

## Assessment Beliefs and Practices of Libyan Secondary School English Language Teachers

Vahid Nimehchisalem\*, Marwa M. Abdalla Khalifa

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Corresponding Author: Vahid Nimehchisalem, E-mail: vahid@upm.edu.my, nimechie@gmail.com

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: July 27, 2020

Accepted: September 18, 2020

Published: November 30, 2020

Volume: 9 Issue: 6

Advance access: November 2020

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

### ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing concerns about the importance of assessment, the studies that directly address the assessment beliefs and practices among Libyan secondary school English language teachers are scarce. The present study aimed to investigate the Libyan teachers' classroom-based assessment beliefs and practices and the relationship between them. For this purpose, a total of 90 Libyan English teachers participated in a survey by responding to a questionnaire which explored their beliefs and practices in the four stages of assessment; namely, planning, implementing, monitoring and recording. Based on their perceptions, other than their confusion over ethical matters in assessment, the teachers' beliefs and practices generally seemed to be at an acceptable level. The results also demonstrated that the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices is positively moderate and significant in all stages of assessment. The findings are expected to provide insights into the difficulties encountered by the language teachers and learners in the assessment processes, and therefore, enhance assessment practice and learning conditions.

**Key words:** Assessment Beliefs, Assessment Practices, Classroom-based Assessment, Language Assessment, Libyan Secondary Schools

### INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a wide range of activities that measure the extent to which students comprehend the curriculum material and achieve the intended instructional objectives planned by teachers (Halpern, Appleby, Beers, Cowan, Furedy, Halonen et al., 1993). It is also known as the process of gathering information for the purpose of improving teaching and learning among. Classroom-based assessment, according to Harlen (1994), is a process of gathering information and interpreting them while considering some defined criterion to form a judgement. McMillan (2013) made a stronger attempt to bring together the characteristics of assessment in one definition. According to him, classroom assessment is a diagnostic test that aims at evaluating students' learning of the subject material. From this perspective, it is a monitoring tool that gathers information about students' learning process to enable teachers make informed decisions about the knowledge of their students. Teaching and assessment are two interrelated concepts which form an intricate relationship that works for each other's benefit, and therefore, they inform and improve each other (Malone, 2013).

Classroom assessment can take two distinct forms (Cizek, 2010). When used formatively, assessment progressively guides and improves students' learning and teachers' instruction. In contrast, when assessment is used in a summative way, it has a reporting function whereby inferences

are drawn from evidence gathered from assessment practices to report students' learning to an audience for consequential purposes. This type of usage is in line with the traditional paradigm based on behaviorism and measurement theories.

### Teachers' Assessment beliefs and Practices

There are several early accounts which suggest that understanding teachers' beliefs of classroom-based assessment is important because they not only have an influence on their instructional practices but also are related to students' attainment (Johnson, 1992). Obviously, knowing about teachers' beliefs enables us to make predictions about teaching and assessment practices in classrooms (Eslami-Rasekh & Valizadeh, 2004). Assessment practices have been largely studied, but there is still need for gathering evidence from various cultural backgrounds (Barnes, Fives & Dacey, 2015).

Research on classroom assessment practice has thus far been focused on the useful approaches that can eliminate negative assessment practices among teachers, and hence, to provide constructive feedback that can improve language teaching and learning. Many educational systems are also striving to bring new assessment practices that incorporate new approaches and techniques. This suggests that teachers' literacy of assessment is of great value to the quality of education.

Several studies have investigated the assessment practices by looking at these practices in different contexts and

at different time intervals. For example, Taggart, McMillan and Lawson (2010) made a study on 261 secondary science teachers from 69 schools. They aimed to examine the teachers' assessment practices and grading practices. On the one hand, Taggart and colleagues found that science teachers focus on a variety of aspects to evaluate their students, including effort ability, external benchmark, extra credit, academic achievement and participation. Additionally, the teachers focused on using four main types of assessment practices: construct response, teacher-created assessment, objective assessment, and major examination. Duncan and Noonan (2007) used the same questionnaire used by Taggart et al. (2010), and they investigated examined teachers' assessment and grading practices in Western Canadian Province. A total of 530 secondary school teachers participated in the study. The findings were similar to that of Taggart et al. (2010). Teachers frequently used objective assessments and they considered students' efforts in their grading.

### **Relationship between Assessment beliefs and Practices**

Previous work on classroom assessment suggests that teachers' beliefs of assessment are related to the actual assessment practices in the classroom and that the main stumbling blocks to an effective use of classroom assessment are the values and beliefs that teachers hold about classroom assessment (Scott, Webber, Aitken & Lupart, 2011). Several studies have attempted to examine the association between teachers' beliefs and classroom assessment practices (Lee, 2017; Ndalichako, 2015; Niveen, Ain, & Sabariah, 2017; Unal and Unal, 2019). The recurring result is that teachers' practices could be altered if changes are made to their beliefs (Barnes et al., 2015).

Chew and Lee (2013) investigated the relation between 148 secondary school teachers' assessment beliefs and practices in Singapore. Their results revealed inconsistencies between beliefs and practices. For instance, while the teachers claimed that they do not believe in performance orientation practices such as using grades and marks, as well as in using the curriculum to plan future lesson rather than previous assessment, results showed that they practiced these beliefs. In other words, although the teachers did not believe in summative practices, they still used such practices in their class.

Similarly, Azis (2015) investigated the relation between teachers' beliefs and practices among 107 English teachers. The study used mixed methods design, where both questionnaires and interviews were incorporated. The participants who scored high in improvement conceptions were interviewed. According to the responses made to the questionnaire, teachers strongly recommended formative practices that aid students develop their learning, and they voted for using summative practices to account for learners' achievement. Nonetheless, the results showed that teachers' beliefs were inconsistent with their classroom practices. Although teachers favored assessments that are used for improving teaching and learning, their practices were more inclined towards accountability conceptions.

On the other hand, there are also studies that report associations between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices.

For instance, Brown, Kennedy, Fok, Chan, and Yu (2009) found teachers' conception was regressed on their teaching improvement practices suggesting a relationship between improvement conceptions and formative practices. Similarly, Calveric (2010) tested the third and fourth grade teachers' assessment beliefs and their impact on teachers' assessment practices. Calveric found a significant relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. Moderate relationship was also found between school accountability and major exams and publisher tests. Improvement conceptions revealed the weakest relationship with major exams. All conceptions were consistently correlated with practices.

Similar evidence about the relationship between belief and practice comes from Adam and Hsu (1998) who examined how the beliefs of mathematics teachers were translated in their actual practices. Their results revealed that the least important conception was related to essay items, while the most important conception related to using observation. Teachers' assessment practices were correlated with their conceptions. The essay items were given the lowest usage and teachers' observation was given the highest. Adams and Hsu (1998) concluded that teachers' conceptions are mirrored in their assessment practices despite the variety of tools used.

Previous studies on language assessment converge on the idea that teachers use a variety of assessment practices in their classrooms (Cizek, Fitzgerald, & Rachor, 1995). Although performance assessments and portfolios are regarded as more ideal to assess students' learning than traditional methods of constructed response and selected response, these alternative assessment methods are infrequently used in the classroom. Moreover, reviews of previous work on teachers' assessment practice suggest that teachers' practice remains dominantly traditional over the past thirty years.

As the review suggests, the research on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices of classroom assessment shows discrepant findings. In some contexts, the relationship is positive whereas it is negligible in other contexts. Cross-cultural studies suggest that teachers who come from different cultural backgrounds are more likely to have various beliefs and practices of classroom assessment (Saeed, Tahir, & Latif, 2018). Therefore, the present study attempts to examine English teachers' assessment beliefs and practices in the Libyan context, as well as the relationship between their assessment beliefs and practices.

### **Assessment in Libyan Secondary Schools**

Libyan schools are considered undeveloped and face many issues that are worth researching (El-Taher Al-Fourganee, 2018). One of these issues is that most Libyan teachers do not receive proper training on how to evaluate students and they are also still implementing traditional assessment approaches. And hence, there is currently an increasing attention to teaching and learning of English language in the Libyan context. The Ministry of Education in Libya plans to reengineer and renovate the entire education system, including the goals and value to be achieved. Classroom-based assessment is currently one of the main subjects of inquiry

and development for the Libyan government (Alshibany, 2018). According to the General People's Committee of Education (GPCE, 2008), the Libyan government works hard on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning of English among schoolteachers and learners. Specifically, GPCE is providing training and workshops that aim to improve the quality of education in general, and to raise the teachers' awareness of more modern teaching and assessment techniques that should be employed in the classroom.

According to some local researchers in the Libyan context (Alhmali, 2007; Dalala, 2014; Orafi & Borg, 2009; Shihiba, 2011), examinations and grades are still considered the most common assessment practices used among Libyan secondary school teachers.

It is also important to note that the Libyan educational system and its assessment practices are all centralized and managed by GPCE. The evaluation criteria are determined every year by GPCE (GPCE, 2008). Teachers largely depend on the tests designed by GPCE to measure their students' learning level in the classroom (Shihiba, 2011). As regards the assessment practices in English assessment, tests that encourage the students to memorize word meaning and spelling are considered the most common practices. Similarly, the use of multiple-choice questions and word-picture matching items are largely common. Oral tests are rare and sometimes argued upon as neglected practice (El-Taher Al-Fourganee, 2018). The main objective of assessment for teachers is to keep track of students' learning level, make record of the scores, and share it with parents, while students' main interest is to pass the test.

Written tests usually occur on a monthly basis in Libyan schools. There are also final examinations that are usually held at the end of the academic year and these exams are considered as a key criterion in evaluating students' learning. It is necessary that students achieve the required score to pass to the next grade level. If a student fails the exam, s/he is given another opportunity to sit for the exam. In case s/he fails the course a second time, then s/he fails to pass to the next learning level. Corresponding to what was said, the Libyan secondary schools are seen to largely depend on examinations and grades as the most common assessment strategies in evaluating students' learning. Although GPCE in Libya is striving to provide the best means to enhance the teaching and learning processes and to give the opportunity for teachers and learners to discover their potentials (GPCE, 2008), the assessment practices among Libyan English teachers in secondary schools do not seem to be well employed or well understood. Ministry of Education (2004) reports that students' performance in English language did not meet the expectations and was even very disappointing. It was speculated that the underlying cause for this poor performance could be the teaching and assessment practices in the Libyan classroom.

According to the literature reviewed in the present study, there is no work that has attempted to study English language teachers' beliefs and practices of classroom-based assessment in Libya. As previously highlighted, assessment practice plays a vital role in the teaching and learning process,

and hence we find that this work would provide insights into Libyan teachers' take on language assessment.

### Objective and Research Questions

This study aims to explore teachers' beliefs of classroom-based assessment and how their beliefs are correlated with their assessment practice in the Libyan secondary schools. To address this objective the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the Libyan secondary school English language teachers' classroom-based assessment beliefs and practices in the four stages of planning, implementing, monitoring and recording?
2. What are the relationships between the teachers' classroom-based assessment beliefs and practices in the four stages of the assessment cycle?

### METHODS

The study adopted a quantitative approach with a correlational design. It was observational in its nature and depended on a questionnaire to collect the data.

### Participants

All the participants ( $n = 90$ ) were English teachers who were randomly selected from public Libyan secondary schools where the curriculum and testing protocols are guided by the Education Ministry in Libya. The teachers were all working in public Libyan secondary schools at the time of participation. The questionnaire was sent to all the secondary schools in Tripoli. English language teachers in these schools who volunteered to participate in the survey responded to the questionnaire and returned it to the researchers. A total of 141 teachers took part in the study and only 93 of them completed the survey. Furthermore, three questionnaires were removed because they had a single-type response and/or their *SD* was above 3. As it is well established in educational statistics, the minimum sample size for correlational studies is roughly 50 participants to achieve 80% power (Cohen, 2013; Wilson Von Voorhis & Morgan, 2007).

### Instrument

The questionnaire was adapted from Shim (2009). A demographic section was added to the beginning of this instrument, which was followed by a five-point Likert style scale, from 1 signifying "Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree". The questionnaire elicits information about teachers' beliefs and practices of classroom assessment, at four stages of planning (17 items), implementation (6 items), monitoring (12 items), and recording (5 items), making a total of 40 items for teachers' beliefs and 40 other items for their practices.

Before being used in the actual study, the questionnaire was introduced to five experienced Libyan secondary school teachers. They were requested to read the questionnaire and suggest amendments where needed. The feedback received from the pilot study showed that the items were to a large

extent clear, and that the participants could easily comprehend the intended meanings of the statements. However, there were some comments related to the clarity of instructions and the format, based on which minor modifications were made to the instrument. The questionnaire was piloted on a sample of 18 Libyan English secondary school teachers. The maximum time that they took to complete the questionnaire was approximately 25 minutes. Based on the internal reliability analysis, both the beliefs and the practices sections had high internal reliability coefficients, 0.96 and 0.97, respectively.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The participants responded to the questionnaire items online via Google Forms. They were notified that there were no correct or incorrect answers, or trick questions. They were also informed that their responses would be treated anonymously and used for only research purposes. No incentives were given to them for their participation which was voluntary, and they could withdraw any time. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data using SPSS (version 25). The following cut-off points were considered in interpreting the mean scores:

- $M \leq 4.5$ : Strongly agree;
- $M = 3.5-4.49$ : Agree;
- $M = 2.5-3.49$ : Undecided;
- $M = 1.5-2.49$ : Disagree; and
- $M \geq 1.49$ : Strongly disagree.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are reported and discussed in this part following the order of the research questions.

### Demographic Information

The participants' background information is presented in Table 1.

As the table shows, the participants were proportionately distributed in terms of their teaching experience. As regards the number of assessments carried out by the Libyan teachers, most of the teachers assessed more than once, but more specifically, they often assessed two to four times a semester. The results also showed that most of the teachers (45.6%) constructed their own tests while others preferred using tests developed by their schools (24.4%) or other institutions (18.9%). Finally, most of the participants stated that they had received training on how to design classroom assessment (62.2%) whereas the rest had received no training on assessment.

### Assessment Beliefs and Practices

The teachers' assessment beliefs and practices were analysed using descriptive statistics. The results are reported in reference to the four stages of assessment, planning, implementing, monitoring and recording, following the research questions.

#### Stage 1: Planning

We analysed the perceptions that Libyan teachers hold about their classroom-based assessment beliefs and practices in the planning stage. Using descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviation values of teachers' responses are presented in Table 2.

According to Table 2, the respondents' beliefs and practices were almost in agreement. Regarding their beliefs, the respondents strongly agreed with items 16 and 17, both of which are related to matters of equality and fairness in assessment. The only item about which the teachers were not sure was item 14 which had to do with ethics in assessment. Admittedly, it is not common practice, particularly in the case of classroom-based assessment, to receive informed consent from the students or their parents in advance before assessments. The respondents agreed with the rest of the items,

**Table 1.** Demographic information

Demographics		Percentage
Experience	1-4 years	34.4
	5-10 years	32.2
	10 years above	33.3
Assessment Frequency	Once	5.6
	Twice	25.6
	Three times	30.0
	Four Times	31.1
	More than four times	7.8
Sources of Assessment	I use tests constructed by other institutes	18.9
	I use previously constructed tests by other teachers in my school	24.4
	I construct tests by myself	45.6
	Others	11.1
Training Experience	Yes	62.2
	No	37.8

**Table 2.** Planning beliefs and practices

Beliefs			Practices		
Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Teachers should first identify the purpose of the assessments when they design them.	4.37	0.99	1. I first identify the purpose of the assessment when I design the assessment.	4.19	0.96
2. Teachers should take into account the attainment objectives of the curriculum when they design the assessments.	4.24	0.88	2. I consider the standards or attainment targets which the curriculum requests when I design the assessment.	4.23	0.65
3. Teachers should consider what their students' needs are when they design assessments.	4.31	0.97	3. I consider what the students' needs are when I design the assessment.	4.26	0.79
4. Teachers should balance the attainment targets with their students' needs when they design the assessments.	4.17	0.86	4. I balance the attainment targets with the students' needs when I design the assessment.	4.13	0.74
5. Teachers should use assessment specifications when they carry out assessments.	4.00	0.89	5. I use assessment specifications when I carry out the assessments.	4.03	0.77
6. Assessments (tasks) should relate to what students do in real class time.	4.22	0.88	6. My assessments (tasks) are related to what the students do in real class time.	4.12	0.82
7. Assessments (tasks) should be meaningful to the students.	4.24	1.03	7. My assessments (tasks) are meaningful to the students.	4.19	0.78
8. Assessments (tasks) should be designed in such a way as to obtain information about what students know at that particular time.	3.90	1.08	8. I design assessments (tasks) in such a way as to obtain information about what students know at that particular time.	3.99	0.85
9. Assessments (tasks) should be designed in such a way as to obtain information about what students can do at that particular time.	3.88	1.04	9. I design assessments (tasks) in such a way as to obtain information about what students can do at that particular time.	3.91	0.83
10. Assessments (tasks) should be designed in such a way as to obtain information about students' potential to use the language effectively.	4.11	0.93	10. I design assessments (tasks) in such a way as to obtain information about students' potential to use the language effectively.	4.26	0.80
11. The appropriateness of assessments (tasks) should be checked by calling for peer comment, or with reference to published guidelines (if available).	3.69	0.89	11. The appropriateness of my assessments (tasks) is checked by calling for peer comment or with reference to published guidelines (if available).	3.82	0.87
12. Assessments should focus on students' progress and achievements rather than on comparisons between the students in the classroom.	4.40	0.86	12. My assessments focus on students' progress and achievement rather than on comparisons between the students in the classroom.	4.36	0.72
13. Teachers should give the students advance notice so that students will be able to prepare for the assessments.	4.09	0.92	13. I give the students advance notice, so that the students are able to prepare for the assessments.	4.07	0.84
14. Teachers should receive advance 'informed consent' from the students or their parents with regards to carrying out assessments.	3.13	1.23	14. I receive advance 'informed consent' from the students or their parents with regard to carrying out assessments.	3.30	1.22
15. Teachers should respect the privacy of the students and guarantee confidentiality of results.	4.33	0.92	15. I respect the privacy of the students and guarantee confidentiality.	4.32	0.83
16. Teachers should make sure that all students are given the same learning opportunities in classrooms.	4.59	0.70	16. I make sure that all students are given the same learning opportunities in their classroom.	4.49	0.58
17. Teachers should make sure that the assessments are not affected by students' personal characteristics such as gender, appearance, economic, and social background.	4.52	0.84	17. I make sure that the assessments are not affected by students' personal characteristics such as gender, appearance, and economic and social background.	4.37	0.69

Key  $M \leq 4.5$ : Strongly agree;  $M = 3.5-4.49$ : Agree;  $M = 2.5-3.49$ : Undecided;  $M = 1.5-2.49$ : Disagree;  $M \geq 1.49$ : Strongly disagree

among which item 11 obtained the lowest mean score, which indicates that teachers believe in but are not too much concerned about having peers vet their assessment or receiving feedback from them for their assessment. This is also understandable considering the hectic schedules and high workload of language teachers. Another interesting point which is worth consideration is that unlike assessment beliefs, none of the items related to assessment practices obtained a mean score signifying 'strongly agree'. This suggests that the teachers might strongly believe in fairness in assessment but in practice they may not strongly perceive themselves as able to implement their assessment beliefs fairly.

According to Rea-Dickins (2000), the main purpose of an assessment is to show evidence of curricular learning and development where teachers should design assessments that serve the goals of the curriculum. However, as indicated by our data, the teachers were more concerned with students being given equal learning opportunities in the classroom, or assessment not being affected by personal and social backgrounds. The planning beliefs related to the purposes of assessment, objectives of the curriculum, and information about students' potential of effective use of language obtained the lowest mean scores in items related to both beliefs and practices. These results imply that Libyan teachers' beliefs and practices are yet to be aligned with the standard educational purposes of assessment or the main characteristics of classroom-based assessment (Arkoudis & O'Loughlin, 2004). The results also suggest that the teachers were uncertain whether they should receive informed consents from students' parents about their assessments. According to Shim (2008), this view towards parental involvement could be associated with practicality matters in the parental permission and the teachers' heavy workload. The teachers could be aware of the administrative demands regarding this matter, but they still felt the weight of parental involvement; and therefore, did not seem to accept this requirement.

## Stage 2: Implementation

The teachers' implementation beliefs are illustrated using descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviation of their beliefs and practices (Table 3).

As shown in the table, on average the teachers held very strong implementation beliefs and they strongly perceived themselves as practicing all these beliefs. As the results indicate, the teachers strongly believed that students' completion of the assessment task within a specific time was very important ( $M= 4.10$ ,  $SD= .73$ ). They also strongly agreed that their students should understand the desired outcomes of the assessment ( $M= 3.96$ ,  $SD= .91$ ) and giving them immediate feedback after completing the task ( $M= 3.80$ ,  $SD= 1.1$ ). The teachers also regarded instructing the students how to do the assessment task as very central among the implementation practices that they actually implemented in their classroom assessments ( $M= 4.11$ ,  $SD= .78$ ). Completing the assessment tasks within a specified time given to students and making it clear how the tasks will be assessed by their teachers are equally important for the teachers.

As indicated in the results related to implementation beliefs, the Libyan teachers pay special attention to the fact that the assessments should be completed within a manageable time. They also believe that students should be supported with feedback when they have a problem that hinders their completion of the assessment task. In the same vein, Rea-Dickins (2000) suggests that the implementation stage should involve teachers' provision of feedback during assessment activity. In addition, the Libyan teachers' beliefs and practices were also in agreement with another related implementation principle that is providing immediate feedback to the learners after their completion of the task.

The teachers also believed that making their students understand the desired outcomes of the assessment tasks is crucial. They also agreed that they considered this principle in their assessment practices. Likewise, Rea-Dickins (2000) considers this a very crucial principle in the learning-teaching process.

**Table 3. Implementation Beliefs and Practices**

Beliefs			Practices		
Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Teachers should inform students on why they are being assessed.	4.04	0.90	1. I inform the students on why they are being assessed.	4.08	0.86
2. Teachers should explicitly instruct the students on how to do the assessments (tasks).	4.07	0.86	2. I explicitly instruct the students how to do the assessments (tasks).	4.11	0.78
3. Students should understand the desired outcomes of the assessments (tasks).	3.96	0.91	3. Students understand the desired outcome of the assessments (tasks).	4.04	0.76
4. Students should be supported when they have a problem that hinders their completion of assessments (tasks).	4.09	0.84	4. Students are supported when they have a problem that hinders their completion of assessments (tasks).	4.09	0.71
5. Teachers should give students immediate feedback after they complete each assessment (task).	3.80	1.1	5. I give students immediate feedback after they complete each assessment (task).	3.89	0.98
6. Assessments (tasks) processes should be completed within a manageable time considering the given context.	4.10	0.73	6. My assessment (tasks) processes are completed within a manageable time considering the given context.	4.08	0.77

Key  $M \leq 4.5$ : Strongly agree;  $M = 3.5-4.49$ : Agree;  $M = 2.5-3.49$ : Undecided;  $M = 1.5-2.49$ : Disagree;  $M \geq 1.49$ : Strongly disagree

Finally, they also agreed with the principle that the students should be instructed on how to perform the assessment tasks successfully. Similarly, according to Shim (2009), the explicit instruction of how students should carry out the assessment task should be a common feature in the assessment protocol.

### Stage 3: Monitoring

We also analysed the teachers' monitoring beliefs and practices. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics results for the teachers' monitoring beliefs.

According to the table, the teachers agreed with almost all the items related to monitoring beliefs and practices. The highest mean scores were recorded for items 7 and 9 which were related to making assessment a part of learning-teaching and providing feedback for learners to help them improve their skills, respectively. On the other hand, two of the items about which the respondents were unsure were items 8 (sharing the findings of assessment with other teachers) and 11 (involving the parents in the process of assessment). With the exception of these two items, the teachers seemed to have a clear idea of the monitoring stage. According our results, the teachers' beliefs and practices were primarily concerned with two central monitoring principles: (a) the overall

feedback should enable students know how to improve their performance and work in the classroom, and (b) classroom assessment should be an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

An interesting finding was that Libyan teachers do not seem to be in favor of sharing their assessment practices with other fellow teachers in the same school or involving parents in their assessment practices. The reason could be that the teachers worried about being ridiculed by their colleagues who are more experienced than them (Shim, 2009). Libyan teachers may perceive themselves as the absolute power or authority in their work environment. According to Davison (2004), the educational system of a school can be enhanced when all the stake-holders are actively involved. This suggests that further steps should be taken in the direction of developing more ethical assessment in Libyan schools.

Furthermore, the results showed that the teachers tended to support the principle that they should use assessment results to revise their teaching methodologies. This was equally demonstrated in their practices which suggests that they were aware of these assessment principles which can have positive washback effects on the learning-teaching process. Overall, Libyan teachers seem to be more positive on the

**Table 4: Monitoring Beliefs and Practices**

Beliefs			Practices		
Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Teachers should construct a marking system as part of the whole assessment process.	4.10	0.73	1. I construct a marking system as part of the whole assessment process.	4.08	0.81
2. Marking criteria should be connected with the aims of the assessment and the learner's characteristics in a given context.	3.93	0.96	2. Marking criteria are connected with the aims of the assessment and the learner's characteristics in a given context.	3.94	0.85
3. Teachers should let students have detailed information about the marking criteria.	3.87	1.05	3. I let students have detailed information about the marking criteria.	3.83	1.01
4. Teachers should mark the students' performance consistently.	4.07	0.86	4. I mark the students' performance consistently.	4.19	0.72
5. Teachers should use the results of assessments to revise their own teaching.	4.27	0.82	5. I use the results of assessments to revise my teaching.	4.13	0.75
6. Teachers should not use the results of any assessment negatively.	4.14	1.01	6. I use the results of assessments positively not negatively.	4.20	0.74
7. Teachers should make assessments a part of the teaching and learning process.	4.32	0.75	7. I make assessments a part of my teaching and learning process.	4.27	0.72
8. Teachers should share the findings of assessments with other teachers.	3.51	1.29	8. I share the findings of assessments with other teachers.	3.49	1.18
9. The overall feedback should allow students to know how to improve their work and take their learning forward.	4.40	0.79	9. The overall feedback enables students to know how to improve their work and take their learning forward.	4.21	0.71
10. The whole process of assessment should be consistent in terms of procedure and administration.	4.01	0.79	10. The whole process of assessment is consistent in terms of procedure and administration.	4.03	0.80
11. The process of assessment should be supported by the involvement of students' parents.	3.43	1.14	11. The process of my assessments is supported by the involvement of the students' parents.	3.40	1.13
12. Teachers should monitor the misuse of the overall consequences of the assessment as a tool of power.	3.81	0.93	12. I monitor the misuse of the overall consequences of the assessment as a tool of power.	3.87	0.89

Key  $M \leq 4.5$ : Strongly agree;  $M = 3.5-4.49$ : Agree;  $M = 2.5-3.49$ : Undecided;  $M = 1.5-2.49$ : Disagree;  $M \geq 1.49$ : Strongly disagree

monitoring stage of classroom assessment than the other stages.

#### Stage 4: Recording

In the recording stage, the teachers would indicate their awareness of their administrative responsibilities when it comes to recording and sharing their students' progress information and the achievement scores. The analysis of the teachers' recording beliefs and practices was the final stage of assessment that was investigated in the current study. Table 5 indicates the mean and standard deviation values of the teachers' recording beliefs and practices.

As shown in the table, on average, the teachers agreed with all of the items related to recording beliefs and practices. The Libyan teachers show awareness of their responsibilities in recording assessment results. To offer an example, as our results show, the teachers are aware that they should report the assessment results in a way that their students' privacy and well-being are not negatively affected. Among the items, the one which obtained the lowest mean score was item 5. Even though the teachers still agreed with the item, its mean value ( $M=3.61$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ), particularly when the teachers' assessment practices are concerned, was close to the borderline between 'agree' and 'undecided'. This is understandable as it does not sound really very practical for the teachers to come up with a formal review of individual students' achievements.

According to Shohamy (2001), the level and nature of responsibility of teachers and/or assessment developers is largely controversial. For instance, the level of teachers' responsibilities is extremely different from that of language assessment developers; the latter have broader responsibilities that include social and political concerns. However, Hamp-Lyons (1997) argues that classroom assessors should understand the level of responsibilities that lies in their own context and how these responsibilities should be considerably under their control.

#### Relationships between the Beliefs and Practices

Before testing the correlations, normality analyses were run. The results showed normal distributions for planning beliefs and practices data. However, the data related to implementation, monitoring, and recording beliefs and practices were not normally distributed. Therefore, Pearson Product Moment test was used for testing the correlation between planning data whereas Spearman Rho test was used for analysing the data related to the other three stages. Table 6 presents the results of correlations between beliefs and practices of the teachers at each stage of assessment.

Based on Guilford's (1973) Rule of Thumb, all these correlation coefficients range between .4 and .7 which means that they are all positively moderate correlations. Similarly, the  $p$ -value in these correlation tests were smaller than alpha at .001 level of significance. Therefore, it can be concluded that all these correlations are statistically significant.

A considerable number of studies examined the relation between beliefs and practices, but the general pattern of evidence is still controversial. Some studies find teachers' beliefs correlated with their classroom practices (Brown et al., 2009; Calveric, 2010, Middleton, 2017), whereas others find inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices (Azis, 2015; Chew & Lee, 2013).

The results of the present study demonstrated that the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices is significantly moderate and positive in all stages of classroom assessment. This was in line with Basturkmen, Loewen, and Eliss's (2004) view of how teachers' assessment beliefs can reflect their practices. According to Basturkmen et al. (2004), the term *teacher's beliefs* is used to refer to the knowledge, ideas and thoughts that are outspoken by teachers of what should be done, and the evaluations that are considered as better to a certain case. This definition supports the positive bond between teachers' beliefs and practices in the present study. The Libyan teachers' beliefs were positively in a considerable accord with their practices.

**Table 5.** Recording beliefs and practices

Beliefs			Practices		
Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Teachers should consider students' rights as assessment takers; they must never be harmed by the results.	4.19	0.85	1. I consider students' rights as assessment takers; they are never harmed by the results.	4.11	.87
2. Teachers should be aware of their responsibilities for the output of their professional work.	4.42	0.69	2. I am aware of my responsibilities for the output of my professional work.	4.33	.75
3. Local or nationwide report systems on the students' progress and achievements should be provided.	4.01	0.77	3. Local or nationwide report systems on the students' progress and achievements are provided.	3.77	1.08
4. Schools should develop their own report system of students' progress and achievements.	4.16	0.82	4. My school/schools develop their own report system of students' progress and achievements.	3.90	.90
5. A formal review of a student's progress and achievements should be reported to the local education authority and the central government.	3.81	1.00	5. A formal review of a student's progress and achievements are reported to the local education authority and the central government.	3.61	1.05

Key  $M \leq 4.5$ : Strongly agree;  $M = 3.5-4.49$ : Agree;  $M = 2.5-3.49$ : Undecided;  $M = 1.5-2.49$ : Disagree;  $M \geq 1.49$ : Strongly disagree



**Table 6.** Relationships between planning beliefs and practices

Variables	$r_{(s)}$	$p$
Planning beliefs and practices	.686**	.000
Implementation beliefs and practices	.595**	
Monitoring beliefs and practices	.616**	
Recording beliefs and practices	.561**	

\*\*  $p < .01$

The positive relationship between Libyan teachers' beliefs and practices takes another issue with the theoretical perspectives of the present study. According to the sociocultural theory, the human activities and practices in a specific cultural context are a reflection of the beliefs and values embraced by that culture. This suggests that one's practices are mediated by a cognition that is greatly dependent upon the social context in which people work (Cross, 2010; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

The teachers in this study could have been influenced by their ex-teachers or their colleagues working in the same school context. According to Bullock (2012), teachers are likely to behave like their past teachers. The apprenticeship of observation equips pre-service teachers with preconceptions of classroom practices (Lortie, 1975). Therefore, teachers' experience in their early school days can decide, in part, the type of teacher they tend to be in the future (Bailey, 1996). It can be speculated that teachers' beliefs of language assessment were mostly a product of previous experience that was carried onto their beliefs and practices.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored Libyan School English teachers' beliefs and practices in the four stages of assessment; namely, planning, implementing, monitoring and recording. The study also examined the relationship between these assessment beliefs and practices. As the teachers reported in their planning beliefs and practices, they were undecided whether they should obtain the students and their parents' informed consent prior to administering any assessment. This finding points to the necessity of improving these teachers' awareness of ethical matters in assessment. The other area of concern was recorded in the case of monitoring beliefs and practices. As our results indicated, the teachers also expressed doubts regarding the issue of sharing the findings of their assessment with colleagues and involving their students' parents in the process of assessment. With the exception of these aforesaid items, the teachers' beliefs and practices were acceptable and in line with the principles of assessment. For instance, in the implementation stage, the teachers agreed the fact that assessments should be completed within a specific time, and that students should be supported with feedback whenever they encountered a problem during the assessment task. Furthermore, in the monitoring stage, we found the teachers had a clear idea of the assessment results and the other ethical considerations related to their use. Similarly, in the recording stage, the teachers were well-aware of the administrative responsibilities and students' rights as test takers. Our results also showed positive, moderate, and

significant correlations between their beliefs and practices regarding the four stages of assessment.

It seems logical to conclude that the teachers' beliefs and practices have room for improvement when it comes to the involvement of fellow teachers and students' parents in the assessment related affairs. The teachers did not seem to see the need to send or receive an informed consent from students' parents prior to assessments. They also did not favor sharing their assessment practices with other fellow teachers in the same school or involving parents in the process of their assessment. These findings have important implications for the schools and Ministry of Education in Libya. In-service workshops, talks, and informal training sessions seem necessary and will raise these teachers consciousness on the importance of these principles. The provision of assessment training could help teachers improve the quality of their assessment, and hence, enhance students' achievements.

This paper is expected to serve as a useful reference not only for those involved in English teaching and classroom assessment, such as schoolteachers, head teachers, and students, but also for the concerned stakeholders, students' parents, supervisors, administrators and policymakers. Undertaking a wider research on the topic could help the concerned administrators make informed decisions about the source of these beliefs that may alter teachers' assessment practices in the Libyan schools. Libyan schools should be encouraged to further make the teachers aware of the standards for effective classroom assessment.

Despite its limitations, the present study provided some useful understanding of the teachers' beliefs and practices of classroom assessment in Libyan schools. This could be a steppingstone for the future studies in this field. Future large-scale studies can be conducted in which English teachers are recruited from both primary and secondary school levels to compare their assessment beliefs and practices. The potential sources of their beliefs and how professional training and courses on assessment can aid English teachers in their assessment endeavors could also be investigated in future research. The present study only relied on a quantitative research approach; using mixed methods design can provide richer insights into the problem.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, T. L., & Hsu, J. W. Y. (1998). Classroom assessment: Teachers' conceptions and practices in mathematics. *School Science and Mathematics*, 98(4), 174-180.
- Alhmali, R. (2007). *Student attitudes in the context of the curriculum in Libyan education in middle and high schools* [Unpublished PhD thesis]. University of Glasgow.
- Alshibany, E. (2018). *Libyan Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Preparatory and Secondary Schools: Teaching Methodology, Curriculum and Professional Development* [Doctoral dissertation], University of Huddersfield.
- Arkoudis, S. & O'Loughlin, K. (2004). 'Tensions between validity and outcomes: Teacher assessment of written work for recently arrived immigrant ESL students.' *Language Testing*, 21(3), 284-304

- Azis, A. (2015). Conception and practices of assessment: A case of teachers representing improvement conception, *TEFLIN Journal*, 26(2), 129-154.
- Bailey, K. M. (1996). Working for washback: a review of the washback concept in language testing. *Language Testing*, 13(3), 257-279.
- Barnes, N., Fives, H., & Dacey, C. M. (2015). Teachers' beliefs about assessment. In H. Fives & M. Gill (eds.), *International handbook of research on teachers' beliefs* (pp. 284-300). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Basturkmen, H., Loewen, S., & Eliss, R. (2004). Teachers, stated beliefs about incidental focus on form and their classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics*, 25(2), 243-272.
- Brown, G. T., Kennedy, K. J., Fok, P. K., Chan, J. K. S., & Yu, W. M. (2009). Assessment for student improvement: Understanding Hong Kong teachers' conceptions and practices of assessment. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 16(3), 347-363.
- Bullock, S. M. (2012). *Inside teacher education: Challenging prior views of teaching and learning*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Calveric, S. (2010). *Elementary teachers' assessment beliefs and practices* (Doctoral Dissertation).
- Chew, A. Y. L., & Lee, I. C. H. (2013). *Teachers' beliefs and practices of classroom assessment in Republic Polytechnic*, Singapore.
- Cizek, G. J. (2010). An introduction to formative assessment: History, characteristics, and challenges. In G. J. Cizek & H. L. Andrade (Eds.), *Handbook of formative assessment* (pp. 3-17). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cizek, G. J., Fitzgerald, S. M., & Rachor, R. A. (1995). Teachers' assessment practices: Preparation, isolation, and the kitchen sink. *Educational assessment*, 3(2), 159-179.
- Cross, R. (2010). Language teaching as sociocultural activity: Rethinking language teacher practice. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(3), 434-452.
- Dalala, J. A. A. (2014). *Investigation the Use of the Self-Assessment Processes by Libyan EFL Secondary School Teachers in Assessing Students' Written Work*. [Unpublished Doctoral Thesis]. University of Sunderland.
- Davison, C. (2004). The contradictory culture of teacher-based assessment: ESL teacher assessment practices in Australian and Hong Kong secondary schools. *Language Testing*, 21(3), 305-334.
- Duncan, C. R., & Noonan, B. (2007). Factors affecting teachers' grading and assessment practices. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 53(1), 1.
- El-TaHER Al-Fourganee, Z. (2018). *How Secondary School Libyan Teachers Assess Students' Oral Communication* [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation], University of Sunderland.
- Eslami-Rasekh, Z., & Valizadeh, K. (2004). Classroom Activities Viewed from Different Perspectives: Learners' Voice and Teachers' Voice. *TESL-EJ*, 8(3), 1-13.
- GPCE (General People's Committee of Education) 2008. The development of education: National report of Libya. *For the Session (48) of the International Conference on Education*. Geneva, from 25-28 November 2008.
- Guilford, J. P. (1973). *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Halpern, D.F., D. Appleby, S.E. Beers, C.L. Cowan, J.J. Furedy, J.S. Halonen, C.P. Horton, B.F. Peden & D.J. Pittenger, (1993). Targeting outcomes: Covering your assessment concerns and need. In T. McGovern & C. Baum (Eds.), *Handbook for enhancing undergraduate education in psychology* (pp. 23-46). Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Hamp-Lyons, L. (1997). Washback, impact and validity: ethical concerns. *Language Testing*, 14(3), 295-303
- Harlen, W. (1994). *Enhancing quality in assessment*. London: Paul Chapman.
- John-Steiner, V. & Mahn, H. (1996). Sociocultural approaches to learning and development: A Vygotskian framework. *Educational psychologist*, 31(3-4), 191-206.
- Johnson, K. E (1992). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices during literacy instruction for non-native speakers of English. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 24(1), 83-108.
- Lee, H. S. (2017). *Malaysian Secondary school English teachers' perceptions about their beliefs towards school-based assessment* [Unpublished MA dissertation]. Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia.
- Lortie, D. (1975). A sociological study. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 26, 360-363.
- Malone, M. E. (2013). The essentials of assessment literacy: Contrasts between testers and users. *Language Testing*, 30(3), 329-344.
- McMillan, J. (2013). Why we need research on classroom assessment. In J. H. McMillan (Ed.). *The SAGE handbook of research on classroom assessment* (pp. 3-16). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Middleton, G. (2017). *Assessment Conceptions and Practices among High School Teachers in Government-Funded Schools in Belize*. (Unpublished PhD dissertation)
- Ndalichako, J. L. (2015). Secondary school teachers' perceptions of assessment. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 5(5), 326.
- Niveen R. M. E., Ain, N. A. & Sabariah, M. R. (2017). Malaysian Instructors' Assessment Beliefs in Tertiary ESL Classrooms. *International Journal of Education & Literacy studies*, 5(5), 326.
- Orafi, S. & Borg, S. (2009). Intentions and realities in implementing communicative curriculum reform. *System*, 37, 243-253.
- Rea-Dickins, P. (2000). Assessment in early years language learning contexts. *Language Testing*, 17(2), 115-122
- Saeed, M., Tahir, H., & Latif, I. (2018). Teachers' Perceptions about the Use of Classroom Assessment Techniques in Elementary and Secondary Schools. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 40(1), 115-130.
- Scott, S., Webber, C. F., Aitken, N., & Lupart J. (2011). Developing teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and expertise: Findings from the Alberta Student Assessment Study. Paper presented at *the Educational forum*.
- Shihiba, S. E. S. (2011). *An Investigation of Libyan EFL Teachers Conceptions of the Communicative Learner-Centred*

- Approach in Relation to their Implementation of an English Language Curriculum Innovation in Secondary Schools* [Unpublished Doctoral Thesis]. University of Durham.
- Shim, K.N. (2009). *An investigation into teachers' perceptions of classroom-based assessment of English as a foreign language in Korean primary education*. (Unpublished PhD). Exeter University, Exeter
- Shohamy, E. (2001). Democratic assessment as an alternative. *Language testing*, 18(4), 373-391.
- Taggart, L., McMillan, R., & Lawson, A. (2010). Staffs' knowledge and perceptions of working with women with intellectual disabilities and mental health problems. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 54(1), 90-100.
- Unal, A., & Unal, Z. (2019). An examination of K-12 Teachers' Assessment Beliefs and Practices Relation to Years of Teaching Experience *Georgia Educational Researcher*, 16(1), 4.