may find it difficult to be critical when assessing their classmates' essays (Vickerman, 2009). Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless (2006) added that peer assessment is reported as being more time-consuming than traditional assessment. For instance, *"with peer assessment, students are required to spend a considerable amount of time processing, comparing, contrasting and evaluating each other's*

work after submission” (Ballantyne et al., 2002:429). In Libya, the majority of students are not involved in peer assessment because it is still not familiar to EFL university students, especially in a context where tutor centred assessment is favoured. It also appears that Libyan students work individually in that they do not exchange their thoughts and experiences with peers about assessment.

Nevertheless, tutors can be educated to encourage and guide their students to perform peer assessment, which leads them to develop their writing performance because it helps students to identify each other’s writing mistakes before handing their work to tutors. Lee and Coniam (2013) confirmed that students need to be involved in peer assessment in order to develop their critical awareness of what is required of them and to improve their work.

The data show that culture factors in the Libyan setting may influence the use of peer assessment in EFL writing. For example, in the same classroom, students may have relatives from an extended family and close friends and therefore they may not perform the peer assessment effectively. This makes it unlikely that they will feel comfortable and confident in peer assessment. Topping (2009) found that social processes can influence the reliability and validity of peer assessment and therefore such factors require consideration by tutors. Libyan tutors could provide a classroom learning environment that supports peer assessment by dividing students into pairs based on their interest and experience of peer assessment to work together, taking into consideration the cultural issues.

Findings of empirical studies such as Feng’s (2007) indicate that most students dislike peer assessment because of confidence issues, where their peers might be expected to laugh at their mistakes, misunderstand their answers, and might

be unable to make a fair and accurate judgement of their work. Consequently, this study suggests, as one strategy, that close friends or relatives in the same classroom could be distributed into different groups. This may help these students to work together in order to use peer assessment. "The success of peer-assessment depends greatly on how the process is set-up and managed" (Langan et al., 2005:13). Ballantyne et al (2002) confirmed that peer assessment involves students using their knowledge and skills to assess the work of others.

This research highlights the importance of the relationship between students' feelings and the use of peer assessment. Consequently, these Libyan tutors need to consider this relationship when peer assessment is used. For example, Libyan students could be taught about the purpose of conducting peer assessment and how it could improve their learning in order to make them more comfortable. Involving students in every feature of their own assessment can build their confidence and maximize their achievements (Chappuis and Stiggins, 2006).

From this, the literature suggests that there is a general need to integrate more peer assessment into the learning process, for EFL writing skills in particular. These Libyan students are not fully involved in the process of peer assessment and the findings show that there is a barrier to using peer assessment due to lack of skill and cultural influences. Tutors need to bear in mind the factors and the learning context involved because they have an influence on the effectiveness of peer assessment in the classroom and need to encourage its use which the study shows is not current situation. Topping (2005) emphasised that peer assessment can yield metacognitive gains. It also has an impact on

developing students' learning, such as vocabulary, ideas, skills, knowledge, styles of writing, the structure of well-written work and learning from mistakes.

The following sections will be concerned with research questions three and four.

7.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS THREE AND FOUR

3) *How do students perceive the assessment methods used by tutors in terms of the process and the product?*

4) *How do students' perceptions relate to the tutors' thinking in terms of the process and the product of assessment?*

The research questions three and four, which relate mainly to students will be discussed together with data from tutors. In each section the findings from students and tutors from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data are merged. The following themes that emerged from the findings including the assessment criteria, grading, feedback and assessment supporting learning and teaching are discussed in order, in relation to the above research questions.

7.9 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

This section discusses the findings concerning assessment criteria (sections 5.12,5.28,6.10,6.21). Assessment criteria are considered one of a series of steps or actions of the assessment process in this study. Assessment criteria refer to the aspects of tasks that are assessed, and they provide the basis for tutors to make judgments about the work students produce. According to Bloxham and Boyd (2007), assessment criteria are aspects of a task, which the assessor takes into consideration when making judgments. The analysis of data indicates that EFL writing criteria include elements such as grammar, vocabulary, content, sentences structure and spelling (see Table 10). Boud

(1995) also confirmed that assessment criteria describe what needs to be assessed and the standards required of writing work.

In the present study, it was found that only three out of 12 tutors provided assessment criteria to students, but not for all classroom-writing activities (see Table 24). The analysis shows that the students interviewed, who received criteria, value knowledge of assessment criteria because they support their understanding and to gain better grades, achieve better work and learning goals. Orsmond et al (2000) stated that the assessment criteria have a major influence on students' learning. Additionally, the findings reveal that four out of six students who were informed about the criteria believed that explanations about them may reduce their stress about assessment and make them feel more comfortable. For instance, S1 said that *"I had feelings of stress when I had an exam but when my tutor explained the test or assessment criteria to me then I became relaxed and normal"*. Assessment criteria also provide a rubric against which the grade can be compared to note any omission or shortcomings and highlight areas where the criteria were met. The current research highlights that students' feelings are related to assessment criteria and thus Libyan tutors need to provide them before every piece of work in order to reduce students' stress about assessment. Students need tutors who are supportive and offer clear criteria and guidance to those engaging in this process to close the gap between a learner's current status and the desired outcome (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006; Vickerman, 2009; Clark, 2012).

On the other hand, the data show that nine out of the 12 tutors did not give students assessment criteria and 90% of students said that they did not receive information about assessment criteria, which make their work difficult (see

Table 24). This is due to these tutors' lack of knowledge about the importance of explaining assessment criteria to students. These tutors believed that giving criteria was not necessary because the students need to focus on all elements of writing in every piece of work in order to obtain high grades. Consequently, the specific requirements of each assessment are unknown to students and they are in the dark about what they are required to do to pass the assessment. In other words, students have to guess the agenda involved, which leads them to become unfocused in their work. "The classroom writing assignment is dependent on more particular circumstances and instructions and is related to specific task expectations students may not be aware of "(Oscarson, 2009:221). This implies that providing students with assessment criteria is important in order to make them understand and focus on aspects of their work. Sadler (2009) argued that students' deserve to be given an opportunity to understand the basis upon which grades are assigned. This is consistent with Feng's (2007) findings that all participants believed that it is necessary to always receive explained assessment criteria because it helps students to understand how to do the work. Taras (2001: 612) argued that "students agree that it not only helps them to focus on assessment criteria, but also to be aware of assessment procedures and patterns".

A further finding indicates that these learners were not asked to discuss criteria before their work was assessed(see sections 6.10,6.21). This is mainly related to the lack of training for tutors on how important it is to involve the students in assessment criteria. Tutors who participated in this study believed that designing criteria is entirely their responsibility. The Libyan educational environment at university level also influences the discussion of criteria because

it appears that students work individually in that they do not exchange their thoughts and experiences with peers about assessment criteria. Thus, Libyan tutors need to create an environment in the classroom in which students could share, discuss and exchange their beliefs about assessment criteria. Rust (2002) indicated that giving students a clear assessment criterion alone is unlikely to result in better work and more engagement with what is being taught. The literature supports that one strategy is to involve students in developing and generating assessment criteria, which is better to make judgements of their work (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006). It seems that the process of assessment is less effective unless criteria are provided before each piece of written work, which will help students to achieve their learning goals and higher grades through greater understanding of expectations. Libyan tutors need to understand the value of assessment criteria and also need to be aware that discussions of assessment criteria among students or with their tutors are useful for students' learning.

7.10 GRADING

This section concerns the findings about grading as a possible product of assessment (sections 5.12,5.22,6.11,6.24). "Grading refers to the classification of the level of a student's overall performance; a summary of achievement in a single component of a course or the quality of a single piece of work" (Sadler, 2005:176).

The analysis of questionnaire data shows that all tutors conducted assessment in order to give grades for students' written work and four out of 12 tutors claimed to grade every piece of written work especially in exams, in order to

meet the requirements of the Libyan educational policy (see Table 7). It is stressed by Sadler (2005), that universities typically have some sort of official assessment with a grading policy. From the qualitative analysis, the purpose of exam grades was to distinguish between students' learning level and as evidence to transfer students from one level of study to another. Several researchers have highlighted that the purpose of grades in summative assessment is to provide the basis for selection, progression and final grading (Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Volante and Beckett, 2011). Light et al (2009) also believed that grades are essentially a means by which to judge the differences between students.

The present results also show that students received grades after the final submission of their assignments, essays and reports. These grades were received in terms of pass or fail, not a way of encouragement to develop students' learning. Consequently, tutors need to recognize that comparison can be very demotivating (Cooper, 2009). This research recommends, as one strategy, that Libyan tutors could be trained to help their students to perceive grading as an indication of what it needs to be developed in their work. Moreover, the analysis of data shows that all these learners focused on receiving high grades in assessments rather than developing their writing performance. Wichadee and Nopakun (2012) stated that after receiving marked papers, students just look at the scores. Hernandez (2012:50) also concluded that:

“It is important to recognise the value of grades as part of the assessment of student learning but student perceptions need to be changed. Reflecting about learning through activities that do not

carry grades may encourage students to change their previous perceptions about the value of grade”.

From the analysis of the data, focusing on grades and feedback could be beneficial for students because both have a role in developing their learning. Grading is thought to be an important component of classroom assessment (Zhang and Burry-Stock, 2003). The present study highlights the importance of encouraging Libyan learners by tutors to focus on feedback rather than grades because it helps them to have better work.

The current study also found that these students were not experienced in self and peer grading. These students were not positive about its introduction because of lack of trust in classmates and in the accuracy of such assessments. Peer assessment denotes grading on peers' work (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006). McConlogue (2012) also stated that, in practice, groups of students could compare their grades and clarify their understandings of the assessment marking. The present findings suggest that the process of self and peer assessment is less effective unless grades are provided by students or discussed before giving the final grades by tutors. Additionally, the findings show that students were not encouraged to discuss or compare their grades because the tutors believed that discussion of grades among students is not preferred due to the learning context in terms of social factors. For example, students who had low grades would not want to discuss them with peers in the classroom. Consequently, learners' participation and understanding within the assessment process is crucial (Marshall, 2007). The current study suggests that tutors could be helped to encourage their students to discuss their grades to

understand the reason behind receiving different grades on writing tasks. Tutors in such educational environments could support students to work together in groups who are not friends or relatives in which students can discuss their grades.

Further findings provide evidence that there is a relationship between motivation and grades (see Table 18). For instance, some tutors believed that low grades may have a negative effect on students' motivation to learn, and T1 who confirmed that *"low grades may affect their desire to learn, so I try sometimes to give extra to motivate them to do more effort"*. However, it was surprising that two out of six students interviewed indicate that low grades may motivate them to make more effort in their next assessment. In the quantitative data 75 % of respondents were motivated to do better by low grades. The students interviewed thought that good grades gave them feelings of satisfaction and no reason to make more effort. However, four out of the six students valued good grades because they have the potential to encourage them to make further improvements. Earl et al's (2006) stated that grading motivates students to work hard and to learn.

The findings show that grades have an emotional effect on students, and this is important for motivating them to make more effort in their learning(see sections 5.22,5.26). Anxiety is amplified when grades are to be given which represent an important part of the overall mark for the course or module (Falchikov, 2007). Perhaps more importantly, *"the emotional shock students experience when receiving bad grades can be mitigated by a relatively realistic understanding of the standard of their work prior to receiving feedback and final grades"* (Taras, 2015:15).

From the above, grades are an important product of assessment because they represent the students' academic achievements or an indication of progression in EFL writing and set the standard by which students are judged. The process of peer and self-assessment is less effective unless grades are provided. Grades also have an emotional impact on students and they may or may not motivate them to make more effort in their learning. This implies that tutors need to consider the role of grades by helping students to practice giving grades and comparing with tutors' grades.

7.11 FEEDBACK FROM TUTORS

This section discusses the findings from the analysis of quantitative (see sections 5.11,5.14,5.24) and the qualitative data (see sections 6.7,6.12) concerning feedback from tutors. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) referred to feedback as information about how the student's present work relates to goals and standards, and an important finding is that all of the tutors in this study provided feedback only after the mid-term exam, whereas in the final exams feedback is not provided. This means that at the end of the year it is not seen as a bridge to the next year but the end of the learning and development line.

The data show that eight out of the 12 tutors explained that final exam feedback is not useful because it arrives too late when there is no chance to use it to do better work. Summative assessment is not effective in developing students' writing during the course because it provides information too late (Leahy et al., 2005; Lee, 2007). Therefore, the majority of students (see section 6.12) were not positive about such feedback because it would have less effect in improving their quality of writing and they prefer to have feedback from their tutors while

they are still working on a task. These tutors deal with this as fact in their teaching process, thus tutors need to understand that feedback could be useful for further study. However, this could be problematic as students only value grades at the end of the year as these are important in their progression whereas the value of feedback is not seen. A number of studies suggest that feedback is effective when given as soon as possible after the work has been assessed (Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Looney, 2010).

On the other hand, four out of 12 tutors in this study felt that mid-term exam feedback is useful because it helps students to identify their difficulties in writing skills within a specific course or year. This is similar to Harlen's (2007a) findings that summative assessment can provide feedback, which could be beneficial for students over a period.

The analysis of data shows that 84% of students in the present study value continuous feedback more than exam feedback because it is frequent and offers them an opportunity to learn from their mistakes. The central purpose of formative assessment is to provide continuous feedback (Brown et al., 1997; Falchikov, 2004). However, in the data findings, continuous feedback was deemed not always constructive or detailed enough because some of these tutors provided only few comments on students' work. This is influenced by class size because it could be difficult for tutors to provide enough feedback on all writing tasks. However, according to the quantitative data (section 5.10) nine of 12 tutors preferred option would be to assess and feedback on a more regular basis. One of the main issues facing academics is how to maintain the quality of feedback in large groups (Ballantyne et al., 2002). This is in accordance with Brown and Knight's (1994) belief that is not always easy to

give in-depth feedback, especially when there are large numbers of students. The findings also show that time affects the provision of constructive feedback (see section 6.12) and Looney (2010) argued that feedback could be written too quickly, as students may need some time to work out problems in their work. One important technique could be used in similar situations is to structure small group discussions of feedback in class depending on the students feelings, after receiving written comments on their individual assignments (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Libyan tutors need to bear in mind class size and time as important factors in giving effective feedback on students' work especially in large classes. Sewell et al (2010) suggested that group activities in large classes could help collaboration in learning where students discuss and have the opportunity to appreciate the perspectives of others. This requires more time after the task is assessed in order to be effective (Light et al, 2009; Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Brown, 2004).

Another result is that feedback from tutors was preferred rather than feedback from peers because these students did not think that their classmates could provide them with good quality of feedback (see 6.12). The analysis also indicates that the students believed that their tutors had good experience, which enabled them to provide useful feedback. Yang et al's (2006) findings showed that students adopted more feedback from tutors than from peers. Feng's study (2007:77) similarly found that "all participants highly valued teacher feedback and would like to have more help from the teacher to understand the work better in order to improve their academic achievement". Lee (2007) stressed that in the writing classroom, feedback from tutors is a useful pedagogical device to improve the teaching and learning of writing. Feedback from tutors is

the key product of assessment, but using feedback from peers as an additional source of information could be more beneficial for students' learning (see sections 5.25, 6.12.3).

Moreover, the analysis of data shows that written feedback is valued by all learners compared to general oral feedback because it is private and students refer to it later (see sections 6.12,6.23). These students may also get support from peers or tutors to discuss feedback in order to understand and apply it better. Additionally, in written feedback, these tutors can write comments and suggestions on students' essays, exams and assignments. However, only one out of the six students preferred to receive combined written and oral feedback from tutors because the latter can clarify unclear points in the written feedback. Lee (2007:190) indicated that "students state that written feedback alone was not very useful. They felt they would benefit more if written feedback was supported with oral feedback". "To support learning teachers must provide descriptive feedback in the form of ideas, strategies, and tasks the student can use to close the "gap" between his or her current learning level and the next level" (Heritage, 2010:13). Feedback that delivers guidance on how to improve performance has a positive influence on students' learning (Nicola and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Looney, 2010). It seems that oral feedback is not valued by these students because of the culture factor. For example, learners do not like tutors to show their mistakes in front of each other in the classroom. This study suggests that oral feedback could be given in general to all students about their similar mistakes, while written feedback could be provided as individual. In this case, both types of feedback may support and complement each other, which enhance students' learning.

A further result was that ten out of 12 tutors in this study focused only on the weak points in students' work because they believed that students preferred to identify difficulties and mistakes in their work, while only two out of the 12 tutors gave feedback on all elements of their students' work. This may be related to the educational context because most of Libyan tutors focus on mistakes rather than good aspects in students' work. Lee (2007) also found that the main focus of tutors was on students' weaknesses pertaining to language use. It appears that Libyan tutors in general are missing the chance to use the strong points of learners' work for motivation, which may lead to improvement in the subsequent work. Studies have emphasised that feedback may "inform tutors' teaching and support strategies as well as students' activity" (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007:30). Assessment is more effective if rich and detailed feedback is given about strengths and weaknesses (Topping et al, 2000).

To conclude, feedback is one of the most important products of assessment due to its direct effect on the quality of students' work. Assessment followed by feedback is much better for students because it aims to help students to close gaps their learning (Looney, 2011). Libyan university tutors need to be trained in giving effective and detailed feedback taking into consideration class size, the time available and the learning environment. For instance, in the Libyan university timetable it is difficult for tutors to provide a combination of written and oral feedback to all learners because it requires more time and individual sessions for discussion.

7.12 FEEDBACK FROM PEERS

Peer feedback is discussed next using findings from both tutors and students (sections 5.11,5.25,6.12.3). Students can provide feedback when they are involved in assessment, which becomes a central part of the learning process, rather than an occasional option (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006; Heritage, 2010).

In the current research, only three out of 12 tutors asked their students to provide feedback on classmates' work regarding aspects such as spelling, vocabulary and grammar. "Peer assessment can focus on the whole written product, or components of the writing process such as planning, drafting, or editing" (Topping, 2009:23). Libyan students who are involved in peer feedback indicate that it is useful because it is considered to be an additional source of information. They explain that they have benefitted from comments about their work in learning EFL writing. For example, peer feedback highlights their written mistakes in spelling, grammar and vocabulary. A number of researchers stressed that peer feedback can be used very effectively to improve students' writing skills (Graham et al., 2011; Spiller, 2009; Vickerman, 2009; Taras, 2001). Three tutors in this study emphasise that peer feedback may lead students to interact with each other by swapping comments and ideas. Peer assessment offers an opportunity for students to interact with fellow students to provide informal feedback (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006; Topping, 2009; McDowell et al., 2011). Engaging learners with peer feedback extends assessment from the private and individual learning domain to a more public process. The analysis in the present study indicates that peer feedback is

beneficial for learning because it helps learners to identify their difficulties in EFL writing and increases the level of interaction in the classroom.

However, it is found that nine out of the 12 tutors did not ask their students to give feedback on their peers' work, and these were the same tutors who did not give oral feedback. They reported that their students lacked the necessary knowledge, skills and training to provide good feedback. As one interviewee T5 explained *"it was difficult for students to provide effective feedback that focused on each written mistake because students could only find a few mistakes in their classmates' assignment or homework"*. The analysis of the quantitative data confirms that 79.6% of students did not want to receive written feedback from their peers and 71.9% did not want oral feedback from their classmates (see Table 21). These students felt that feedback from tutors was more effective than that from classmates because it would be used to improve the quality of their work. Feedback from peers is often less welcome than feedback from tutors (Wichadee and Nopakun, 2012). It also appears that approaches of teaching in Libya followed at the English departments did not support the use of peer feedback because tutors mainly use grammar translation method in which the role of learners is passive information recipients. This implies that tutors need to consider the importance of using the communicative approach in order to help students to use peer feedback in their learning. Another reason that restricted the use of peer feedback is the culture of these students. For example, most Libyan students refuse to give feedback because they consider their peers' feelings of embarrassment and prefer tutor-centred assessment in terms of judgment and providing feedback. They found it challenging to provide feedback on their peers' work because, for example, in one classroom, there

were extended family. This finding is consistent with those of other studies. For instance, Yang et al., (2006) indicated that peer feedback has less impact than feedback from tutors especially in cultures which grant great authority to the teacher. It could be suggested that tutors bear in mind such factors when they involve students in peer feedback. Tutors could prepare a learning environment that supports the use of peer feedback, for example, tutors could ask their students to choose and work with classmate who are compatible. This may reduce the influence of traditional culture among students and helps them to provide peer feedback on each other's work.

A conclusion which could be drawn from the above discussion is that the current findings add substantially to our understanding of how feedback from peers could support and complement feedback from tutors in improving students' learning. The findings show that 79.6% of students did not want to receive written feedback from peers, which means the biggest challenge is to persuade students of the value of peer feedback. The use of peer feedback could be difficult due to factors such as culture, training and encouragement. Also, peer feedback can enable students to develop skills in self-assessment (Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006).

7.13 ASSESSMENT SUPPORTING LEARNING AND TEACHING

This section discusses how assessment supports learning and teaching (see sections 5.23,6.13). There is a link between learning and assessment (Boud, 1995), and the teaching and learning may not be finished until the process of assessment has been employed. The present research found that assessment has impact on students' writing performance(see section 5.23) Assessment

helps tutors to become aware of their students' knowledge and skills as a starting point for further instruction and to monitor students' perceptions to promote learning (Earl and Katz, 2006). For instance, formative assessment helps tutors identify students who need help when there is still time to help them (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006). Assessment helps students to identify their difficulties in writing and to be aware if they have achieved their learning goals (see section 6.13). Assessment is a more powerful device if students are encouraged to be involved in their learning (Ciuzas, 2011). Therefore, this study highlights the importance of assessment in relationship to students' learning. The Libyan educational establishment needs to consider the value of the assessment role in the wider learning context.

For instance, self-assessment enhances independent learning and increases the levels of interaction among students when they are involved in peer assessment and the discussion of assessment criteria, feedback and grades. "The writing teacher is no longer engaged in assessing his/her learners' writing, but in negotiating meaning and collaborating with learners to clarify and voice their thinking, emotions, and argumentation as well as in helping them to develop strategies for generating ideas, revising, and editing" (Tsui and Ng, 2000:168). Thus, this study suggests that Libyan students need to be more involved in assessment in which the level of interaction and independent learning could be increased.

The analysis also indicates that the students did not believe that doing a lot of assessment using only one method can improve their writing skills; yet, using different methods could be more effective. Stiggins (2006:5) stated that "the assessor needs a clear sense of what kind of information is needed in order to

know what kind of assessment must be conducted”. This is important evidence from the data that students’ work could be assessed by different methods rather than sticking to only one method of assessment. Consequently, the findings from this research could help tutors and students to be aware of various methods of assessment that could be used in EFL writing such as peer and self-assessment.

Concerning teaching, the present findings also indicate that assessment has a role in changing or developing teaching methods and materials. T3 stated that *“I think assessment helped me to modify my teaching plan and develop the writing materials to meet students’ learning needs and goals”*. This suggests that assessment has an important role in affecting the resources used in teaching. Sewell et al (2010) stated that formative assessment gives the tutors an opportunity to modify the teaching plan and learning experience in order to achieve learning outcomes. Formative assessment is a process of gathering evidence of students’ learning in order to modify instruction in response to feedback (Yorke, 2003; Heritage et al., 2009; Cauley et al, 2010). However, in the Libyan context, all of assessment methods need to be developed in order to achieve learning and teaching goals.

At present, methods used are affected by educational policy and there are no specific textbooks, which include guidelines for conducting assessment. For example, exams used to assess students’ work are working in accordance with the writing teaching materials and syllabus demands. T12 added that *“my experience about assessment in Libya was that assessment was really unfair, because of not giving students complete feedback and encouraging them to use other methods of assessment; they gave just scores that made them looked for*

pass or fail". Since assessment is a part of curriculum planning it may be associated with teaching methods and the issues of students' learning (Armitage and Renwick, 2008; Light et al., 2009). This implies that assessment is not only restricted to measuring students' learning but could be more effective when it is integrated in teaching textbooks and lesson plans. For example, Libyan universities could provide an assessment guide, which supports tutors to integrate assessment methods in their teaching materials.

To sum up, assessment supports learning and teaching especially when several methods of assessment are used in EFL writing classes. Assessment has an important role in helping tutors to examine the goals of EFL writing instruction and link to the pedagogical activities. The current findings indicate that the role of assessment in Libya needs more development by involving students in assessment and integrate it with writing materials. Tutors could be involved in seminars and training sessions to be aware of the importance of assessment in learning and teaching.

7.14 REVIEW OF ALL RESEARCH FINDINGS

The present research has found that all 12 of the writing tutors who participated in this study had experience with examination and continuous assessment in assessing students' written work. Other methods such as self-and peer assessment were not widely used in the Libyan context. Importantly, three out of the 12 Libyan tutors asked their students to use peer assessment as well as self-assessment. This might indicate that these tutors knowledge or skills were better developed than the others concerning methods of assessment. It was highlighted that most of these tutors did not recognise the term "formative

assessment”, as did none of the students which seems to indicate that they are not familiar with the international assessment literature.

The findings include evidence that several factors had an effect on the use of a variety of methods of assessment. These factors included the tutors’ experience, knowledge and point of view about assessment, class size, assessment training, students’ motivation and culture, the time available for assessment and the policy of the English language department. This research found that these factors may be interrelated; for example, tutors lack of experience with assessment methods could be linked to a lack of time for assessment, class size, training in assessment and the policy of the English language department.

Moreover, the findings show that most of these tutors and students were not positive about the methods of assessment used for EFL writing work. Participants perceived the current methods of assessment as traditional methods, which had little effect on developing EFL writing skills. However, these tutors valued continuous assessment because it enabled them to monitor their teaching approaches and helped students in their learning. They also suggested that there was a need for the use of other methods of assessment that might enhance learning and teaching. One of the other key areas highlighted in this study was the lack of training for tutors in assessment. This means that the tutors lacked knowledge and as a consequence were unable to encourage students to be more involved in the assessment process; thus limiting the variety of assessment methods used.

Furthermore, these students were not informed about assessment criteria used because the tutors believed that learners needed to focus on all aspects of their

writing, which made it difficult to have good quality of work. In addition, the findings indicate that feedback from tutors was valued by all learners because it played an important role in improving their written work; however, the students required detailed and constructive feedback. Students preferred written feedback from tutors rather than general oral feedback because it was perceived as private and they could refer back to it at any time to improve their writing. The key finding concerning the process of assessment was the relationship between assessment criteria, feedback and grades. For instance, without knowing the criteria, which would be used, the students did not know what was being assessed. Then the feedback was considered too broad because it covered every aspect of writing and they were unable to target particular faults in the next assessment as they did not know what they had been measured on.

Findings, from the students' data, in relation to the products of assessment indicate that grades were perceived as the main product by all students. Grades were provided for different activities; however, the main grades were assigned for exams. The data analysis also shows that the students focused more on getting higher grades than using feedback or comments. Another result indicates that all of the Libyan students agreed that they were not involved in discussion of feedback, criteria, grading and learning goals. Finally, assessment could have a beneficial effect on EFL teaching materials in terms of modification and development by tutors in order to meet the students' needs. The following section discusses some of the pedagogical implications of the findings of this study.

7.15 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

A number of important pedagogical implications could be drawn from this study and applied to similar Libyan contexts. The theoretical and practical implication of this research was provided and considered as a basis for further studies. The current study adds to the current body of knowledge about assessment methods used in EFL contexts at university level in Libya. It has also offered critical interpretations of what methods are used to assess students' written work with a sample of EFL Libyan university tutors and students. Knowledge gained from this study, therefore, could be useful to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment methods not only in the context of EFL but also other L2 learning contexts and teaching and learning in general.

An important recommendation of this study, and a contribution to new learning, is that, within the Libyan context, tutors could be required to provide students with information about assessment criteria which will be used to assess their work, in order to help them to achieve their learning goals, get high grades and meet the standards required. This would allow students to concentrate on those particular aspects of writing that will be assessed and it gives them clarity about the task they have to complete. Moreover, it would make feedback more useful because it could be more specific and focused. Providing assessment criteria could also reduce students' feelings of stress or anxiety. The findings suggest that Libyan tutors could change their thinking about the importance of providing assessment criteria to students before each written task.

The findings show that several methods of assessment such as peer and self-assessment are not widely used in the Libyan context. Therefore, applying such methods of assessment in EFL writing could be very effective in developing

students' learning. For example, if students' work was assessed by several methods of assessment would give a broader view of the work to support more specific learning. Learners could be involved in peer and self-assessment in line with summative and formative assessment in which students' work can be assessed in several ways. Concerning teaching materials, more formative assessment could help tutors to review their teaching materials to check their effectiveness.

This study provides and adds clear and specific definitions of terms, including summative, formative, self- and peer assessment, assessment criteria, standards and feedback. From this study, tutors and students could be trained to better understand the definitions of assessment terms, which could enhance on their knowledge and practice.

The research findings have added to the literature of the EFL writing context a general belief that selecting and using assessment method requires clear knowledge of a number of factors such as; training in assessment, the experience, knowledge and point of view of the tutors, class size, the time allowed for assessment, students' motivation and culture and the policy of the English language department. This study suggests that Libyan tutors need to consider these factors before selecting and using assessment methods. For instance, students' culture can influence the use of peer assessment and feedback negatively. Thus, tutors could devise techniques to divide students into pairs who are not friends or relatives to work together, which reduces its influence.

Feedback is a product of the assessment process considered by many to be inadequate. Therefore, one of the pedagogical implications of this study is that

feedback needs to be more detailed and constructive in order to help students to improve their work. Taras (2002) argued that effective feedback involves knowledge of required standards and taking action to improve. Tutors and students participated in this study attached great importance to formative or continuous feedback because it has an influence on students' learning while teaching is underway. Feedback informs "tutors" teaching and support the strategies used as well as student activity" (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007: 30). Students value receiving feedback from tutors rather than classmates, which indicates that students need to be trained in order to provide useful feedback to peers. Tutors could encourage and motivate students to provide good quality of peer feedback, which is beneficial in developing students' learning. Tutors also need to create a classroom environment that helps students to be involved in assessment.

Students are not experienced in the discussion of feedback from tutors and peers, assessment criteria and grading. This implies more motivation and encouragement from tutors is required to help students to be more involved in assessment. The findings suggest that tutors could try to change their perceptions about discussion of the above aspects of assessment. Consequently, learners could be involved in discussion, which would increase their role in assessment.

A further pedagogical implication of this study is that understanding of tutors' and students' perceptions about the role of assessment could have an effect on learning and teaching practice in the classroom and beyond. For example, assessment could be seen as a method of developing students' work and not just a measurement of students' learning. All types of assessment could also be

viewed as methods of determining students' needs and setting learning goals. Approaches of teaching followed at the English departments did not support a change of the role of learners from traditional tutor-centred assessment to learner-centred learning. This study would suggest that the communicative approach could be used to support the use of peer and self-assessment in EFL writing which means that tutors need to be familiarized with the communicative style of teaching. For example, tutors could be involved in staff development programmes and discussion with colleagues in which their knowledge about the communicative approach is developed in relation to assessment.

The findings also indicate that levels of interaction and cooperative learning can be increased if students are involved in assessment. In addition, this study provides evidence that self-assessment may enhance students' self-regulated and independent learning. This requires more determination from EFL tutors to integrate self and peer assessment into their teaching. Libyan tutors can encourage their learners to discuss assessment criteria, grades and exchange feedback among themselves to improve their learning. Hence, the findings of this research add to the assessment literature a general view that assessment has a vital relationship with teaching and learning. The present study draws attention to the roles of feedback from tutors and students, knowledge of assessment criteria and grading in developing students' work to achieve learning goals. To conclude, the pedagogical implications can be used by educationalists such as management and tutors to improve the system of higher education to meet all of the requirements of successful teaching and learning.

7.16 REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Even though the present study adds knowledge to the body of assessment literature, it has several limitations, as with any research. The mixed-methods approach used in this study was beneficial because it could provide rich data that could address the research questions. However, challenges were experienced such as in distributing, collecting and analysing the data collected from six English language departments in different locations. It was also time-consuming to travel between the English language departments and to analyse the data. In addition, analysing the quantitative data was not easy because the researcher is not a statistician. Another challenge was to find a convenient place which was comfortable and quiet in which to conduct the interviews. Moreover, the transcription process was difficult and time-consuming. All of the above challenges added to the researcher's experience.

During the research process I realised that the approach of mixed methods had made the data capture and subsequent analysis very complicated. Therefore, reflecting on the research process, if I were to do a similar project, I would probably choose a single method of data gathering and find a robust triangulation method from within the single approach.

Another aspect of the research that I would reflect upon is that researching summative, formative, peer and self-assessment was quite a broad platform of study. In future I would look to narrow the focus to one or two areas of research rather than four.

7.17 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A number of directions for future research can be suggested. Throughout the process of the analysis of data and interpretation of results, ideas emerged that

may be of interest in developing the research which has been completed for this thesis. A number of areas are recommended for further research, as follows:

- ❖ It is suggested that knowledge of the assessment criteria used for EFL writing has a significant influence on students' work. For example, informing students about the concepts of their work will help them to understand where to focus on and then obtain higher grades. Thus, further investigation into giving assessment criteria to Libyan students across a variety of assessments would give the opportunity to test if indeed giving criteria, and for what kind of assessment, would be beneficial.
- ❖ Interaction and cooperative learning among learners within the process of assessment in the classroom could be explored, since assessment has more functions than only measuring students' learning: for example, in peer and self-assessment. Further research into peer to peer dialogue can measure whether discussion of feedback and grades has any discernible effect on the subsequent results produced. This will then provide useful information on how assessment discussion affects the level of interaction and cooperative learning.
- ❖ The current findings draw attention to the importance of integrating assessment into the curriculum of teaching EFL writing at university level. For example, integrating assessment in curriculum could guide tutors to use a range of assessment method, which are suitable for specific work. More research exploring the introduction of various assessment methods could be useful to explore this relationship.
- ❖ The results show a lack of the use of peer feedback in the context studied. This is due to some factors restricted its use including students' culture and encouragement from tutors. Therefore, further research is recommended to investigate the use of peer feedback in relation to its

role in developing students' learning and which factors are key in affecting the use of peer-feedback.

In conclusion, the above recommendations could be valuable in developing learning and teaching English as foreign language in relation to use of assessment.

7.18 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has discussed the findings from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in order to address the research questions. Several concepts concerning assessment methods, the process and product of assessment in relation to learning and teaching have been discussed with reference to the existing literature. The current findings add to our understanding of the use of methods of assessment in EFL writing in Libya. The pedagogical implications of the study, a review of the research process, and recommendations for further research have been provided. This study will make a contribution to the literature concerning the effectiveness of using several methods of assessment, with a new finding of the importance of providing pre assessment criteria to EFL writing students (see section 7.9).

It was also important to address the contribution about students' perceptions and tutors' thinking about assessment methods in EFL writing classes because it showed that the participants prefer more variety in the methods of assessment. Moreover, this research could add insights to the literature concerning the effectiveness of assessment methods. The findings from the tutors in this study suggest that more formal assessment training sessions are valuable for tutors in order to develop their awareness of using several methods

of assessment which could motivate students to be involved more in the assessment process such as peer and self-assessment. It will be also useful to integrate assessment into the materials which form the writing curriculum in particular and in other aspects of teaching English. The findings could be used as evidence to develop the Libyan education system and also the way of assessing students' work and help students and tutors to have a better understanding of assessment. Awareness is drawn to the importance of the use of assessment and opportunities for the Libyan Ministry of Education to develop future plans and policies concerning assessment which needs to be part of a wider review of an agreed set curriculum and syllabi which can lead to appropriate textbooks and tutor training.

The study shows areas where, if changes are made, there could be opportunity to develop the learning for Libyan EFL writing students. Primarily a better understanding of the dialogue within the assessment and feedback process will enhance the students' learning and giving both the tutors and students a greater voice in the process of assessment. Students and tutors could then become participants in the process rather than just being passively caught up in the process. The use of the communicative approach could be important in order to establish a foundation to enhance the communication between students and tutors concerning assessment. This enhanced communication would strengthen the constructivist philosophy that underpins assessment and consequently improve the process and product of assessment in the Libyan context.

Developing tutors' skills will broaden the variety of assessment methods chosen; giving criteria could increase the students' understanding; rearranging the schedules to give students more time to complete assessments and tutors

more time to give constructive feedback would all help to enhance the assessment and learning experience for those concerned. In order to achieve this, there needs to be a change in mind-set from the Libyan Education Authorities to understand the value of assessment beyond the summative and then inform tutors, the tutors need to engage with other assessment methods and not just wait for the training and students need to engage better with the dialogue. Nothing will change without the cooperation of all parties, but potentially this study has helped to show what might be achieved and offer options of how to achieve it. With this in mind the study will be disseminated to both the University that provided the research subjects and the Libyan Ministry of Education as a reference for further studies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A (tutors' questionnaire)

This questionnaire aims to examine assessment methods in writing. It will take approximately ten minutes of your time. The information you provide will be treated in strictest confidence and will only be used for research purposes in this study. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

1. Your highest qualification

2. Years of teaching experience:

a) In schools () b) In universities ()

c) Other, please specify...

Please tick all the appropriate answers to each question or statement below.

3. How many writing lessons do you teach per-week?

a) One () b) two () c) more ()

If your answer is c, please specify.....

4. How long does each writing lesson last?

a) One hour () b) two hours () c) more ()

5. Do you tell your students to do their written work?

a) Only at home ()

b) Only in class ()

c) Mainly in class with some at home ()

d) Mainly at home with some in class ()

6. Do you assess your students' work in the following ways? Tick as many as are appropriate.

a) Correction with feedback (every week, every month) ()

b) Correction with grades (every week, every month) ()

b) Correction with feedback (mid & final) ()

c) Correction with grades (mid& final) ()

d) Others

7. Have you ever received any training in assessing students' work?

Yes () No ()

If yes,

a) In the last two years ()

b) In the last five years ()

c) In the last ten years ()

8. Do you assess your students' work in order to:

a) Provide grades ()

b) To help them identify their weaknesses in writing ()

c) To help them identify their strengths in writing ()

d) all of a, b & c ()

e) Other.....

If your answer is E please specify.

9. Do you assess your students' written work, during your teaching sessions?

a) Always () b) sometimes () c) hardly ever () d) never ()

10. Which type of feedback do you provide on your students' work?

a) Oral feedback () b) written feedback () c) both a & b ()

11. Do you design different assessment criteria for each written task?

Always () sometimes () hardly ever () never ()

12. Do you explain assessment criteria to your students?

Always () sometimes () hardly ever () never ()

13. Do you give students grades for each written task?

Always () sometimes () hardly ever () never ()

14. Do you encourage your students to check each other's written work?

Always () sometimes () hardly ever () never ()

15. Do you ask your students to discuss with each other your written feedback on their writing task?

Always () sometimes () hardly ever () never ()

16. What do you assess in your students' written task? Tick all options you prefer to assess

a) Grammar ()

b) Vocabulary ()

c) Sentences structure ()

d) Word spelling ()

e) Content or ideas ()

f) All of them ()

17. A. What are the factors that affect your choice of assessment methods?

Choose as many as you want from the list below which you feel are appropriate

a) Your background and knowledge ()

b) Your view of assessment ()

c) Class size ()

d) Motivation ()

e) Other, please specify.....

B. Please, put the above list in order of importance.....

Thank you for your time and cooperation

APPENDIX B (students' questionnaires)

This questionnaire aims to investigate assessment methods in writing. It will take approximately fifteen minutes of your time. The information you provide will be treated in strictest confidence and will only be used for purpose of this study. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

1. Which department are you studying in?

A. Zawia, 1 () B. Zawia, 2 () C. Aboessa () D. Sabrath () E. Aljalat () F. Zwara ()

2. Age: 19-21 years () 22-25 () 26 and over ()

Now please tick the answer that you feel is the most appropriate for each of the 41 statements below

3. Assessments help me to develop my writing skills.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

4. I believe written assessments help me in my learning.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

5. I feel stressed when I have assessment

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

6. A bad grade motivates me to put more effort into my following written assessment.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

7. Doing a lot of assessment does not improve my writing skills.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

8. I discuss my work with my fellow students in the classroom.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

9. I discuss the work of other students with them in the classroom.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

10. I always find my tutor's feedback helps me to learn.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

11. I explain to my fellow students what can be improved in their written tasks.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

12. In the classroom, I tell my classmates which aspects of their work are good.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

13. I prefer my written task to be assessed by

A. My tutor () B. classmate () C. both ()

14. Assessing my own work helps me to become an independent learner.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

15. My tutor provides me with assessment criteria.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

16. Assessing my own work helps me to assess other students' work.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

17. A good grade motivates me to put more effort into my next writing assessment.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

18. My tutor provides me with assessment criteria before every written assessment.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

19. I prefer to receive written feedback from my tutor.

- Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 20. I prefer to receive written feedback from my classmates.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 21. I prefer to receive oral feedback from my tutor.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 22. I prefer to receive oral feedback from my classmates.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 23. I prefer to find out by myself my written mistakes in assignments.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 24. My tutor asks me to exchange my written task with classmates to check for mistakes.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 25. I like to have feedback from my tutor, while I am still working on a task.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 26. I give written comments on my classmates' work.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 27. I prefer written feedback on my work.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 28. I prefer oral feedback on my work.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 29. I prefer to be assessed on what I have done in my written work.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 30. Assessments help me to know my weaknesses in writing.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 31. Assessments help me to know my strengths in writing.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 32. Assessments motivate me to improve my writing skills.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 33. My tutor provides me with better feedback than my classmates.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 34. My classmates provide me with better feedback than my tutor.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 35. I find it useful to have feedback on my assessment.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 36. Assessing other students' work helps me to understand my own assessment.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 37. I prefer to receive grades after each assessment.
 strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 38. I prefer to receive grades from my tutors.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 39. I prefer to give grades on my classmate' written work.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 40. I discuss my tutors' grades with my classmates in classroom.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
 41. I discuss assessment criteria with my fellow students in classroom.
 Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

APPENDIX C (tutors' interview questions)

1. Please explain the methods of assessment you prefer to use in assessing written work and why.
2. Is there any other methods of assessment do you prefer to use and why?
3. How often do you assess your students' written work?
4. Please tell me what do you think of the different methods of assessing writing?
5. Please discuss any factors that may affect your choice of assessment methods?
6. Can you explain how assessment improves teaching and learning or not?
7. Do you provide your students with assessment criteria for each written task?
8. What do you think of involving students in assessment? In terms of self-peer assessment
9. Would you explain the kind of feedback you provide for your students?
10. Please discuss your experience of using assessment methods in assessing writing.
11. Would you please explain the materials you use to teach writing?
12. Do you have further information you may want to add to this interview?

APPENDIX D (students' interview questions)

1. What do you think of the written assessments that your tutors use?
2. Do written assessments help you to improve your writing skills? If yes, can you explain how you think they help? If no, why and explain that.
3. How do feel when you are preparing to take a written assessment?
4. Do you prefer to receive your written feedback while you are writing? If yes, why? If no, why not
5. What do you think of reviewing your classmates' work?
6. What do you think of having to find your own written mistakes in writing tasks?
7. Could you please tell me if your tutor provides you with assessment criteria?
8. Could you please explain if you prefer to be involved in assessment?
Either with (a) your classmates (b) in discussion with your tutor (c) assessing your work
9. Finally, is there any further information you would like to add?

APPENDIX E (questionnaire Modifications and Added Items Pilot study)

Original, introduction to the questionnaire: Would you please answer this questionnaire in order to help me in my study? The information you provide relating to this research will be treated with the strictest confidence and will only be used for statistical analysis purposes. Your participation by answering this questionnaire will make this research successful.

According to the feedback obtained, the researcher changed the introduction of the questionnaire in order to provide a full picture to the participants. This introduction presents the aim of the study that can help participants to understand the purpose of the questionnaire.

Modified: This questionnaire aims to investigate assessment methods in writing. It would take approximately fifteen minutes of your time. The information you provide will be treated in strictest confidence and will only be used for purpose of this study. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Original: Q1. your full name

This item is not related to the aims of study because it does not provide any information that is related to the aims of the study. Therefore, the researcher decides to remove it and use codes in order to protect the obtained data.

Original: Q3. how old are?

The researcher decides to modify this item because a potentially embarrassing question. In addition, some participants do not wish to reveal their exact ages. Therefore, age-group is used because it is more appropriate for all participants.

Modified: age: 19-21years () 22-25 years () 26 and over ()

Original: Q14. I prefer my written task to be tested by

a) My tutor () b) classmate () c) both ()

The researcher decides to change the word 'test' because it is not suitable for classmates. This is because in EFL context a test is done only by tutors. In other words, students can assess their classmate's work but not test.

Modified:14. I prefer my written task to be assessed by

a) My tutor () b) classmate () c) both ()

Original: Q15. I believe that checking my own work can be a useful way to make me an independent learner.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () slightly disagree ()

According to the feedback, some words would be removed from this sentence because they have different meanings which are not related to the answer options.

Modified: assessing my own work helps me to become an independent learner

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

Original: Q17. Marking my own work helps me to mark other students' work.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

There are few words that have different meanings such as marking and mark. These words may mean giving grades which are not linked to the purpose of this item. Therefore, the researcher changed these words in order to gain specific answers.

Modified: Assessing my own work helps me to assess other students' work

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

Original: Q20. I prefer to receive feedback from my classmates then my tutor.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

The feedback indicates that this item can be divided into several items. These items have a direct aims to provide information.

Modified:20. I prefer to receive written feedback from my tutor.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

21. I prefer to receive written feedback from my classmates.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

22. I prefer to receive oral feedback from my tutor.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

23. I prefer to receive oral feedback from my classmates.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

Original: Q21. I prefer to find out my own written mistakes in assignments.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

The obtained feedback indicates that this sentence needs to be modified because there is unfamiliar word such as 'own'. Therefore, the researcher changes and adds some words such as by myself because they are familiar to EFL students.

Modified: I prefer to find out by myself my written mistakes in assignments.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

Original: Q24. I like to have my feedback, while I am still working on a task.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

The item needs more clarification. Thus, the researcher added one word in order to be easy to understood for participants.

Added:24. I like to have feedback from my tutor, while I am still working on a task.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

Original: Q26. I prefer written feedback rather than oral feedback on my examinations

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

Due to the feedback, the researcher decides to divide this sentence into two items in order to have specific purposes. This helps the researcher to obtain direct answer and also has relationship with the research questions.

Modified: I prefer written feedback on my examinations.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

I prefer oral feedback on my examinations.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

Original: Q27. I enjoy being tested on what I have learnt.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

This statement aims to find students' feeling towards assessment after each written work. The statement has a few words that are not familiar for participants. Thus, the researcher modifies it to obtain the information that is related to the study.

Modified: I prefer to be assessed on what I have done in my written work.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

Original: Q28. Tests help me to know my weakness and strengths in writing.

Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

The feedback highlights that this sentence may be divided because some literature states that the word 'and' should be excluded from questionnaire

items. In addition. The word 'test' would be changed into 'assessment' in order to have consistency in the questionnaire. These items are more appropriate to provide data that are related to the aims of the study.

Modified: 28. Assessments help me to know my weakness in writing
Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()
Assessments help me to know my strengths in writing.
Strongly agree () agree () disagree () strongly disagree ()

Tutors' Questionnaire Modifications and Added Items

Original, introduction to the questionnaire: Would you please answer this questionnaire in order to help me in my study? The information you provide will be treated with the strictest confidence and will only be used for statistical analysis purposes. Your participation by answering the questionnaire will help to make this research successful.

Due to the feedback obtained, the introduction of the questionnaire was update with more useful sentences that can provide a full picture regarding the questionnaire design. This modification helps the participants to be fully understood of the aims of the study.

Modified: This questionnaire aims to investigate assessment methods in writing. It will take approximately ten minutes of your time. The information you provide will be treated in strictest confidence and will only be used for research purposes in this study. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Original: Q1.Your full name

This item will be removed from the questionnaire because it is not important and also it does not provide any information that is linked to the aims of the study.

Original: Q2.Your Qualifications since leaving school:

The feedback indicates that there are some words need to be removed from this statement because they are not important to be included in this study. This statement may provide information that is not linked to the study since all tutors have MA or PhD degree.

Modified: Your highest qualification

Original: Q4.Years of teaching experience:

a) In schools () b) In universities ()

Due to the feedback, the researcher decides to add more option to this item because it provides options that are suitable for all participants.

Added: Years of teaching experience:

a) In schools () b) In universities () c) other, please specify.....

Original:Q5. Do you tell your students to do written work?

a)Only at home () b) only in class() c) both at home and in class()

The options of this question are divided into four in order to cover all the aspects of the aim of the question.

Modified: Do you tell your students to do their written work?

a) Only at home ()

b) Only in class ()

c) Mainly in class with some at home ()

d) Mainly at home with some in class ()

Original: Q 6. How often do you test your students' work?

A. every week B. every month C. mid &final tests D. final test only

This question does not provide answer to the research questions. Consequently, the researcher decided to modify it.

Modified: Do you assess your students' work in the following ways? Tick as many as are appropriate.

a) Correction with feedback (every week, every month) ()

b) Correction with grades (every week, every month) ()

- b) Correction with feedback (mid & final) ()
- c) Correction with grades (mid& final) ()
- d) Others

Original: Q7. Have you ever received any assessment training in assessing students' work?

Yes () no ()

According to the feedback, this item needs to be modified in order to be more specific.

Modified: Have you ever received any assessment training in assessing students' work?

Yes () no ()

If yes

- a) In the last two years ()
- b) In the last five years ()
- c) In the last ten years ()

Original: Q8. Do you test your students' work in order to:

- a) Provide grades ()
- b) To help them identify their weaknesses and strengths in writing ()
- c) Other ()

If your answer was C please specify.

The researcher decided to add one option to this statement in order to make it better. The added options are important to be asked because they linked to the aims of the study. In addition, the word 'test' would be changed into 'assess' in order to have consistency in the questionnaire.

Added and modified: Do you assess your students' work in order to:

- a) Provide grades ()
- b) To help them identify their weaknesses in writing ()
- c) To help them identify their strengths in writing ()
- d) Both of a, b & c ()
- e) Other.....

If your answer is E please specify.

Original: Q9. Do you test your students' written work, while you are teaching?

- a) Always () b) sometimes () c) hardly ever () d) never ()

According to the feedback, this question has several meanings. Therefore, the researcher modified this question in order to gather useful information.

Modified: Do you assess your students' written work during your teaching sessions?

- a) Always () b) sometimes () c) hardly ever () d) never ()

Original: Q10. Which type of feedback do you provide on your students' work?

- a) Oral feedback () b) written feedback ()

One option will be added in this question because participants may select both of the above options regarding their teaching. This is because some tutors provide written and then oral feedback.

Added: Which type of feedback do you provide on your students' work?

- a) Oral feedback () b) written feedback () c. both a & b ()

Original: Q16. What do you assess in your students' written task?

- A) Grammar
- b) Vocabulary
- c) sentences structure

- d) Word spelling
- e) All of them

The researcher decided to add one option to this item in order to cover all the aspects of assessing writing. This option is important to be included in this questionnaire because it is one of the writing elements.

Added: What do you assess in your students' written task? Tick all options you prefer to assess

- a) Grammar ()
- b) Vocabulary ()
- c) Sentences structure ()
- d) Word spelling ()
- e) Content or ideas ()
- f) All of them ()

Extra added questions

During working on the pilot study, the researcher noted that there are some questions need to be added to this questionnaire. It is important to add these questions to the questionnaire because they may provide information that is missed in the pilot study.

Q3. How many writing lessons do you teach per-week?

- a) One () b) two () c) more ()

If your answer is c, please specify.....

Q4. How long does each writing lesson last?

- a) One hour () b) two hours () c) more ()

Q17. A. What are the factors that affect your choice of assessment methods?

Choose as many as you want from the list below which you feel are appropriate

- a) Your background and knowledge ()
- b) Your view of assessment ()
- c) Class size ()
- d) Motivation ()
- e) Other, please specify.....

B. Put the above list in order of importance.....

APPENDIX F (modification of the interviews questions)

Tutor's Interview Questions Modifications and Added Items

Original: Q 1. what are the methods of assessment or tests do you like to use to assess your students' writing?

The feedback indicates that this question is not suitable to be asked in interview due to its purpose. Thus, the researcher changed format of this question in order to gain the information that is linked to the research questions.

Modified: 1.Please explain the methods of assessment you prefer to use in assessing writing work and why.

Original: Q4.What do you think of assessment methods which are used to assess writing?

This question needs to be modified because it is similar to the first question; the researcher changed the form of this question in order to gain different data.

Modified: Please tell me what do you think of the different methods of assessing writing?

Original: Q5. Is there any factor that may affect your choice of assessment method?

The feedback highlights that this question needs to be modified in order to be specific.

Modified: Please discuss any factors that may affect your choice of assessment methods

Original: Q 6.Do you think assessment can improve teaching and learning?

This type of questions cannot be used in interview because it aims to gather yes or no answers.

Modified: Can you explain how assessment improves teaching and learning?

Original: Q9.What type of feedback do you provide your students?

The researcher decided to modify this question because it does not provide full information.

Modified: Would you explain the kind of feedback you provide for your students

Original: Q10.Would you please talk about your experience and knowledge of using assessment methods in assessing writing?

This question needs to be modified because it has several ideas. Thus, the researcher chose to modify it in order to be more focused on one aspect of the research questions.

Modified: Please discuss your experience of using assessment methods in assessing writing.

Extra added question

The feedback indicates that this interview needs another question which is important to help the researcher to gain information about the materials that tutors use to teach writing.

Q11. Would you please explain the materials do you use to teach writing?

Interview questions for students

Original: Q2. Do written test help you to improve your writing skill? If yes, could explain that?

According to the feedback, the researcher decided to update this question in order to achieve specific information that is linked to the study.

Modified and added items: Do written assessments help you to improve your writing skill? If yes, can you explain how you think they help? If no, why and explain that.

Original: Q3. Could you please explain if you prefer to be involved in examination?

The feedback indicates that the word 'examination' is not clear for participants. Therefore, the word 'assessment' is used to cover all the aspects of assessment such as criteria, self and peer-assessment.

Modified: Could you please explain if you prefer to be involved in assessment?

Original: Q5. Do you prefer to receive your written feedback while you are learning? If yes, why?

This question needs more items such as 'if no why' because these items provide different information that is useful to answer this question.

Added: Do you prefer to receive your written feedback while you are learning? If yes, why? If no, why not

Original: Q 7. could you please tell me if your tutor provides you with test criteria?

According to the feedback, the word 'test' needs to be changed into 'assessment' because criteria in linked only with assessment not test. Therefore, the researcher decided to modify this question in order to make it understood for the participants.

Modified: Could you please tell me if your tutor provides you with assessment criteria?

APPENDIX G (sample of tutor's and student's interview concerning coded data).

The following table shows the key code for used colour in interviews.

Blue	Themes
Red	Method of assessment
Yellow	Thinking/ perceptions
Gray	Factor/ difficulties
Green	Process/ product

Coding → Preferred method of assessment

peer assessment

Interview Analysis Sample (T4)

1. Please explain the methods of assessment you prefer to use in assessing writing work and why. (Responses from T 4)

Well, for me I prefer to use formative assessment technique when I assess my students' work..... I think formative or continue assessment is the best way to assess writing skills because I always look at writing as a process not a final product. Formative assessment allows me to see the process of writing, how students edit, how they plan and write their work. If you ask me the method I prefer I say it is formative but usually not the case because of the limited time and concentration I always find myself to assess the final product which is not preferred or perfect way of assessment.....I think this method is useful to me as a tutor because it helps me to identify students' learning whether they learn what I taught or not.

2. Is there any other methods of assessment do you prefer to use why?

Yes, of course. From time to time in class I prefer to ask my students to use peer-assessment. I ask my students to exchange their written work with classmate to find one good element and one weak element in each work. That is not all the time..... Oh, I would say whenever I teach writing. Each class is a sort of assessment I give them something I explain and I ask them to do something and I assess that sometimes informally and not formally but still I give them some feedback.

3. How often do you assess your students' written work?

I follow the department's policy regarding exams in Libya. There are two times to assess students' work which are mid and final exams. I also assess every written work which is about every week.

4. Please tell me what do you think of the different methods of assessing writing?

Well, I think there are **good ways of assessment**. However, the most important is the **feedback**. I believe the most **important part of assessment is feedback** that I give to the students because students can **get benefit** from it. Just giving **marks** and leaving is not very useful for further improvement. So no matter what a method is got to be followed by **feedback**. I do not like the way we assess students' work in Libya. It is just look at the writing and give them **score not feedback** and also no indication for thing you like in their writing or not. **No way how to improve their writing**. It is just giving them **score**. I think **the number of students, limited time**. I do not it is fair but this what we do.

Feedback, difficulties, improvement

Factors

5. Please discuss any factors that may affect your choice of assessment methods?

Oh, yes, it depends on the work itself. If it classwork or homework, **exam**, assignment. I would say the **time is the factor the more time** I have the more options I have for using different methods of assessment. The other factor is the **class size** because **small group** of students help me to use some kinds of assessment such as **peer- and self-assessment**. I can also **provide feedback**. If I have a **large class** the **feedback** has to be small or focused on one or two groups of students not the whole class. It is difficult to give **feedback** to a **large number of students**. The willingness up of students is to **motivate** them to share and speak to each other.

Assessment and teaching/ learning

6. Can you explain how assessment improves teaching and learning or not?

Well, **assessment helps students as well as teachers**. Students can be helped through **feedback and suggestions** **how to improve and get better next time**. For example, asking tutor is a matter of assessment. Assessment helps students to **know their level of writing and also the weaknesses and strengths**. Tutor can identify the level of students through assessment. For example, tutors can understand whether their students understand the lesson or not. He can change it or slow down. I would really say that assessment has positive effective on teaching and learning.

Assessment criteria

7. Do you provide your students with assessment criteria for each written task?

Yes, but not each written work. For a full assignment, I would **provide structured criteria or marking scheme** to the students. They got full picture about every

Tutor's thinking about involving students in assessment

point in the work that I am looking for in essay. So, they can see where they fit and how to improve their writing next time. Of course, I mean before a full or whole assignment not homework work not class work. In terms of continuous assessment, what I do is to tell them that something is to improve to get points in assessment. I tell them to spend more time in this because this is where you get a lot of points without providing exact criteria. Telling them this is a factor to score better marks for full assignment they have self-assessment sheet.

8. What do you think of involving students in assessment? In terms of self-peer assessment

Oh, it is very good idea. The motivated class with group confidence specially and sharing is very useful because students feel not to tell them. Engage them in this process, I think it makes them think in different way more creative more direct to the point because they become aware that they are a part of teaching and learning. This is the case; they can know their mistakes from somebody else not only from teachers. Yes, I try to do this by encouraging my students to be involved in assessment in side classroom and at home. This can help them to depend on their learning and improve their writing by correcting each other work or given comments on their mistakes

Feedback

9. Would you explain the kind of feedback you provide for your students?

Yes, I give feedback after mid exams but not final exams. My feedback is written and I always make points of writing down what I find it is good or weak. Students can use my feedback to correct elements of their work. I prefer oral feedback I usually do it as whole class because I cannot tell my students about their weakness in front of each other. I like to write the examples on the board and ask the class to give feedback whether is correct or not and how we can improve it.

Tutors' experience of assessment

10. Please discuss your experience of using assessment methods in assessing writing.

From my experience, I think that feedback and suggestion are more important than marks but students like to obtain high marks. I believe mark is not helping them to improve their learning. The feedback is more important than marks for improvement process in students' learning. I see students feel satisfied when they have passing marks. I would say that most of teachers do not give complete feedback, not encourages students to participate in criteria or design. Giving just score, we make them look for pass or fail. They do not look how to improve their learning and the way they study and write.

11. Would you please explain the materials you use to teach writing?

In fact, I am using the materials that have been left from the previous teacher. I do not have a certain textbooks. I collect my materials from different books based on the syllabus that are provided by the department.

Teaching writing materials

12. Do you have further information you may want to add to this interview?

All right, here in Libya it is difficult to use many kinds of assessment but more focus is needed from teachers towards the relation between assessment and learning and teaching. Libyan teachers need to learn about assessment; we

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Factors, thinking

need training courses for teachers. I believe this helps the teachers to change their opinion that assessment does not mean score, pass or fail only.



Appendix: Interviews Analysis Sample (S3)

Researcher: What do you think of written assessments that your tutors use?

Student: All right. I think it depends on the teachers' use. For example, my tutors used traditional methods one at the middle of the year and one in the final. They use continuous assessment which is useful to improve my writing skills. Every time I would be better in writing than the first time because they determined whether I passed or failed the course. Other teachers use the same way of assessment. I think more ways of correction are good to help me to improve my learning but not using the same methods every time.

Researcher: why?

Student: I think different assessment methods are important because they help me to do less written mistakes by providing me with feedback.

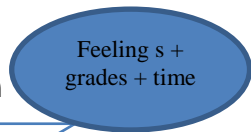
Researcher: Do written assessments help you to improve your writing skills? If yes, can you explain how you think they help? If no, why and explain that.

Student: Yes, as I said early that assessment helps me to know if I have done written mistakes in my task or not, such as spelling, vocabulary and structure. Assessment also helps me to improve my work next time. I always remember that I have mistakes in my writing. Assessment can improve my work every time and I am not going to do the same mistakes again. However, exams are not always effective in improving my writing performance, because it occurred twice in a year which there was no feedback to improve my learning between tests.



Researcher: How do feel when you are preparing to take a written assessment?

Student: Yah, I think I feel a little nervous when I have assessment because I know that I am going to do couple of mistakes. I feel worried sometimes and every time it would be better than first time but assessment is assessment. For example, low grades had a negative effect on my feelings especially for exams because grades were used for selection and transfer from one level to another. Furthermore, a short time allowed for me to answer the exam questions had a negative effect because the time was too limited which could affect my thinking while I was doing the assessment. I started thinking and focusing about the time rather than the questions of the exam.



Researcher: Do you prefer to receive your written feedback while you writing? If yes, why? If no, why not



Student: Of course, I always prefer to receive written feedback because my tutor assesses every part of my work.

Researcher: Do you prefer to receive your written feedback while you are writing? If yes, why? If no, why not

Student: Of course, I always prefer to receive written feedback because my tutor assesses every part of my work.

Feedback & thinking

Researcher: Give example?

Student: This feedback helps me to improve my writing and also enables me do less mistakes in the next work. My answer is, feedback helps me to explore me mistakes and correct them because the next time I will not do the same mistakes. My opinion is that continuous feedback is useful in my learning because I can receive a number of feedbacks on my drafts of work. In fact, I prefer feedback from my tutors rather than classmates.

Peer assessment, factors

Researcher: why?

Students: Because classmates just wrote one or two comments for whole assignment or work but my tutors provided good feedback. Tutors feedback focused only on the weak points in my written work and not strong points. I would say that I prefer to receive written feedback than oral because I can get to it at any time.

Researcher: What do you think of reviewing your classmates' work?

Student: I do not review my classmates' work because my tutors do not motivate me to do peer assessment. I believe that it is difficult to review my classmates' work because I have friendship in my classroom which prevent me to assess each other's work and also I do not trust my peers about providing good assessments. I think is not important to review my classmates' work because my tutors can do the job.

Researcher: What do you think of having to find your own written mistakes in writing tasks?

Student: I would say that I do not practice self-assessment because I do not have experience. I believe that it required more knowledge or experience. I think it is hard to find mistakes in my written task. My tutors do not encourage or motivate me to use it. My teachers can find written mistakes in my assignment or home work better than I do.

Self-assessment, factors, thinking

Researcher: Could you please tell me if your tutor provides you with assessment criteria?

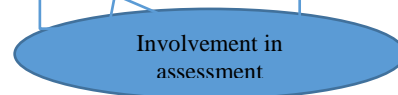
Student: Yes, they provide me with assessment criteria before written task. They tell me how every certain aspect is assessed and graded. They also tell me the most important thing to focus in my work and less important aspects. Providing assessment criteria helps me to obtain higher grades and to pay more attention to specific aspects of the writing task. In writing classes, tutors provided me with criteria before the event and they explained that some points

Criteria, thinking

should be focused on as grammar, ideas, spelling and writing style and vocabulary.

Researcher: Could you please explain if you prefer to be involved in assessment? Either with (a) your classmates (b) in discussion with your tutor (c) assessing your work

Student: As I said before I had no experience in involvement in the assessment process because my tutors did not ask me to conduct peer and self-assessment. There are also other difficulties for example, I believe there were some difficulties that prevented me to be involved in peer assessment such as my classmate's culture of writing and also I did not trust their assessment. I do not discuss tutors' feedback and assessment criteria. Grades also were given by tutors not discussed among us because I perceive them as private and there was no need to be discussed with peers. I do not like to show my low grades to classmate. I believe my tutors do not encourage me to discuss grades.



Researcher: Finally, is there any further information you would like to add?

Student: Of course, I think in writing classes there is a need to use more ways of assessment, which can help me to improve my writing performance such as peer and self-assessment.

APPENDIX H (Sample of Memo Writing)

I typed a few examples of memo writing because my supervisors could not read my handwriting. The following examples of memo writing will be attached in the appendices(E).

Collecting the quantitative data was in December 2013 to January 2014 at 10:30 am and 12:30 am in each English language department.

Six English language departments were visited to distribute the questionnaires to tutors and students.

Analysing some tutors' and students' questionnaires showed some important points such as a lack of providing assessment criteria by tutors.

This led me to focus on criteria and understand the reason behind not giving criteria to students.

Similar questionnaire items were clustered into groups under headings such as self-assessment, peer assessment and development of students' learning.

Comparing tutors' questionnaires to students' to find the similarities and differences.

I read literature about assessment to understand what other researchers said about criteria, peer and self-assessment and feedback: Topping, 2009; Light et al., 2009; Taras,2005, Black and Wiliam, 1998; Ngar-Fun Liua and Carless, 2006.

I asked myself several questions about the collected data for example, why students do not give peer feedback?

Cultural issues , knowledge. check

Interviews with tutors and students would help to understand the problems of giving peer feedback.

Interview sessions were conducted between the 14th of December 2013 to 18th of January 2014 and each lasted about 30 minutes. All interviews were conducted at 11:00,12:30 and 1:00 am.

Listening to first interview with tutor 1, who said mid and final exams were used to assess students' work. why?

Several colours were used to highlight the codes for example, red colour was used to highlight the assessment methods used in the Libyan context.

T1 mentions lack of time for feedback check other tutors

Looking for similarities and differences between the data, to put them under one heading.

Another example, students 4 prefers to receive tutors' written feedback rather than from peers. I checked other students' and tutors' perceptions about this to compare and find if there was similar view or not. Student's culture including family and close friends.

Class size was factor and this led me to understand how and which assessment method was affected by this factor.

A number of codes emerged during the analysis process including preferred methods of assessment, frequency of written assessment, mid and final exams. These codes were compared and developed into methods of assessment including summative, continuous, self and peer assessment.

Literature about assessment was read to understand what other scholars wrote about assessment in relation to the my study.

Students interview-motivated by bad grades. Check the quantitative data.

Ministry Of Higher Education
And Scientific Research

University Of Zawia

Faculty of Arts



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و البحث العلمي

جامعة الزاوية

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التاريخ: 2013/12/04 م

To whom it may concern

I certify that Mr. Imad Waragh is permitted to collect his data for his main study (questionnaire and interview) with fourth year students and teachers at Zawia university, faculty of arts, department of English.

For more information please do not hesitate to contact.

All the best

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2013/12/04



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