



**Palestinian EFL Middle Public School Teachers
Literacy Assessment Methods at the Middle School
Level**

أساليب تقييم اللغة لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية للمرحلة
المتوسطة في المدارس الحكومية

By

Hind Khaled Hussein Daramnah

1205340

Supervisor

Dr. Anwar Abdel Razeq

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**Palestinian EFL Middle School Teachers Literacy Assessment Methods at the
Middle School Level and Its Effect on Students Achievement and Motivation**

أساليب تقييم اللغة لدى معلمي اللغة الانجليزية للمرحلة المتوسطة في المدارس الحكومية وأثر هذه
الاساليب على دافعية وتحصيل الطلبة في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية

By

Hind Khaled Hussein Daramnah

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Supervisor

Dr. Anwar Abdel Razeq  Supervisor

Dr. Ola Khalili  Committee Member

Dr. Abdallah Bsharat  Committee Member

Birzeit University / Palestine

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Abstract

This study focused on identifying Palestinian English (EFL) teachers' literacy assessment practices, their effect on students' academic achievement / motivation and teachers' perspectives on how to develop and enhance their skills in this field. To meet these goals, the researcher adopted the qualitative research methodology. The researcher used three qualitative data collection instruments. These include semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and the analysis of teacher-designed final exams. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight English teachers who taught at public schools in Ramallah Directorate. Fourteen English periods for grades 7-9 were observed. Fourteen final exams developed by the participant teachers themselves were analyzed.

The researcher used the qualitative thematic analysis method to analyze the data collected through the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The researcher used the content analysis qualitative method to analyze the final exams. Semi-structured interviews data analysis revealed a number of themes. This include linkage of instructional and assessment strategies, motivating students through assessment and feedback, differentiating assessment, assessment of students based on their levels, and linkage of assessment strategies and purpose of assessment. Data analysis of classroom observations revealed that teachers use limited assessment practices such as oral questioning, quizzes and worksheets.

Moreover, the results showed all teachers' exams focus on assessing the reading comprehension skill and grammar. The other language skills such as listening, speaking and writing and language areas such as vocabulary were not emphasized enough in the teachers' developed exams. In the light of these findings, some implications and recommendations for assessment and future research were introduced.

ملخص الدراسة

تركزت هذه الدراسة حول التعرف على أساليب تقييم اللغة لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة المتوسطة في المدارس الحكومية الفلسطينية، والتعرف على أثر هذه الأساليب على دافعية وتحصيل الطلبة في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية، بالإضافة إلى التحقق من وجهات نظرهم حول كيفية تطوير مهاراتهم في هذا المجال. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، اعتمدت الباحثة منهجية البحث النوعي؛ حيث قامت الباحثة بتطبيق ثلاثة أدوات نوعية لجمع البيانات، وهي المقابلات والملاحظات في الفصول الدراسية، بالإضافة إلى تحليل اختبارات لغة إنجليزية قام بإعدادها المعلمون المشاركون. حيث تم إجراء ثماني مقابلات شبيهة منظمة مع ثمانية معلمي لغة إنجليزية في المدارس الحكومية في محافظة رام الله، كما تمت ملاحظة أربعة عشر حصة لغة إنجليزية للصفوف من السابع حتى التاسع. بالإضافة إلى أربعة عشر اختباراً نهائياً تم تطويرها من قبل المعلمين المشاركين أنفسهم. تم بعد ذلك نسخ جميع الملاحظات والمقابلات وترميزها وتنظيمها وتحليلها باستخدام نهج التحليل المواضيعي النوعي. أشارت النتائج إلى ممارسات التقييم الصفوي الرئيسية للمعلمين، والتي تضمنت ممارسات مثل الأسئلة الشفهية، والاختبارات، وأوراق العمل، بالإضافة إلى الربط بين استراتيجيات التدريس والتقييم، وتحفيز الطلاب من خلال التقييم والتغذية الراجعة، والتقييم المتميز، وتقييم الطلاب على أساس قدراتهم، والربط بين استراتيجيات التقييم والغرض من عملية التقييم.

كما كشفت النتائج أن المعلمين استخدموا ممارسات تقييم محدودة أثناء التعليم مثل تقنية الاستجواب وأوراق العمل والحوارات. علاوة على ذلك، أظهرت النتائج أن جميع اختبارات المعلمين تركز على تقييم مهارة الفهم والاستيعاب القرائي والقواعد، في حين أن المهارات اللغوية الأخرى مثل الاستماع والمحادثة والكتابة ومجالات اللغة مثل المفردات، لم يتم التركيز عليها بشكل كاف في الامتحانات التي أٌعدّها المعلمون المشاركون. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج تم تسليط الضوء على بعض الدلالات والتوصيات.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction and Theoretical Framework	1
1.1 Introduction	1
2.1 Research Problem	3
1.3 Research Questions.....	5
1.4 Significance of the Study	5
1.5 Theoretical / Conceptual Framework	6
1.6 Types of Assessment	6
1.7 Formative Assessment	7
1.8 Summative Assessment	8
1.9 Authentic Assessment.....	9
1.10 Vygotsky's Assessment Framework	10
1.11 Summary.....	11
Chapter Two: Literature Review	12
2.1 Literature Review	12
2.2 The Nature of Literacy Assessment	12
2.3 Types of Assessment Used in the Classroom	14
2.4 Teachers' Assessment Practices	19
2.5 Teachers' Assessment Conceptions and Beliefs	21
2.6 The Effect of Assessment on Teaching and Learning.....	25
2.7 Summary.....	27
Chapter Three: Methodology	28
3.1 Introduction	28
3.2 Research Methodology	28
3.3 Study Participants	29
3.4 Instruments of the Study	29
3.5 Instruments' Validity and Reliability	30
3.6 Data Analysis.....	31
3.7 Summary.....	32
Chapter Four: Results	33
4.1 Introduction	33
4.2 Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices.....	33
Theme #1: Use of oral questioning, quizzes and worksheets.....	34
Theme #2: Linking teaching practices and assessment	35
Theme #3: Linking assessment and motivation	35
Theme #4: Providing students' with Feedback	36
Theme #5: Using different types of assessments	37
Theme #6: Adapting assessment practices based on students' levels	39
Theme #7: Choosing types of assessments based on teachers' gauging purpose:	40
4.3 Teachers' Assessment Practices during and after Instruction	41
4.3.1 Assessment during Instruction	41
4.3.2 Assessing Language Skills and Areas.....	42

4.3.3 Assessment after Instructions Using Formal Assessment Tests	44
4.4 Teachers' Assessment Challenges and Needs	46
Theme #1: Teachers' assessment needs.....	46
4.4.2 Choosing the most effective assessment instruments.....	47
Theme #2: Teachers assessment challenges	47
4.4.3 Textbooks Driven Instruction and Assessment.....	48
4.5 Students' English levels is challenging to differentiate assessment.....	48
4.6 Rigid and Ineffective School Assessment Polices	49
4.7 Stressful and Unhealthy Work Demands	49
4.8 Summary.....	50
Chapter Five: Discussion	52
5.1 Introduction	52
5.2 Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices	53
5.2 Teachers' Assessment Practices during Instruction.....	56
5.3 Assessment after Instructions Using Formal Assessment Tests	58
5.4 Teachers' Assessment Challenges and Needs	60
5.5 Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research	63
References	64
Appendix A: An Investigation of Palestinian EFL Middle School Teachers English Language Literacy Assessment Methods at the Middle School Level.....	71
Appendix B: Sample of Teacher's Developed Exams	74
Appendix C.....	80

List of Tables

Table 1. The demographic information of the participants	29
Table 2. Teachers Assessment of Language Skills and Areas Using Teacher Designed Tests.....	44

List of figures

Figure 1: Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices	34
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Chapter One

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction

English as an international language. Its role has become rapidly important in the world specifically among communicative and business sectors in addition to educational fields. So it is used as a main course in schools' curricula and other educational institutions. In addition to the rapid and continuous changes in foreign language teaching, contexts in which learners learn a foreign language called for improving language teaching programs (Coombe et al. 2020).

The process of learning English entails four skills mainly: listening, speaking, reading and writing. These four skills are related to each other; the learner needs to master these various skills to use language in order to express feelings, thoughts in an appropriate form verbally or written (Pamela, 1991). Thus, student could use English to obtain the latest information, to communicate with the foreigners from different cultures and societies, and for career enhancement. Meanwhile learning a language cannot occur without assessment scales. There are various types of assessment methods that could be utilized by the instructors to measure the progress of instructional process in general.

Recently, teachers' language assessment literacy has got enormous interest and developing programmes to improve it (Alkharusi, 2012). Accordingly, it is important to explain the fundamental issues about teachers' practices that involve testing, evaluation and assessment. Language assessment literacy is considered as an intensive knowledge and effective competence in implementing various assessment methods in appropriate learning context, which allow to construct and analysis tests efficiently (Pill & Harding, 2013).

Assessment consists of various processes such as constructing test, analyzing data, scoring and interpreting results to reach the most relevant decisions that might improve learning progress. So These assessment processes take into account students different learning levels and variable abilities. Further, competent language teachers could choose the most appropriate assessment tool in the light of their teaching purposes (Coombe et al., 2020).

Teachers who are competent in effective assessment and evaluation procedures are expected to be able to elicit and apply the most suitable assessment techniques, which suit the curriculum formal outcomes, and help in improving valid and vital grading procedures.

Accordingly, there are various distinctive methods for evaluating students' knowledge levels and skills. These include formative assessment, performance assessment, using portfolios, summative assessment, short exams, and observations. Therefore, teachers who are literate in assessment practices will be aware of all assessment method's purposes, its benefits and effects, rely on it as a main source of feedback about student progress of learning process and their achievement of curriculum outcomes (Webb, 2002). Thus, there are certain worries about the quality and validity of classroom assessment, since there are some teachers who are incompetent in effective assessment process where assessment practices might affect students' achievement and their motivation to learning English language (Zhang & Burry, 2003).

In the Palestinian context, the most widely used means of assessments to guide students' improvements in learning English language are short exams, tests, and written assignments. It is necessary for teachers to utilize classroom assessments to enhance

students' learning process; however, they need to be more flexible in their perception toward assessment practices and their interpretation of the learning outcomes (Guskey, 2003). In particular, teachers should consider their assessment as a crucial part of assessment process that aims to improve learner's achievement in the second language learning.

Meanwhile the assessment process is considered one of the serious challenges that face Palestinian EFL teachers. This is because of time limitations, instructional supervision pressure and overwhelming textbooks. Moreover, EFL teachers need to be trained effectively to achieve their classroom assessment demand, since they have limited knowledge of assessment strategies. Consequently, most Palestinian EFL teachers seem to rely entirely on summative assessment techniques (Abdel Razeq & Bianchi, 2017).

Consequently, this study is attempting to investigate Palestinian teachers' literacy assessment methods and their effect on middle school students' motivation and achievement. Firstly, the researcher discussed the nature of language assessment literacy as it introduced in previous literature. Second, the researcher explained teachers' assessment practices that match their teaching practices and various context areas, as well as teacher's beliefs about assessment skills and procedures in light of their teaching experience. Finally, the researcher discussed the major effects of literacy assessment practices on student's motivation.

2.1 Research Problem

The current study focuses on identifying Palestinian EFL middle school teachers' knowledge of literacy assessment, recognizing their skills in designing language assessment procedures, and shedding light on their perspectives on how to

improve their skills and practices in language assessment. Literacy is more than reading or writing; it is embedded in the contexts in which it occurs and the meanings that they convey for individual communications. From the early stages of the literacy process, assessment procedures are applied to recognize children's literacy achievements and critically examine whether the curriculum and instruction offered to the students is compatible with our knowledge of the way people acquire language and other cognitive skills. More importantly, literacy processes and outcomes are closely related with the social contexts in which they occur (Nutbrown, 1997).

In general, literacy assessment is used for variety of purposes; however, the focus of this study is on academic settings where teachers and instructors use language assessment to measure their students' progress in learning English. Being an English teacher, I observed various effects of language assessment tools on my students' achievement in learning English and, furthermore, their motivation to learn English as a foreign language. Since assessment is taken up as an outcome of the learning process, teachers adopt a strict and theoretical concept syllabus to assess their students by concentrating on how they achieved those fixed objectives set at the beginning of the course and focusing their attention more on the result than the learning teaching process itself. Furthermore, the assessment process focuses on measuring some learning activities done in the classroom, such as grammar, writing, reading comprehension, and vocabulary, rather than communicative activities. Furthermore, the assessment methods impact students' motivation. Many students feel stressed and pressured during the assessment process because they are not involved in the assessment process (Lazaro, 1996). Therefore, the current research has been designed to identify EFL teachers' literacy assessment methods in assessing their students' progress in English language

learning and find out their perspectives on how to develop their skills in this field in order to improve the language learning process.

1.3 Research Questions

The present research is specifically designed to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do teachers assess their students' literacy in the English language?
- 2) How do EFL teachers assess their students' progress in the English language skills and language areas during and after instruction?
- 3) What are teachers' assessment needs to improve their assessment knowledge and skills to enhance the teaching and learning process from their perspective?

1.4 Significance of the Study

- The current study is important for teachers, students, curriculum developers and school leadership. The results of the study is expected to:
 - Make teachers aware of the effective literacy assessment practices and procedures that contribute to improving the learning process and enhancing students' achievement in learning English as a foreign language.
 - Provide foreign language curriculum developers and foreign language program directors / coordinators with teachers needs pertaining to assessment knowledge, skills and practices.
 - Make school leaders, as instructional leaders, aware of the most effective assessment practices particularly in teaching English as a foreign language in the Palestinian context in order to assist their English teachers apply such practices in their classrooms.

1.5 Theoretical / Conceptual Framework

The current study focuses on identifying the underlying features of the nature of literacy's assessment and its impacts on learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, before we go into details about literacy assessment and its different kinds, it is important to pay attention to the various definitions of the term literacy. Many researchers and educators define the term "literacy" from their own perspective. Thus, the acceptable definition is that literacy is more than reading and writing; it's a social construct which enables people to communicate, according to the contexts in which it occurs and the meanings that they hold for others (Nutbrown, 1997).

Literacy is one of the most basic concepts in education and society. Literacy has two distinctive elements; one is task-based literacy; the other is skill-based literacy. Task-based literacy focuses on instruction and on the extent to which learner could achieve main literacy tasks such as reading and writing. While skill-based literacy focuses on the knowledge and skills, which learners should own in order to carry out these tasks. which vary from basic skills to higher-levels ones (Mokkadem et al., 2020). Literacy can be measured in absolute terms by distinguishing between individuals who have the ability of reading and writing, and in relative terms by assessing learners different skills who are able to carry out the challenging literacy tasks and those who are not. Having stated the definition of literacy and the focus of the current research project, the researcher will introduce in the next section various distinctive definitions of assessment.

1.6 Types of Assessment

As the term suggests, assessment refers to the process of measuring and providing feedback about learners' skills, knowledge, and their learning achievements to

develop and enhance their learning performances (Taras, 2005). Assessment of students' achievements can be made during the whole learning process by different individuals to reach certain purposes. More importantly, engaging students in the assessment process, so they will be able to take responsibility of their own learning, thus, the key challenge for teachers will be to develop assessment tools which enable them to control their assessment practices and techniques and enhance the instructional process (Carr, 2001). Meanwhile, the concept of literacy assessment involves all the principles and practices of measuring the level of knowledge, skills, and understanding of assessment, which is a prerequisite for English teachers, considering their needs and the context where it occurs (Taylor, 2009).

Broadly speaking, assessment takes many different forms. It is clear that the purpose of the assessment guides teachers to decide which type of assessment to utilize and the approach which reflect the assessment form. Many forms of assessment serve different purposes. Types of assessment include formative assessment, summative assessment, informal assessment, formal assessments, and performance assessments. All of these kinds play an important role in second language learners' progression and their learning outcomes. The next section will discuss each form of assessment thoroughly.

1.7 Formative Assessment

As a main method of assessment, which occur during instruction, formative assessment is utilized as a tool to determine strengths and weaknesses of learners throughout the learning process. Therefore, it aims at improving students future performance, through explaining and understanding learning intentions success criteria, guiding effective classroom discussions, providing feedback that improve learners'

progress and activating students as owners of their own learning. In other words, this kind of assessment almost affects learning in a positive way, and most importantly where students will be able to control and develop their own learning (Stiggins, 2002).

Typically, formative assessments occur when teachers utilize the outcomes to adjust teaching practices to suit students' abilities and interests (Boston, 2002). Thus, the teaching process is a constantly adaptive process. It involves activities such as polls, quick writes, one-minute papers, pre-tests, which most often tends to be less threatening and thus less stressful to learners. Formative is distinguished from summative assessment that will be discussed below.

1.8 Summative Assessment

This kind of assessment occurs at the end of instruction process; it is designed to assess the learner's total performance including knowledge, skills, and other achievements, aiming to assess readiness for progression. As the term suggests, summative assessment serves as the basis for grade assignments. In addition, they communicate learners' mastery of learning and skills to the stakeholders.

It involves written assignments, such as essays, and other high-stakes activities; which is also called formal assessment. It is, however, also associated with increased stress (State et al., 2018).

The distinctive difference between formative and summative assessment reflect the distinction features between assessment of learning and assessment for learning which is significantly about the essence of assessment. Assessment for learning aims to improve a teacher's teaching practices and techniques. Whereas the purpose of assessment is to mark the learners on a test, so it's labeled as assessment of learning.

1.9 Authentic Assessment

This form of assessment focuses on asking questions and posing real problems to students through presenting authentic intellectual work. Therefore, it includes real life situations of the proposed tasks (Newman et al. 1998). Besides, the teacher as to determine the criteria of authenticity that could include, among other aspects, the nature of the stimuli, the complexity of the task, conditions, resources, consequences, and whether the student or the teacher determines the specific tasks or activities (Meyer, 1992).

According to Wiggins (1993), authentic assessment considers the learner as a partner in the assessment process. The tasks for assessment should, as much as possible guide students to practice and integrate more skills and knowledge which are contextualized to the authentic setting, rather than disparate the tasks. Further, it rely on the student's own knowledge, which is considered representative more than comprehensive, where it give students a chance to inquiry deeply and enhance their learning process. In addition, authentic assessment tools are valuable and meaningful, which reflect students' interest and motivation. This kind of assessment involves various tools such as self-assessment, oral interviews, storytelling, text retelling, writing samples, thematic projects, exhibitions, experiments, demonstrations, observations, portfolios and other distinctive assessment methods where teachers could be implementing them in their classrooms. Which help to avoid the traditional paradigm of students' passivity toward learning and assessment, and reflects the student initiative, with self-confident and the right learning choice (Janisch et al., 2007). Additionally, this kind of assessment stimulates learners' instructional progress in a responsible way through assessing individuals' knowledge.

Furthermore, it helps learners to get responsibility of their own learning through their understanding of their learning, and offers teachers a chance to reveal the students hiddenabilities (Babae, 2013).

Generally speaking, alternative assessment which includes authentic and performance based tasks, which carried out in realistic contexts. that help teachers to gain a clearer picture of their learners' abilities, as well as engaging students in assessment process which enhance their higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills (Mahrooqi & Denman,2018), through distinctive assessment methods such as portfolio, peer assessment and self- assessment.

1.10 Vygotsky's Assessment Framework

According to Vygotsky's assessment framework language teachers need to develop their assessment tasks which are within the learner's zone of proximal development. Teachers should determine the current learning level of their students, be aware of their actual developmental level, thus, then develop the assessment tasks that are pitched slightly above the child's actual level of development in order to move children through their respective zones of proximal development (Glazzard & Percival, 2010). Teachers could derive knowledge from their assessments of each individual student in their classroom.

By using the scaffolding strategy adults or teachers could support children's learning and development. It is the role of the teacher to develop his teaching practices by engaging his students which help them to guide their learning progress without teachers' support.

Accordingly the learning process occurs in a social context and language exchanges facilitate learning progress.

1.11 Summary

The current chapter introduced the concept of assessment in general. The researcher explained the various types of assessment such as diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment, authentic assessment and other alternative assessment tools. Further, she explained the assessment process based on Vygotsky's assessment framework. In the following chapter, the researcher will introduce the latest findings that researchers concluded on the implementation of various types of assessment introduced in the introduction and their roles in enhancing the teaching and learning process.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Literature Review

In this chapter, the researcher sheds the light on previous related research about the effect of literacy assessment methods on EFL students' achievement and motivation. This literature review has been classified into five sections due to the variety of topics that interrelated to sum the whole aspect of literacy assessment. The first part will be about the nature of literacy assessment, and then moving on to various types of assessment, after that teachers' assessment practices in the classroom, in addition to the distinctive features about teachers' conceptions and beliefs. Finally, the researcher introduces the effects of assessment on students learning.

2.2 The Nature of Literacy Assessment

Gronlund (2006) argued that learning assessment is a crucial component of the instructional process. It refers to teachers' practices in the classroom to gain a clear perception about students' progress on assessment tasks, either as a group or individually, through implementing a variety of assessment methods, to reveal the students' achievement according to the target instructional outcomes. Thus, Classroom assessment is considered as the essence of language learning process, which guide both instructors and learners to make sound decisions in the light of clear evidence. (Mendoza, 2009).

Additionally, classroom assessment is considered a key element in guiding students to reach the main instructional objectives (Beziat & Colman, 2015).

Black and William (2009) argued formative assessment provides evidence about

student achievement. Such evidence is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers to make decisions about the next steps in the instructional process. Meanwhile, Beziat (2015) argued that when teachers have to be assessment literate in order to take ownership of their classrooms and the assessments utilized to measure student learning and progress. Webb (2000) showed that assessment literacy is an integral part in the knowledge of test tools and score interpretation to reveal students' progress in achieving the target learning purposes, and to enhance the whole learning process, and to ensure the effectiveness of teaching programs which help students learning. In order to understand each assessment method's purposes, advantages and disadvantages, and value as a main source of information about student learning progress and their achievements of the target learning outcomes, they need to be well literate in assessment process, many language teachers face difficulty in designing valid and reliable assessment tools, which is considered a demanding task need a specialized teachers.

On the other hand, Black and Wiliam (2009) argued that the distinction between summative and formative assessment is based on the target purposes that the assessment supposed to achieve. Furthermore, the processes of assessment are considered as an integral part in the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they occur. So, it's important for teachers, students to adapt their learning experiences according to these various contexts (Wicking, 2017). McMillan (2000) found out that assessment practices affect student practices in the classroom including their motivation toward learning.

Based on this finding teachers should consider students' engagement, students' efforts, the kind of feedback and when it should be provided to students. This

deepens teachers and other stakeholders awareness of the powerful effects of assessment on students' motivation and learning. Accordingly, teachers could use effective assessment tools to enhance students' learning.

2.3 Types of Assessment Used in the Classroom

In general, assessment process has been classified according to various considerations such as the target instructional purposes, students' learning abilities or curriculum demands. So, there are two main types of assessment; summative and formative. In the light of these two assessment types each teacher needs to develop their perception and knowledge in order to reach his target teaching purposes. Based on the literature on assessment, it is clear that an effective classroom management is affected by the utilize of distinctive types of assessment.

Rogers (2002) argues that the key role of assessment process is the target purpose of assessment, whatever the type of implemented assessment which might be formative or summative assessment. In general, assessment tends to be summative rather than formative, meanwhile it is urgent for language teachers to be aware of the useful feedback and how to provide it to their students, which should be immediate, relevant and ongoing feedback which helps teachers to achieve their target teaching purposes effectively (López, 2008). Importantly, assessment feedback has to be descriptive which mean it needs to focus on students' strengths and weakness points, also inform them about possible ways to reinforce their learning process. Besides, William (2014) pointed out the summative assessment in many educational institutions is used to assess students at the completion of an academic year.

Meanwhile, summative assessment guides teachers to determine the effectiveness of their teaching practices through immediate feedback from their students' progress. It assists in decision-making process, and evaluates the effectiveness of school wide interventions; meanwhile, this kind of assessment does not provide teachers with imperative information to develop their remedial instruction plans to enhance students' learning, since it occurs at the end of the instruction (State et al., 2018).

Derrick & Ecclestone (2006) argue that summative assessment is an inevitable, essential element in the instructional process which does not prevent the use of formative assessment. Broadly speaking, most teachers utilize two different types of summative assessment, during their classroom practices most teachers depend on summative assessment with its' various forms such as informal and standardized systematic assessment forms. which play a vital role in education system, accordingly they should be implemented to meet the purposes for which they were designed (State et al., 2018). In particular, formal assessments are standardized, which means that they are well constructed, and have clear scoring processes to ensure that administration of the assessment is standard ; as well as it considered as norm-referenced, in which it enables teachers to compare their students' performance to same-grade peers (Boothroyd & Mc Morris, 1992).

Informal assessments, on the other hand, include tasks which are non-standardized, also they are less structured and more authentic, including practices such as observations, interviews, and questionnaires (Navarete et al., 1990). Thus, student's performance can be observed and measured but it's difficult to compare between peers' performance at the same task. However, Guskey (2003) argued that public examinations, which aim to classify students and schools through grading system, is

useless for teachers in guiding or enhancing their teaching practices in the light of their students' needs. In addition, Mendoza (2009) found that most of language teachers use summative rather than formative assessments, where their lack knowledge of implementing various types of assessment forced them to use test scores as main assessment practice without any thinking of improving or facilitating the learning process in general. Further, they have lack knowledge of providing useful effective feedback to their students, how to encourage students to guide of their learning progress, limited ethical knowledge related to test design, assessment implementations and how results interpretation the role of teacher and student and the lack awareness of assessment concepts such as validity, reliability, and fairness. Beziat and Coleman (2015) agreed with this point of view in which summative or once-a-year tests are not adequate in providing language teachers with accurate information about learners' achievements.

Although the crucial role of summative assessment in formal instruction recently, formative assessment become more popular assessment compared to summative assessment (Ozan & Kincal, 2018). There is a recent shift from assessment of learning toward the idea of assessment as learning, where assessment practices are dominant in the learning experience (Torrance, 1995). Moreover, formative assessment is considered as crucial and vital part of both teaching and assessment (Miller & Lavin, 2007). A similar point of view presented that formative assessment has become more common in instruction, although not being widely used in the context of higher education (Hanefar et al., 2022). Accordingly, most language teachers implement formative assessment positively in most of their assessment practices, to enhance students learning. Accordingly, the primary objective of formative assessment practice

are the implementation that involving feedback to help students to improve their learning process (James & Pedder, 2006).

Pertaining to this issue, Frey (2009) claimed that formative assessment could utilize entirely to inform the teacher, or providing feedback to students. So it could be used as a powerful means of guiding students to adjust their learning practices to improve their progress. In other words, formative assessment should be treated as assessment for learning, not as assessment of learning. This point of view matched with McManus (2008) distinctive definition of formative assessment which is considered as a mentoring process where teachers and students provide feedback during instruction to enhance the learning and teaching process which leads to improve student achievement. Sadler (1989) also pointed out that effective use of formative assessment requires the cooperative responsibility of both teacher and the learner to get the target purposes. According to these views formative assessment should improve student learning, since the students use the information to adjust their own learning attitudes, and teachers could utilize the information to adjust their teaching behavior.

The standardized purposes of classroom assessment which include measuring knowledge, skill or ability, providing feedback for both teachers and students, or some combination of all these purposes. Classroom assessment should be classified according to the assessment purpose (Frey, 2009). Thus, formative assessments guide teachers to achieve their teaching goals, in addition to provide proper feedback to ensure their progress and learning permanence. Ozan and Kınca (2017), showed that formative assessment is useful method in which it empowers students to self-assessment and guide their own learning, so it is a key role in a good teaching process. For example, recent research presented by Black & William (1998) showed

that some kinds of formative assessment such as student self-assessment practices, could improve student learning progress.

Performance assessment is another crucial kind of classroom assessment which become more popular recently (Hoffman et al., 2015). Implementing performance assessment in curriculum enables teachers to promote, measure, and guide their student learning; furthermore, it enhances students' higher-order skills and improves classroom instruction and student outcomes (Brown & Mednick, 2013).

Guskey (2003) claimed that the best assessments practices to guide student learning are the quizzes, tests, writing assignments, or any other assessment methods embedded by teachers in their classrooms regularly. Teachers regard the results from these assessments are more relevant and valid because they are immediate and connected with classroom instructional goals. So, language teachers need to be more flexible with assessments implementations and results interpretation. On other word, they need to consider their assessments practices as an integral part of the whole teaching and learning process.

Language assessment, whether formative or summative, plays a vital role in language learning process as well as affects learning outcomes. Whatever the target assessment purposes, it should involve gathering, interpreting and evaluating evidence of learning. In brief, by categorizing assessments as summative assessment, formative assessment, authentic assessment, performance based assessment, or assessment for learning, it should be based on what the intended purpose of the assessment. For classroom assessment, the purposes vary from measuring knowledge, measuring skills or abilities, providing feedback for both teachers and students, or some combination of all these purposes.

2.4 Teachers' Assessment Practices

Language assessment literacy has become an integral part in English language teaching; this is mainly due to the fact that many English language teachers lack the knowledge and skills to develop good language tests, measure the reliability or validity of their tests, or interpret and use test results effectively and meaningfully (Davidson, 2019). A similar point of view presented by Zhang (2003) who explained teachers' belief about regarded their assessment skills as useful, although they are inadequate in implement distinctive classroom assessment appropriately, where they involved in some activities more than others, due to the target content areas and grade levels in the light of certain instructional purposes. Zhang also added that there is a relation between assessment practice and teachers' assessment activities, while assessment skill reflects teachers' perception of their skill level in conducting assessment practices. Additionally, Zhang found that many teachers stated that the field of classroom assessment is extended to cover several learning areas. Obviously, assessment is regarded as one of the most crucial and complex components in a teacher's work.

Importantly, recognizing teacher's assessment practices and improving it, is necessary to enhance students' learning and demonstrating their performance in the learning process in general (Erdol & Yildizili, 2018). Assessment regarded as a useful way to guide teachers in facilitating students' learning. Since they are primarily responsible for evaluating learning progress and student's achievement, as well as , providing information about students' learning development, it also helps teachers to assess their teaching practices. However, to ensure that assessment is valid, reliable and accurate, teachers need to be well- qualified and have sufficient assessment skills

not only in conducting assessment tools, administering assessments, giving grades, using and interpreting assessment results, but also the proper ethics in assessing students progress (Veloo et al., 2016). Thus, they have to be able to apply the results to determine students' strengths and weaknesses as well as identify the effectiveness of their own teaching process.

McMillan (2000) supported the previous point of view by introducing a significant example of the assessment tools that are used widely in education. He discussed alternative assessment tools which include assessing students' achievement through classroom activities without following grading system. It's important to take into granted teachers' skills and knowledge in addition to the kind of required support and assistance. Good assessments use multiple methods, are fair, lead to valid inferences with a minimum of errors. It's necessary to recognize all the aspects of assessment techniques and methods, their advantages and disadvantages and the entire effects on learning process in general (James, 2000). According to Newman (1998) assessments that ask questions and pose real life problems are authentic. It has also been found that teachers' assessment practices are deeply affected by the subjects they teach and learning context they involve it (Zhang & Burry, 2003).

According to this view, classroom assessment should be planned carefully based on students' learning aims, feasibility, validity and reliability of an assessment (Veloo et al., 2016). Zhang and Burry (2003) argued that classroom assessment involves a broad range of activities such as conducting written tests and performance measures, to grading, interpreting standardized test results, and using assessment results in making appropriate decisions. Stiggins (1992) added when using written tests and performance measures, teachers need to be aware of the strengths and

weaknesses of distinctive assessment methods, and choose appropriate forms to assess various achievement purposes.

On the other hand, Marso (1988) found that some teachers frequently prepared and gave many formal teacher-made tests during a typical school year. They extensively use multiple-choice, completion, and matching item types. They do not use many essay and true- false items.

White (2009) pointed out that assessment-literate teachers should have a range of distinctive skills related to emphasize student learning rather than assessment as measurement.

Investigations of teachers' assessment practices pointed out that teachers were inadequate training to meet the demands of classroom assessment practices which aim to enhance the instructional process in general (Goslin,1967).

Moreover, many teachers face difficulties with language assessment concepts and implementation, such as validity and reliability, which forces language teachers to be well- qualified require specific skills to recognize these terms and deal with appropriately (Davidson,2019). Several studies such as Brown (2004) suggest that teachers' assessment practices are mirror of their perceptions of classroom assessments.

2.5 Teachers' Assessment Conceptions and Beliefs

Educational assessment play a key role in enhancing classroom learning and student progress. But, its effectiveness depend heavily on teachers' beliefs and perceptions toward assessment methods and its' implementation in a daily classroom practices (Alkharusi et al.,2012). The reviewed literature clearly shows an rising interest in teachers' beliefs. Extensive research had been carried out on teachers' assessment conceptions and beliefs. For instance, Pajares (1992) found that beliefs are important

because they are related strongly with teachers' behaviors at instructional process. Teachers should take the responsibility to improve their knowledge and skills, especially those that are connected with classroom assessment.

Yidana and Partey (2018) concluded that teachers' conceptions about classroom assessment purposes is different, where the most common conceptions are enhancing teaching and learning, as well as holding schools and students accountable. Accordingly, assessment is a vital mean for enhancing teaching and learning process, Perceptions that teachers hold about assessment are likely to influence their assessment practices. A similar view presented by Brown (2004), who revealed that.

The teachers themselves are deeply aware of the purposes of assessment as primarily for instruction improvement. Although, some teachers thought that the main purpose of assessment tasks is accountability and examination scores. Further, Brown and Gao (2013), pointed out that what teachers believe about assessment practices, implement, interpret and making- decisions practices; refer to a teacher's perceptions about the nature and purpose of assessing students' learning process.

The previous literature presented various teachers' conceptions about assessment; which is regarded as a mean to diagnose and enhance learners' performance and the quality of teaching process (Crooks, 1988).

Teachers' conceptions of assessment are also influenced by the subject they teach (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). Another factor is related to motivation. Some teachers believed that students would not pay any attention to the assigned readings or take the course material seriously if tests were not given. Many of the teachers stated that they conducted tests which are related to the types of activities they apply during instruction. So, most students deal with the formal exams as more important than other

classroom activities, so they take them more seriously, and take charge of well-preparation in advanced (Hornstra et al., 2015).

In classrooms, beliefs are regarded as integral factor in teachers' decision, practices and behaviors (Borg, 2001). Therefore, it's necessary to understand teachers' conceptions of assessment process.

Brown (2004) reported that teachers in New Zealand have a clear conception of assessment for enhancing teaching and learning besides a school accountability, the first conception derives from the idea of 'assessment for learning', where the target purpose of assessment is to improve student learning, by reinforcing students' engagement in assessment practices such as involving peer assessment and self-assessment as well as providing useful feedback.

The literature has also shown that in some situations, professional training is vital for assessment procedures where it could improve teachers' conceptions of the purposes of classroom assessment, in addition to enhance their assessment practices. In spite of the importance of assessment's role in education, Guskey (2003) pointed out that teachers lack specific training in assessment design or analysis, teachers rely heavily on the assessments offered by the curriculum developers and instructional designers. When there is a lack of professional training about suitable assessments, teachers may conduct their own in a haphazard fashion, such as oral questions and essay prompts similar to the ones that they were exposed to in advance. This perspective matched Mendoza (2009), view who believe that the negative view of assessment that some teachers hold derives from inadequate training in language assessment. which lead to more negative view of language assessments. According to this view, assessment is simply regarded as a simple mean to give a grade or to make

judgments about the students performance, but not as a strategy to enhance learning. In his study, Mendoza presented information about teachers' perspectives toward language assessment process. He found that there seems to be an interrelation between language assessment training and perceptions about language assessment. Thus, the proper training programmes could help teachers change their perceptions about language assessment. Since the positive view of assessment will enable teachers to design and conduct an appropriate assessment practices which suit their instructional context and students, and match their targetassessment outcomes.

Most language teachers believe that they need specific assessment skills, in addition, there are many teachers depend heavily on their own assessment practices in determining their student progress than any other assessments designed by others (Boothroyd et al., 1992). So it's urgent to train teachers to become more effective, which mean both change in their assessment practice and change in their beliefs and perceptions about learning. Therefore, for instance, implementing assessment for learning may require teachers to rethink theirperception of effective learning and how to achieve it.

Teachers also utilize some types of assessments as behavior-control as well as classroom-management strategies. They use the tests and grades as a source of power to control students behaviors. Thus, some teachers tend to use the power of assessment to forcespecific behaviors, attitude or values (Stiggins, 1992). This represents the prominence of the reality of classroom assessment that involve both legal and ethical requirements of teachers. Teachers' willingness to engage with changes in assessment process is particularly influenced by long-standing beliefs and concept of the target purpose of assessment, which mean that they have a specific assumption about what is

expected of them during instructional and assessment process (Torrance et al., 1995).

James (2006) found that the collaborative engagement of both teachers and students in assessment for learning processes plays a vital part of learning an explicit and critical based on classroom engagement and interactions among students and between students and teachers. These are crucial classroom conditions necessary for helping students develop the permanent skills and readiness for learning how to learn in formal educational contexts. In another study, Vandeyar and Killen (2007) demonstrated that different conceptions could lead to different assessment practices. So, teachers who regard assessment as an monitoring and control mean to hold students accountable for their own learning tend to apply formal and summative assessment. While Other teachers who consider assessment as necessary but not compulsory prefer summative and quasi-formative assessment practices that help in grading purposes. But, teachers who view assessment as irrelevant will avoid formative assessment. Thus, when teachers regarded assessment as crucial means to gain clear information lead to decision-making, they will implement assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning.

Beziat (2015) argued that assessment plays a vital role in guiding students and teachers to meet their target purposes, so teachers have to discuss the results of assessments with both parents and students, furthermore, they need to use the standardized assessment scores to adjust instruction, which lead to enhance the learning and assessment process.

2.6 The Effect of Assessment on Teaching and Learning

It is well documented that assessment has a great effect on teaching and learning (Airasian, 2001). Moreover, there are differences between well-literate

teachers assessment practices in their classroom management and those who are inadequate knowledge of assessment practices (Mellati & Khademi, 2018). The idea that classroom assessment can provide useful feedback for students, to help them enhancing their own learning, as well as the quality assessment can directly affect learning is relatively new (Frey, 2007).

Therefore, it is important for teachers and curriculum developers to design classroom assessments that align new curricula in the light of the agreed standards as a means of enhancing learners' abilities, in addition to test scores interpretations to facilitate making-decision process effectively (Dayal & Lingam, 2015).

White (2009) pointed out that assessment is one of the most critical factors which affect students' learning. Importantly, teachers need to be well- assessment literate in order to apply vital and useful assessment activities.

General speaking, many student face challenges in spending too much hours preparing for a major formal assessment, to discover later that the material that they had spending long time in studying it was completely different from what the teacher chose to emphasize in the assessment. Thus, experience like this lead the students to not trust their teachers as well as their beliefs about their useless hard work and wasting efforts which has little effects on their results (Guskey, 2003). He also, claimed that indeed, teachers and students share responsibility for learning. Even with intensive teaching efforts, we cannot guarantee that all students will learn and master everything. So hardly do teachers find points or assessment criteria that every student could answers correctly. A few students are never willing to put forth the necessary effort. If a teacher is reaching fewer than half of the students in the class, he need to improve his teaching methods. So teachers need this rather evidence to help target

their instructional improvement efforts. Assessment is an integral part of the instructional process. It cannot be a one-shot, do-or-die experience for students. Instead, assessments must be part of an ongoing effort to help students' learning.

Borg's (2006) found out that many various factors could affect instructional process and teachers' experiences; such as the teacher's conceptions, teachers' professional development, and school context factors. According to Borg, the research shows that well-qualified teachers rely heavily on their constructed knowledge of teaching, in addition to their comprehensive teaching experience and beliefs about the classroom and their students levels. On the other side, novice teachers who are inadequate knowledge and experiences seem to be affected deeply by the contextual factors in schools and classrooms. Even though they are equipped with knowledge and principles from their previous training and education, but they still influenced by the principles and actual teaching situations, because of many contextual factors such as large classes, the students' weak levels, and pressures from work demands and examinations.

2.7 Summary

In light of this literature review, it can be seen that instruction assessment is a key component of the language learning process and a powerful informed method in enhancing students' achievement. In addition, it's important to take into account that assessment purposes were classified into three main domains: assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning. In other words, these three domains are almost equal to the formative, metacognitive and summative purposes of assessment. The reviewed literature documented that the effective assessment methods require multiple and varied procedures and skills which complement one each other. Additionally it's critical to take into consideration teachers' beliefs about assessment when designing and implementing assessment methods and techniques.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Language assessment plays a significant role in second language learners' educational progress and achievements. The assessment process involves gathering, interpreting, and evaluating evidence of learning. Since literacy is considered a social construct that enables human beings to communicate, it is inevitable to recognize the main features of literacy assessment. Therefore, the problem of the current research centered around identifying Palestinian English as a Foreign (EFL) teachers' knowledge of literacy assessment and discussing their perspectives on how to develop their skills in this field. To achieve the purpose of this research, the researcher adopted the qualitative methodology to collect data through semi-structured interviews, observation and exam analysis. The researcher conducted the interviews with a sample of EFL Palestinian middle school teachers at public schools in West Ramallah Villages. Data collected analyzed using the qualitative thematic six-phase approach.

3.2 Research Methodology

The current study adopted the qualitative research methodology. Such methodology enables the researcher to obtain a deeper and more realistic view of the field, which cannot be understood or experienced in numerical data and statistical analysis. It also brings the researcher closer to the views and opinions of the participants as a result of direct interaction with them during the interviews (Merriam, 2001). In analyzing the qualitative data collected, the researcher relied on Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis qualitative approach. The approach will be described in detail below in the Data Analysis section.

3.3 Study Participants

The study population consists of all Palestinian English as a Foreign Language teachers in Ramallah School District. A sample consisting of 8 teachers selected from 8 schools in villages and town around Ramallah city. The researcher chose the sample based on the researcher's ease of access, flexibility and ease of communication with educational leaders and other participants. The researcher chose the sample of the teachers on a voluntary basis. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1. The demographic information of the participants

Nu	Participant's Name	Age	Gender	Qualifications	Years of experience	Grade levels taught
1.	Asma'	27	female	BA in English literature	3 years	8th and 9th grades
2.	Arwa	42	female	BA in TEFL	17 years	9th and 10th grades
3.	Manar	30	Female	BA in English literature and Translation	5 years	7th, 8th and 9th grades
4.	Aya	35	Female	Master degree in TEFL	8 years	9th to 12th, grades
5.	Jamila	44	Female	BA / Diploma in TEFL.	22 years	7th, 8th and 9th grades
6.	Wafa	38	Female	Master degree in TEFL.	18 years	9th and 10th grades.
7.	Ahmad	29	male	BA in TEFL.	6 years	7th and 8th grades
8.	Anas	32	male	BA in TEFL	8 years	8th and 9th grades

3.4 Instruments of the Study

In order to collect the data for the study, the researcher used three qualitative instruments. The first instrument is a semi-structured interview, which is considered as the most common tool used in qualitative research. In addition, it helped the researcher understand deeply the participants' opinions and perspectives on the subject of the study (Creswell, 2013). Before starting the interviews with the participants, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with a teacher outside the sample, in order to examine the

sequence of questions, their arrangement, logic and relevance, in addition to gauging the time needed for each interview and for practicing conducting the interviews. The second qualitative instrument is classroom observation, which is a form of qualitative data collection that is fundamental to finding out teachers' actual classroom assessment practices. The third qualitative instrument is written exams analysis. The researcher analyzed fourteen English teacher-developed exams.

3.5 Instruments' Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study semi-structured interview instrument:

1. The interview questions shared with specialists (faculty members at the Faculty of Education who have rich experience in the field of education, research, and educational leadership. This is to ensure that the data collected is valid and to assist in answering the research questions. These ensured questions were not judgmental in nature, leading, or overly repetitive without intention. Based on the comments of the reviewers, modifications to the interview questions made in terms of wording or the adding or removal of questions.
2. The semi-structured interview questions were cross-validated against the research study questions and the purpose of the study.
3. To ensure interrater reliability of the results achieved through the interviews, in analyzing the data the researcher worked with a colleague in analyzing the data thematically ensuring consistent results. This has been accomplished by comparing codes and themes drawn from randomly selected interviews leading to high reliability.
4. Collected findings were revisited with participants for verification (respondent validation) to confirm the validity of the data collected through the interview instrument.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data collected through the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations in the study were analyzed using the Thematic Analysis qualitative method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this method, the data are organized, collected and arranged in elementary patterns, and these patterns form the basis for forming the main patterns, in order to reach a clear and deep understanding of the views and opinions of the participants on the subject of the study. Data analysis was performed using the Thematic Analysis six phases. In Phase One, the researcher familiarized herself with the transcribed data by reading and rereading the data several times to become familiar with all aspects of the data. During this process, notes were taken and some ideas underlined throughout the reading and rereading process in the coding phase. In Phase Two, the researcher organized the data and coded them using different highlighter colours. In Phase three, the researcher searched for themes by putting the gathered codes into themes. In Phase Four, the researcher reviewed the themes and made some adjustments and edited them. In Phase Five, the researcher defined and named the themes. Finally, in Phase Six a list of final themes were selected (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In analyzing the 14 exams developed by the teachers, the researcher used the content analysis method (Silverman, 2011). According to this method, the research established a set of categories (listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and Vocabulary). Then counted the number of questions found in the exams that fall under each category. The categories and questions were so precise that could enable other coders to arrive at the same results in analyzing the 14 self-made teachers' exams. In this way, content analysis reinforces reliability in data analysis. Further, it ensures validity through precise counts of the questions under each category.

The steps that the researcher followed in conducting the quantitative content analysis include:

- Selected the 14 teacher tests that will be analyzed.
- Constructed the coding frame by establishing the categories (listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar).
- Piloted and revised if necessary the coding frame.
- Tested the reliability of codes by cooperating with another coder.
- Coded all the questions in the exams under each category
- Put all the data in a table showing the categories, examples, number and percentage of the questions in each category.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher introduced the research problem and the research questions. She described the significance of the study and the research methodology. In particular, she explained that she adopted the qualitative research methodology. In addition, the researcher explained the population of the study, participants in the study, instruments of the study, instruments validity and reliability. Further, the researcher described how she analyzed the data qualitatively following the thematic and content analysis qualitative methods.

Chapter Four

Results

4.1 Introduction

The current study investigated English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Palestinian middle school teachers literacy assessment practices and their effect on students' academic achievement and motivation. In particular, the researcher attempted to answer three main research questions. The first question focused on how EFL Palestinian teachers gauge English literacy. The second research question focused on the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and language areas (Vocabulary and Grammar) that teachers assess during and after instruction. The last research question concentrated on the teachers professional development needs in terms of knowledge and skills in order to boost learning and mastering the English language. The researcher adopted a qualitative research methodology. She used three main instruments to collect the data. These include semi- structured interviews, classroom observations and analysis of final exams developed by the participant teachers themselves.

4.2 Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices

Qualitative thematic analysis of the data collected on how Palestinian EFL Teachers assess their students' literacy in English revealed seven major themes (Please see Figure 1). These are

- Use of oral questioning, quizzes and worksheets,
- Linking teaching practices and assessment,
- Linking assessment and motivation,
- Providing students' with Feedback,

- Using different types of assessments,
- Adapting assessment practices based on students' levels,
- Choosing types of assessments based on gauging purposes.

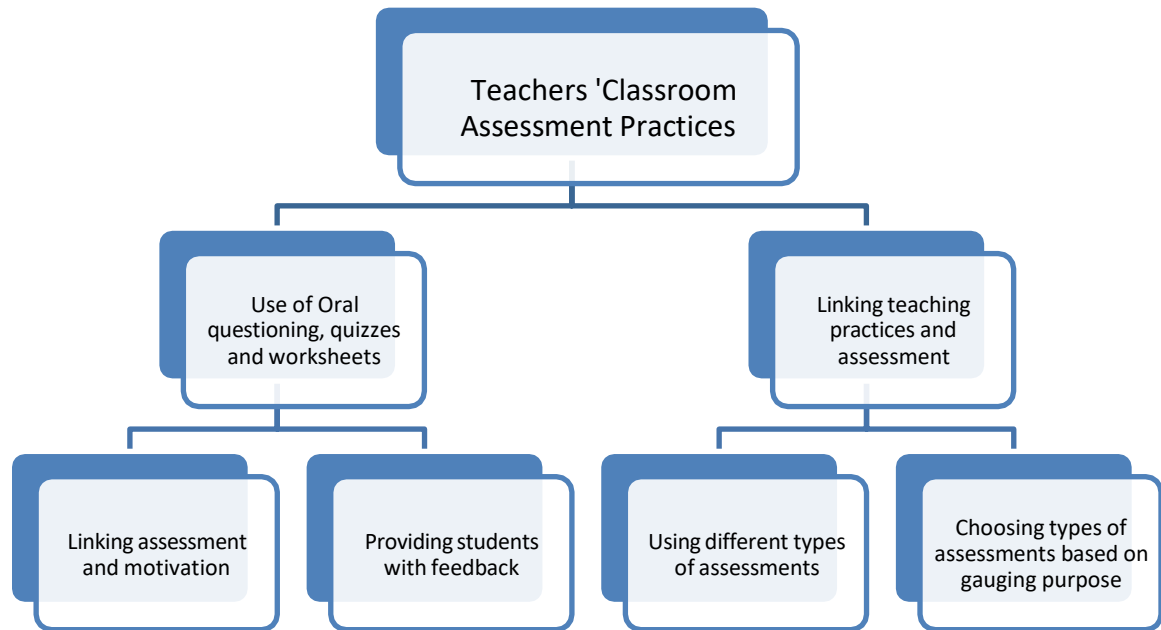


Figure 1: Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices

Theme #1: Use of oral questioning, quizzes and worksheets

Data analyses showed that teachers used on a daily bases *oral questioning strategy, quizzes and worksheets*. Most of the teachers reported that they practice oral questions during each class. The purpose of using this strategy is to check students' previous knowledge and their understanding of the material being taught.

In the words of one of the teachers (Fadwa) I focus more on how the students participate with oral questions. I take into considerations the weak students and motivate them to participate like others. In any lesson or skill to reach my aim, I focus on student's participation.

Another teacher (Ahmad) reported that he relies on *using short quizzes and worksheets* to check for students understanding and learning of new content. He stated:

In each class, I check the students understanding through short quizzes. I make sure that the students get the point from each lesson. Also they maintain steady progress in each lesson.

Theme #2: Linking teaching practices and assessment

Pertaining to the linkage between teachers' teaching strategies and assessment practices, most of them reported that they try to adapt their teaching strategies with the type of assessment tools that they will be using to gauge their students' knowledge and understanding of the content taught.

One of the teachers (Salah) stated All the time I connect my ways of teaching with how I will assess the students.

When I teach them passive voice for example, I give them a worksheet to assess their understanding. Then I give them an exam, which is related to the way I assess them during the lesson. So they get familiar with the lesson and the assessment process.

Other teachers reported that they choose their teaching strategies according to their students' levels. Then they could assess them in light of that. In the words of one of the teachers (Maha) I think this is related to the kind of students in each class. For example, my teaching Strategies differ between ninth and tenth graders. ... Most of ninth graders are so active.

They interact most of the time so I could verify my assessment tools, such as worksheets, oral questions and exams. But, with tenth graders it's completely different. The students' levels are so bad that there are no active girls. I ask them by name to answer, but they couldn't answer correctly till I translate the question into Arabic.

Theme #3: Linking assessment and motivation

Data analysis also revealed that all teachers use preparing for assessment and assessment results to encourage and motivate their students to do better. All of them

reported that they employ the reinforcement strategy to motivate their students to prepare for formal and informal classroom assessment practices. Further, they stated that they notice positive effects of their reinforcement on their students' achievement.

One of the teachers (Adnan) reported: "After each exam, I reinforce the students, who achieve the high scores, and I motivate the others to exert more efforts in order to get high marks."

Also, I try all the time, to take care of all students. I take into consideration their interests, hopes, abilities and other personal needs. I could notice their love of the English class.

Another teacher (Areen) added: "I reinforce the students' participation whatever it is. So, my students love the English class."

I could notice that from their enthusiasm in the class, their interaction and happy feelings.

Theme #4: Providing students' with Feedback

Commenting on students' performance in classroom assessments is another theme the data revealed.

All participants reported they provide their students with direct feedback after any assessment particularly when they notice frequent errors in their students' answers. In the words of one of the teachers (Duha): "I think feedback is the most important part of assessment."

So after I check the exams' answers, I give direct feedback to my students. Sometimes I write the correct answers on their papers, or tell them orally. However, if I notice there are frequent errors committed by most of the students, I review the question with the whole class and make sure all of them understood it.

Theme #5: Using different types of assessments

Qualitative data analysis showed that all participants employ different types of assessments for various purposes. Most of the teachers reported that they use diagnostic assessment to identify their students' strengths and weaknesses during English classes. One of the participants (Hind) stated that

At the beginning of each semester, I check my students' level of language through oral questions, written exercises on the board or diagnostic worksheets. Also at the beginning of each lesson, I ask oral questions to check the students' previous learning.

Further, following the Ministry of Education assessment policies, all teachers reported that they use summative assessment in order to be able to assign students achievement marks.

Such summative assessments use written in-class exams. These exams are designed by the English teachers themselves. One of the teachers (Ahmad) stated that At the end of each unit, I give students a comprehensive exam about the whole unit. Therefore, I could evaluate their achievement in that unit and put a plan for the next lesson.

Another teacher emphasizing this point reported "through exams and oral practices, I use daily, monthly and final exams". It is clear from data analysis that all the teachers use diagnostic and summative assessment tools to gauge students' literacy in the English language.

In addition to diagnostic and summative assessments, some teachers reported that they use some types of authentic assessment instruments such as portfolios, presentations, projects, drama, and games. They use such authentic assessment tools to improve students' speaking and writing skills. In the words of one of the teachers (Asmaa')

I use portfolios with the girls as authentic assessment. By this I check their writing and speaking, I ask them to write about their life, or I ask them to choose a story to read, summarize and retell.

It is worth noting that some of the teachers found the use of authentic assessment with low-level students useless. Rather, they prefer to use written exams as a main assessment method. In the words of one of the teachers (Aya)

Actually, I do not try to use any type of alternative assessment. Sometimes I ask them to do presentations. I assess their speaking skills through that, but I consider it as a minor way of assessment. I depend heavily on daily, monthly and final exams. I think a written exam is the most appropriate way in assessing students' achievement. I do not use peer or self-assessment because the students' level does not help to do that.

Another teacher (Manar) emphasized the less frequent use of authentic assessment instruments stated that the students' low levels does not help to make authentic assessment.

Once I asked them to do a project about a topic. They depended on their parents or other adults to do that for them. As a result, they do not get benefit from it. I think this kind of assessment is just a waste of time.

Exams are the most reliable and accurate way to assess students' learning.

On the other hand, some of the participants reported that they found authentic assessment tools such as presentations beneficial in improving students speaking skill. One of the participants (Jamila) stated I get benefits from the authentic assessment.

I use presentations as a new kind of assessment so I could improve the students achievement in English.

Another teacher (Anas) who uses some forms of authentic assessments would like to be able to use such assessments and assign a mark for them that could be

calculated in the students' final mark in the subject.

In his own words, I just use these kinds of assessments such as authentic assessment without assigning marks for them. I hope if I have a chance to use portfolios that I could allocate marks for them as one of the main required assessments.

This is because I noticed the girls put tremendous efforts working on their portfolios. Their portfolios are amazing. However, I assign to them low marks. I use also presentations.

Some girls are creative in their presentation, but I allocate low marks from the total mark in the subject.

Theme #6: Adapting assessment practices based on students' levels

Data analysis revealed that teachers try to adapt their assessment practices based on students' levels in the English language skills. In the words of one of the teachers (Ahmad)

I know my students' level in each skill. I deal with them according to their levels and abilities. I focus heavily on reading because I think all the other skills depend on it. If they could read and understand the written texts, they could interact actively with other the skills.

Another teacher (Hala) emphasizing the significance of the reading skill stated I allocate for the reading skill high marks. When I analyze the results, I try to focus more on comprehension skills. I think all the other skills are affected by it. If they understand the reading text I think they could answer orally, or summarize the reading passage in a few sentences.

Other teachers reported that they use presentations, role playing, dialogues, and communication games to gauge their students speaking skill. In the words of one of the participants (Aya):

I encourage them [Students] to speak in English during the class, to reply in English. Also I encourage them to record videos about their daily lives and speak in English, "

Other participants reported on how they adapt and choose assessment instruments to evaluate their students writing skills. Most of the teachers reported that they use writing exams to assess their students writing skill. This is accomplished by requesting from their students to write about specific topics focusing on the content of the English curriculum, writing short paragraphs, writing summaries and through dictation. One of the teachers (Marwa) stated at the end of each unit I give my students a comprehensive exam... which covers the whole unit ... I give them some general topic about the unit content and encourage them to write a short paragraph about it...

To assess the listening skill, all the participants reported that they assess this skill through daily practices by requesting from students to listen to an audio recording and answer the teacher's oral questions or some exercises in their English textbooks. Arwa, one of the teachers reported During listening classes, I use audio set to check the students' listening skill During listening lessons, I let them listen to an audio then answer oral question or do the books exercises.

Theme #7: Choosing types of assessments based on teachers' gauging purpose:

All the teachers reported that they use diagnostic, formative and summative assessment instruments to gauge their students' English literacy. The type of assessment they choose depends on the purpose of the evaluation process. For instance, one of the teachers (Khawla) stated that she uses diagnostic assessment to determine students strengths and areas that require improvement.

In her own words "I give them exams or oral questions. In addition, I could know their strength and weakness points during their participations in the class".

All the participants also reported they use summative evaluation to evaluate their students achievement in a specific unit or the whole subject. One of the teachers commenting on this point stated that

When I distribute the marks on the tasks in an exam I take into consideration all the skills. Especially I focus on how they read and how they use the new words in the sentences. Here I could know their level of learning so I could build on this in the next lessons.

Some teachers reported that they use some types of authentic assessment to motivate their students such as implementing portfolios, presentations, projects based learning ...etc. Marwa, one of the teachers reported Some students are very weak in English and they know that they couldn't achieve any progress.

But I promise them if they do any effort whatever it is I will give them extra points, so this way encourages many girls who have Low levels, but they started to pay more attention to the class and improve their learning.

Sometimes I reinforce the higher level students in front of the class by some gifts which motivate another ones to do their best in order to get high marks."

4.3 Teachers' Assessment Practices during and after Instruction

4.3.1 Assessment during Instruction

The second research question focused on the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and language areas (Vocabulary and Grammar) that teachers assess during and after instruction. Further, this question investigated the assessment strategies that the teachers use and the mechanisms that they employ to provide their students with

feedback.

To find out the assessment strategies that teachers use during instruction the researcher observed 14 English classes (grades 7-9) at seven secondary schools in Ramallah Directorate. She used an Observation Instrument (**Please Appendix C**) to record her notes about each class observed. Further, the researcher noted other important data not included in the Observation Template. The researcher tried to capture and describe all the interactions and activities occurred in each class observed. Further, she also tried to note down teachers exact words uttered in the class. Data analysis revealed that the teachers used a number of assessment strategies to gauge their students, understanding during instruction. These will be introduced in the next section.

4.3.2 Assessing Language Skills and Areas

Data analysis showed that all teachers observed used *dialogues and oral questions assessment strategies* to assess their students speaking skill. Further, all teachers assess the English language skills in an integrated method. That is, while assessing speaking, they also, assess listening and reading. For instance, they asked students to provide an oral summary of a reading passage. This allowed them to gauge both speaking and reading skills. In addition, it assisted them assessing other students' listening skill. Pertaining to the use of oral questioning strategy, all teachers utilized this assessment tool to revise previous lessons and check for understanding while explaining new lessons.

To assess the writing skill, most of the teachers requested from their students to write about specific topics either in groups or individually. For instance, in one of the classes observed, the teacher wrote a number of questions about students' daily lives and then using the brain storming strategy discussed the questions with the whole class and

asked each group to write about the topic and then present it to class. In addition to assessing the writing skills, the teacher was able to gauge the speaking, listening and reading skills.

She assessed the reading skill by asking some students to read what they wrote. The listening skill was assessed by students listening to other classmates reading and providing a summary of their written assignments. Another assessment instrument some teachers used during instruction is *worksheet*. They used it to assess students' listening comprehension skills. For instance, in one of the classes, after students listened to an audio recording, the teacher distributed a worksheet and requested from all student to answer the questions in the worksheet based on the passage to which they listened.

Pertaining to assessing language areas (Vocabulary and Grammar) most of the teachers used the guessing strategy particularly when they taught new vocabulary. For instance, in one of the reading comprehension grade eight classes, the teacher asked students to guess the meaning of the new words from the context. The same strategy (guessing) other teachers used in requesting their students to try to pronounce new words before the instructor teaches the new vocabulary. This is performed to assess students' ability to figure out the meaning of new words on their own and the ability to pronounce them correctly.

In the observation of some grammar lessons, observed teachers used a variety of assessment instruments to gauge their students' achievement. These include oral questions, worksheets, and textbook exercises and activities. For instance, in one of the classes the teacher used oral questions to assess students' knowledge and understanding of the previous lesson that she explained. In another class, the teacher distributed a worksheet for the students to work on in pairs to check for understanding of the lesson

she explained in that period. The other teacher who used the textbook activities, did so after she explained the lesson. She depended on textbook exercise to examine her students' knowledge and understanding of the new lesson.

In assessing both the language skills and language areas, all the observed teachers provided the whole class with feedback by either writing the correct answers on the board or saying the right answer verbally then writing it on the board. For instance, in a grade 9 reading comprehension class, the teacher wrote the correct answers on the board after listening to students own answers. In another class, the teacher repeated the correct answer verbally, asked another student to repeat it and then she wrote the right answer on the board.

4.3.3 Assessment after Instructions Using Formal Assessment Tests

In order to find out which language skills and language areas the teachers assess after instruction, the researcher analyzed fourteen summative exams developed and administered by the teachers themselves. The table below shows the language skills and areas on which the teachers focused. The table provides examples of questions used in the exams, the number of questions used to assess each language skill or area and the percentages.

Table 2. Teachers Assessment of Language Skills and Areas Using Teacher Designed Tests

Skill / Language Area	Example Question	Number of Questions	Percentage %
Listening	Listen and choose the correct answers	5	4 %
Speaking	Complete the following dialogue	3	2 %
Reading	Read the passage and answer the given questions	53	39 %
Writing	Write a short paragraph using the given information	13	9 %
Vocabulary	Complete the sentences with words from the box	33	25 %
Grammar	Correct the verbs between brackets	28	21 %
		135	100 %

Table (2) shows the skills and language areas that teachers focused on in their self- developed summative exams. It provides example questions for each skill and language area, the number and percentage of questions in the 14 texts analyzed. As the table shows teachers focused on assessing the reading skill. Fifty-three (39%) of the questions in the teachers self- developed exams focused on the reading skill. The second language area that teachers focused on in their exams is assessing vocabulary. Thirty-three (25%) of the questions in the exams focused on assessing vocabulary.

The third language area that teachers focused on assessing is grammar. Twenty-eight (21%) of the questions in the exams tested students' grammar knowledge. Listening and speaking were the least skills on which the teachers focused in their assessment self-developed exams. There were only five (4%) of the questions focused on listening and three (2%) of the questions focused on speaking.

In assessing the reading skills, teachers focused on comprehension of written text involved in textbook by answering in most cases multiple-choice questions. Vocabulary assessment focused on students' ability to understand the meaning of each word / phrase, and use them in the appropriate context. Vocabulary questions focused on completing sentences with the suitable word, matching, definitions, synonyms and antonyms. Grammar question focused on completing sentences with the correct form or choosing the right answer in a multiple- choice question. Writing questions focused on writing a paragraph or composing a message or an email. Listening questions included questions such as choosing the correct answer after listening to a passage or a story. Finally, in assessing students speaking skill, the teachers requested from students to engage in a dialogue.

4.4 Teachers' Assessment Challenges and Needs

The third question in the current study focused on Palestinian English teachers' assessment needs which is derived from the main challenges that face them during assessment process. In particular, it attempted to find out the teacher's assessment needs that might assist them to improve their assessment knowledge and skills in order to enhance their teaching, and assessment practices. Qualitative thematic data analysis revealed two main themes revolved around; **"Teachers' assessment needs"** and **"Teachers' assessment challenges."** Which derived from a number of sub-themes that will be presented below supported by participants own words.

Theme #1: Teachers' assessment needs

The researcher asked the participants about their assessment needs to improve their assessment practices and the language learning process. This major theme includes a number of sub themes that are described thoroughly in this section.

4.4.1 Desire to learn more about literacy assessment practices

All the teachers admitted that they did not think about literacy assessment and its implementation. They just assess their students' progress in English language skills and areas according to their schools assessment policy. All participants indicated the desire to learn more about literacy assessment practices. In the words of one of the teachers (Asmaa') Actually before this interview I didn't think about literacy assessment and its practices. Therefore, I think I have to read more about it. I need to know how I could apply any kind of assessment to evaluate students' literacy.

Further, all teachers emphasized the significance and effectiveness of assessment. Accordingly, they would like to know more about the most effective assessment practices to be able to differentiate assessment and tailor it towards their

students' levels, abilities and interests. One of the participants (Aya) stated:

I think the teachers should know the best assessment types that suit their teaching practices then their students' level. In addition, they have to know the abilities and interest of their students.

Another participant (Jamila) echoed the Palestinian English teachers' need for more training and resources on literacy assessment. In her own words If the ministry or school provide us with further resources about new types of assessment where we could get benefits from them in developing our assessment skills.

4.4.2 Choosing the most effective assessment instruments

All teachers emphasized the significance of choosing the best assessment instruments that suit their students' abilities and literacy levels. In one of the teachers words (Adnan)

I have been teaching for 17 years. Therefore, I have a lot of experience about how I have to deal with my students. I could choose the best way of teaching that help my students to get better in language. In addition, I could apply the best assessment methods that suit my students' levels.

Further, all participants reported that it is critical to differentiate assessment methods and modify them to fit their students' levels and abilities. Jamila, one of the participants, stated

I could use presentations in very effective way. I choose topics that match the students' interests and abilities. In addition, I could differentiate my assessment methods to suit all the students' levels.

Another teacher, Wafa', reported

I know what suits my students during the class. I know that exams unfair with all the students especially with low-level students so I try to use another kind of assessment to help them improve their achievement and modify their exams' marks.

Theme #2: Teachers assessment challenges

The second major theme which emerged from the thematic analysis of the third

research question data includes the following sub themes.

4.4.3 Textbooks Driven Instruction and Assessment

All participants in the study reported that they are required to abide by the English for Palestine textbooks and the period set to complete each textbook during the school year. Such lack of flexibility restricts them not only from differentiating assessment practices but from also teaching methods. Accordingly, teachers use the assessment exercises and activities prescribed in the English textbook. In the words of one of the teachers (Maha) commenting on the English textbooks and how they restrict her from selecting the appropriate and more effective teaching and assessment practices

I wish if there were no English school books ... So I could choose the suitable content, instructional and assessment strategies that suits my students' abilities and interests. I could use the time efficiently. I know this is impossible but I think it may be useful in enhancing my students' proficiency in the English language.

Another participant (Samer) emphasizing the lack of flexibility on the part of the English instructional supervisor regarding time constraints and meeting established deadlines to complete the units in the textbooks. In his own words,

Several times, we spoke to the English supervisors that we need more flexibility in following the textbooks. Their reply was we have to abide by the textbooks and instructional and assessment plans we developed at the beginning of the year.

4.5 Students' English levels is challenging to differentiate assessment

All teachers reported that students' English levels constitute a serious challenge in differentiating teaching and assessment practices. One of the participants (Manar) commenting on time constraints, textbook contents and students' levels reported

Time, really my big problem is the time, and the loaded content of the curriculum, which are mismatched with 'the students low levels. They need more time to develop their skills in language. However, I have to finish the textbook at the fixed time.

Another participant (Anas) emphasizing the challenge that students' level impose on teachers stated

The big challenge that I face is the weak levels of the students. Actually, there are a large number of students in the same class who are very weak in the language basics. Therefore, I think I need extra time to deal with them and help them to improve their levels. So, the time is another challenge because it limits my ability to differentiate my teaching and assessment practices to assist low-level students and improve their English.

The intensity of the textbooks and its content exasperate teachers' efforts to plan teaching and assessment practices tailored towards low-level students. One of the teachers (Muna) reported

The schools' instructions, the limited time and the intensive content [of the textbooks] restrict me from focusing on students' weak skills such as speaking which needs a lot of time to improve. ... I find myself forced to finish the whole textbooks at the fixed time or the supervisor will note that against me. '

4.6 Rigid and Ineffective School Assessment Policies

All participants reported that the rigid school assessment policies limits their assessment choices and practices. They reported that regardless of students' levels and achievement, they are forced by school policies to promote failing students to the next grade level in spite of their academic performance. This in turn affect their desire to differentiate assessment to suit all students' levels. In the words of one of the participants (Marwa)

I think the most disappointed thing is the final grades. Really I feel very depressed when I am forced to put forged marks to very lazy students just because the school instructions forced us to promote all students to the next grade level.

4.7 Stressful and Unhealthy Work Demands

All the participants reported on how stress and work demands negatively affects their efforts to plan and differentiate their teaching and assessment practices. In the

words of one of the participants (Samar)

Hhhhh, the salary, it is just a joke. Actually, the whole system put the teacher under pressure. Firstly the loaded content of the textbooks in addition to the fixed time, and the students low levels. All these things make our career so hard and stressful.

Another teacher (Manal) commenting on the pressure and the demands that restrict their efforts stated

I see the big challenge is the written tasks that the school and supervisor force me to do, in addition to the textbooks which are loaded with information. ... We have to cover all of it within a fixed timeframe.

4.8 Summary

The current chapter presented the results of the study. The first section detailed the results of the first research question that focused on teachers' classroom assessment practices. These included practices such as oral questioning, quizzes, worksheets, linkage of instructional and assessment strategies, motivating students through assessment and feedback, differentiating assessment, assessment of students based on their levels, and linkage of assessment strategies and purpose of assessment. The second section presented the results of the second research question that focused on assessment during instruction. The researcher found out that teachers used limited assessment practices during instruction such as questioning technique, worksheets and dialogues. In addition, the results showed all teachers' exams focus on assessing reading comprehension skill and grammar. The other language skills such as listening, speaking and writing and language areas such as vocabulary were not emphasized enough in the teachers' developed exam.

The last section of this chapter documented the results of the third question that focused on investigating EFL teachers' literacy assessment needs to improve their teaching and assessment practices. Their needs focused on improving their assessment knowledge and skills in order to enhance their teaching, and assessment practices. In the next chapter, the researcher will discuss the results and present some implications and recommendations for improving students literacy assessment.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research centered around EFL Palestinian middle school teachers' literacy assessment practices and their effect on students' academic achievement and motivation. The main objective behind the implementation of the current research project was to investigate how Palestinian EFL teachers assess their students' literacy. It also tried to find out the Palestinian EFL teachers' literacy assessment needs. This chapter summarizes and discusses the major findings in light of the theoretical framework adopted in this research study and the previous literature review.

The current research study is guided by three main questions. The first question focused on teachers' classroom assessment practices. The results revealed that EFL teachers used assessment practices such as oral questioning, quizzes, and worksheets. Further, a number of themes emerged pertaining to teachers' assessment practices such as linkage of instructional and assessment strategies, motivating students through assessment and feedback, differentiating assessment, assessment of students based on their levels, and linkage of assessment strategies and purpose of assessment. The second question focused on assessment during instruction and after instructions. Data analysis showed that most teachers implement limited assessment practices during instruction such as questioning technique, worksheets and dialogues. Furthermore, most teachers assess their students' language skills and language areas using teacher-developed exams. The results indicated that all teachers' exams focused on assessing reading comprehension skill and grammar. The other language skills such as listening, speaking and writing and language areas such as vocabulary were not emphasized enough in the

teachers' developed exam. Whereas the third question focused on investigating EFL teachers' literacy assessment challenges and needs to improve their teaching and assessment practices. Their needs focused on improving their assessment knowledge and skills in order to enhance their teaching, and assessment practices.

5.2 Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices

Data analysis revealed that most of the teachers preferred to assess their students through oral questions, worksheets or daily quizzes. They found these methods the best way to check their students' previous knowledge and their understanding of the material being taught, as a main daily classroom assessment practices. Further, most of the teachers tried to adapt their teaching strategies with the type of assessment tools that they used that might be a useful technique to gauge students' knowledge and understanding of the content taught.

The reason behind using assessment activities that match their teaching practices might be they found this technique was effective in enhancing their students' achievement. This is in congruent with Zhang (2003) who found out some teachers modified teaching their practices based on the assessment activities that they employed in order to improve students' achievement.

Students' high achievement is expected to assist in improving their motivation and engagement. That is why may be all observed teachers tried to encourage their students to participate and interact actively with English lessons. Some of them used encouraging expressions, others promised their students to give extra points to them when achieving simple tasks, in addition to using assessment results to encourage and motivate their students to do better. Teachers' classroom practices and the results of the current study support McMillan (2000) findings that assessment practices affect

students' learning engagement and motivation. This supports teachers and administrators understanding that assessment has a great influence on motivation and learning. Accordingly, teachers could use effective assessment tools to enhance motivation and learning.

Providing students with feedback after any assessment is crucial. This might be attributed to that, students get benefits from the given feedback and improve their learning and there is a deep connection between assessment and feedback. When students recognize their mistakes during the assessment process, and have a chance to think and reflect on them, they might improve their thinking skills, which will affect their learning process ultimately. Taras(2005) concluded the effectiveness role of feedback in assessment process focuses on examining and providing feedback about learners' skills, knowledge, attitudes and work products to improve and enhance their learning, achievement and performance.

Enhancing students' achievement might also be improved by differentiating assessment.

This is why may be most of the teachers reported that they use diagnostic, formative and summative assessment instruments to gauge their students' English literacy. They chose the most effective assessment types according to the purpose of the evaluation process.

Furthermore, they tried to adapt their assessment practices based on students' levels in the English language skills and employ different types of assessments according to the skills and language areas assessed. This might explain the reasons behind their teaching and assessment practices alignment to allow students to perform well. Teachers differentiate their assessment practices in spite of the requirement that

they have to follow the Ministry of Education assessment policies, which focus on summative assessment practices.

In addition to summative assessment, data revealed that most participants use diagnostic assessment. They used it as a tool to identify students' strengths and the areas that require improvement. For instance, they use writing assignments such as writing about specific topics focusing on the content of the English curriculum, writing short paragraphs, writing summaries and through dictation. Further, they assess the listening skill through daily practices by requesting from students to listen to audio recordings and answer the teacher's oral questions or some exercises in their English textbooks. The researcher believes that the participants used diagnostic assessment because the summative assessments that they administer to their students after instruction is completed, it has little value as a diagnostic tool to guide teachers in making appropriate adjustments to instruction to aid students who are not performing well. Additionally, teachers would not get benefits from this kind of assessment specifically in designing remedial plans (State et al., 2018). Diagnostic assessment is as important as summative assessment, since it could help students to recognize their strengths and weaknesses so they could improve their learning by themselves. This confirms Stiggins (2002) findings that diagnostic assessment plays a significant role in the learning process that allow students to control and improve their own learning. Beside the central role of summative assessment, which emphasized by Derrick & Ecclestone (2006) they argue that summative assessment is an inevitable, essential element in the instructional process which does not prevent the use of diagnostic assessment.

Another type of assessment that most participants used was authentic assessment such as portfolios, presentations, projects, drama, and communication games to gauge

their students speaking skill. This use might be attributed to the benefits of such authentic tools in improving students' language skills. Further, using such kind of assessment allows instruction and assessment processes to interact continuously, accordingly guiding teachers in recognizing their students' abilities. Previous studies such as Mahrooqi & Denman (2018) confirmed the importance of authentic assessment, where students are fully engaged in higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills, through implementing various forms of assessment such as portfolio, peer assessment and self-assessment.

The finding that some participants found authentic assessment useless particularly with low level students might be attributed to different reasons.

First, the pressure that teachers face to complete an intensive English textbooks within a time limit. In the teachers' views, such assessment is time consuming and low level students are incapable of performing the required tasks. Second, teachers do not have the required time to design, implement such assessments and plan remedial work for weak students. Further, low-achieving students require assistance from all teachers, not only English teachers. Therefore, English teachers will not be able to assist those low-level students by themselves. They need all teachers and administrative support to be able to do that.

5.2 Teachers' Assessment Practices during Instruction

The second research question in the current study focused on investigating the English language skills and language areas that Palestinian EFL teachers assess during and after instruction and what assessment strategies they apply to assess them. Data analysis revealed that the teachers used a number of assessment strategies to gauge their students' understanding during instruction. Results of the study revealed that most of the

teachers depended frequently on a few simple assessment strategies such as questioning technique, worksheets and dialogues. The reasons behind using these limited strategies might be easiness of use and teachers' familiarity with these strategies. They used such strategies during reading comprehension and grammar lessons. Pertaining to writing assessment, they assessed their students' writing skill by requesting them to write about specific topics in groups or individually or as a homework. The reason behind this might be that writing requires time and effort to assess and it is challenging to assess students' writing in a short classroom period. In assessing students' listening skills, all participants used oral questioning and worksheets. Use of only these two assessment strategies might be related to the fact that they are easy to use, and teachers were not trained to teach and assess listening skill using a variety of assessment strategies. Further, lack of emphasis on teaching listening skill might affect the assessment strategies utilized.

Limited use of assessment strategies had been observed in teaching grammar and vocabulary. Most of the teachers used the guess strategy particularly when they taught new vocabulary. Further, all teachers relied heavily on textbook exercises and activities to assess students understanding in teaching both grammar and vocabulary. The reasons behind the use of these only strategies might be the lack of training in using various assessment forms and the lack of time that teachers need to familiarize themselves with new assessment strategies and develop new ones. Further, the textbook exercises and activities are aligned with lessons objectives that made it easier for teachers to use in assessing students' achievement. This is because as Dayal and Lingam (2015) stated classroom assessments that suits new curricula with agreed criteria encourage teachers to apply assessment practices which improve learner' abilities, tests'

qualities, and test scores' interpretations.

Assessing students' achievement effectively requires the use of more diverse and inclusive assessment practices that improve students' learning not only measure their attainment. Marso (1988) found out that some teachers frequently designed formal teacher-made tests during formal instruction. They extensively use multiple-choice, completion, and matching item types. They do not use many essay and true false items. In addition, White (2009) argued that assessment-literate teachers need to be qualified with a variety of basic assessment practices skills, which help enhancing student learning progress rather than assessment as a grading tool. Therefore, it's important to take into granted teacher' assessment skills and knowledge, in addition to the kind of required support. Good assessments use multiple methods, are fair, lead to valid inferences with a minimum of errors(McMillan, 2000).

5.3 Assessment after Instructions Using Formal Assessment Tests

The other part of the second research question focused on investigating which languageskills and language areas the teachers assessed after instruction. Analysis of the results, revealed the fourteen summative exams developed and administered by the teachers themselves focused on assessing the reading skill more than other language skills. Further, teachers' self-developed exams focused on questions that evaluate students' reading comprehension skills by answering in most cases multiple-choice questions. In addition, the results showed that teachers focused on assessing vocabulary in their self-developed exams.

The questions in the exams focused on assessing their students' ability to understand the meaning of each word / phrase, and use them in meaningful sentences appropriately.

Vocabulary questions focused on completing sentences with the suitable word, matching, definitions, synonyms and antonyms. The third language area that teachers focused on assessing in their exams is grammar through asking questions such as completing sentences with the correct form or choosing the right answer in a multiple-choice question. Writing questions focused on writing a paragraph or composing a message or an email. Finally, the listening and speaking skills were not emphasized in the teacher' self-developed summative exams.

It is noteworthy that some teachers considered assessment as a way to force their students to learn. They think that without assessment students will not pay any attention or be aware of the learning process. This finding is in congruent with Vandeyar & Killen (2007) conclusion who stated that teachers' conceptions of assessment are influenced by many factors, such as the subject they teach and motivation. Accordingly, there are some teachers who stated that their students did not pay any attention to the assigned tasks or prepared seriously if they do not impose tests.

The reasons behind the poor quality and limited focus of teacher-developed tests might be attributed to a number of reasons. Teachers in their instruction focus on this language skill (reading) and language areas (Grammar and Vocabulary). Thus, in their exams they focus on the skill and language areas that they teach. Second, most English teachers lack the appropriate training to develop valid and reliable exams. Further, tests developments require not only knowledge and training but also time. As mentioned earlier Palestinian English teachers are under a lot of pressure to complete the units in the English for Palestine textbooks. Davidson (2019) stated that language assessment literacy has become a crucial component in English language teaching process; however many English language teachers have limited knowledge in assessment process, which

mean, many English language teachers are inadequate in assessment knowledge and skills to conduct a proper assessment methods, evaluate the reliability and validity of their tests, and interpret test results to make a clear decision to improve learning process. Moreover it's important to recognize teacher's assessment practices and develop them in order to enhance students' learning progress and demonstrating their performance in the learning process (Erdol & Yildizili, 2018). Assessment regarded as useful mean to guide teachers in facilitating their students' learning. Since they are primarily responsible for evaluating instruction and student's achievement. Guskey (2003) pointed out that teachers lack specific training in assessment design or analysis, most teachers depend severely on the assessments offered by the curriculum developers and instructional designers. the lack of appropriate assessments methods, teachers will conduct their own assessment practices randomly, such as questions and essay prompts similar to the ones that their teachers used.

5.4 Teachers' Assessment Challenges and Needs

The third research question focused on finding out the Palestinian teachers' assessment needs in order to improve their literacy assessment skills to enhance the teaching and learning process. First, explicitly and implicitly all participants expressed strong desire to learn more about literacy assessment and assessment and evaluation in general. Not only that, in addition to training they would like to have the time and the permission to apply the assessment skills that they learn in their teaching and assessment practices. Such strong desire to learn more about literacy assessment and effective assessment strategies might be attributed to teachers' awareness of the current mediocre situation as far as assessment is concerned. Further, teachers are not content with the status quo. They would like to see changes in assessment policies and textbook

completion at the expense of quality.

Palestinian English teachers would like to know more about the most effective assessment practices to be able to differentiate assessment and adapt it to their students' levels, abilities and interests. Previous studies have concluded that the negative effects of less training and knowledge of effective assessment, when the teachers depend only on the assessment that is involved in the text books the learning process will be boring and useless. For instance, Mendoza (2009) found out that teachers who are inadequate training in literacy assessment seem to hold a negative perception about assessment practices. In addition, he found that teachers with who are incompetent in language assessment have a negative view of language assessments. Thus, professional training in assessment procedures might enhance teachers' perceptions of the classroom assessment purposes. In addition, such training is expected to assist teachers choose the most effective and appropriate assessment tools to gauge their students English literacy. It will assist them to differentiate assessment instruments and adapt them to the Palestinian context and students' levels.

Teachers will be able to differentiate assessment in spite of textbooks driven instruction that limit their ability to use a variety of assessment strategies and teaching methods. The reasons behind textbook assessment and instruction could be that teachers are required to abide by the English for Palestine textbooks and the period set to complete each textbook during the school year.

Teachers use the assessment exercises and activities prescribed in the English textbooks. Furthermore, all the participants were emphasizing the lack of flexibility on the part of the English instructional supervisor regarding time constraints and meeting established deadlines to complete the units in the textbooks. All these factors limit their

ability to differentiate assessment and threaten the quality of the assessment process and teachers' moral and motivation in performing their teaching and assessment practices.

Students' English levels is considered another challenge in differentiating teaching and assessment practices. Most of the participants stated that students are weak in English language. To accommodate students' low levels teachers simplify the language and use simple assessment tools to evaluate their students' progress. Moreover, the intensity of the textbooks and its content exacerbate teachers' efforts to plan teaching and assessment practices tailored towards low-level students. In addition to students levels teachers have to follow rigid and ineffective school assessment policies that restrict their choices and practices. Besides, schools promotion policy discourages teachers from differentiating assessment knowing that all students will be promoted to the next grade level.

To conclude, assessment is a crucial component in the teaching and learning process. Besides, providing clear information about students' learning progress, it also guides teachers to evaluate their teaching practices. English teachers in Palestine and similar contexts could be trained on how to adapt and modify effective assessment practices. Further, language teachers could also be trained on literacy assessment methods. Language assessment is more than evaluating students' progress in the language through summative exams at the end of each unit. As Taylor (2009) stated the concept of literacy assessment extend to describe and determine the level of knowledge, skills, abilities and recognizing assessment practices, which is gradually required by language teachers, based on their needs and the context where it occurs.

For language teachers, assessment is regarded as one of the most difficult and demanding task they have to perform since designing valid and reliable assessment tools

requires specialized skills. Therefore, assisting teachers to become more effective require drastic adaption in both their assessment practices and their beliefs about learning assessment. Generally speaking, assessment has a great influence on learning process (Airasian, 2001). Moreover, there are clear differences between well- qualified teachers in their classrooms assessment and those who have lack assessment skills (Mellati & Khademi, 2018).

5.5 Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

This study guided by three major questions which concentrated on three main issues related to EFL Palestinian teachers assessment practices to gauge English literacy, the impact of teachers' assessment practices on their students' achievement and motivation, and investigating the teachers professional development needs in terms of knowledge and skills in order to boost learning and mastering the English language. Future research studies might investigate the impact of English teachers' current practices on student's motivation and achievement in learning English as a Foreign Language. An experimental study could be conducted on differentiation of assessment effect on students' level in all language skills and language areas. Another research study that could be conducted is investigating the impact of the intensity of English for Palestine textbooks and the time required to complete them on teachers' effectiveness in teaching English. Finally, a study could be conducted using English language instructional supervisors as participants to investigate the effectiveness of their supervision practices and the Ministry of Education assessment policy that schools have to follow in evaluation and assessing their students' progress in all subjects including English.

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Appendix A

An Investigation of Palestinian EFL Middle School Teachers English Language Literacy Assessment Methods at the Middle School Level

Interview Questions

Research Question #1:

How do Palestinian EFL teachers assess their students' English language literacy?

- 1) How do you use assessments to guide learning or teaching goals?
- 2) How do you use assessments to evaluate students' progress in language learning?
- 3) How do you use assessments to evaluate students' achievement in language learning?
- 4) How do you use assessments to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses?
- 5) How do you use assessments to motivate student learning?
- 6) How do you use students' self-assessment to improve English literacy?
- 7) How do you use peer-assessment to assess English literacy?
- 8) How do you interpret assessment scores in terms of a student's English language literacy?
- 9) How do you prepare students to take language assessments focusing on literacy?
- 10) How do you give useful feedback to students based on literacy assessment?
- 11) How do literacy assessments influence your teaching and learning practices in the classroom?
- 12) How do literacy assessments influence teaching and learning materials?
- 13) How do language skills develop (e.g., reading, listening, writing, speaking) based on your literacy assessment?

- 14) How do you set pass-fail marks/cut-scores for literacy assessment?
- 15) How do you make sure that your literacy assessment is accurate and consistent?
- 16) How do you make sure that an assessment measures what it claims to measure?
- 17) What is the impact of language assessments on your students educationally?
- 18) How do the assessment traditions in your local context influence your literacy assessment?
- 19) How do you determine your students' different stages [levels] of language proficiency?
- 20) How do you use different types of purposes for language assessment (e.g., proficiency, achievement and diagnostic)?
- 21) How do you use different forms of alternative assessments (e.g., portfolio assessment) in assessing your students' English literacy?
- 22) How do your own beliefs/attitudes might influence your literacy assessment practices?

Research Question #2:

What are the English language skills and language areas that Palestinian EFL teachers assess during and after instruction? How do they assess them? How do they provide their students with feedback? (In order to answer this question the researcher will collect the data through **classroom observations and document analysis such as tests**).

Research Question #3.

What are teachers' assessment needs in order to improve their assessment knowledge and skills to enhance the teaching and learning process from their perspectives?

1. Please provide information about your English language literacy assessment needs that could help in assessing your students' literacy skills.
2. In your experience, what are the two most important things that Palestinian English as a Foreign Language teachers at the middle school level need to **KNOW** about English language literacy assessment? (**Focus on knowledge that effective EFL teachers should have.**)
3. In your experience, what are the two most important things that Palestinian English as a Foreign Language teachers at the middle school level should be able to **DO** in language assessment? That is, **skills** that effective EFL teachers should have.
4. What two skills of English language literacy assessment do you believe you are most competent in assessing your students' literacy?
5. What two areas of knowledge of English language literacy assessment do you believe you are most competent in assessing your students' Literacy?
6. What are the two biggest challenges (e.g., logistical, administrative, instructional, technological) you encounter when assessing your students' English language literacy?
7. Related to these challenges, what two kinds of support would assist you in alleviating the challenges and subsequently promote your literacy assessment skills?
8. How your own knowledge of language assessment could be further developed.
9. How your own skills of language assessment could be further developed

Appendix B

Sample of Teacher's Developed Exams

Part one: Comprehension

(14 points)

Read the following passage then answer the questions:

Fish and many other kinds of life are disappearing from the oceans fast. There are sad changes everywhere. Near the coast, **they** are often caused by pollution. Farther out, the cause is often **over-fishing**. Fishing boats with huge nets catch and kill everything. We risk a terrible manmade disaster –the death of the oceans .Two centuries ago, whales were already being caught for their oil and meat. By the 1940s, the job was being made easier by modern technology. From the 1950s to the 1980s, **they** were being caught everywhere and numbers were collapsing.

Whole species of whales were quickly being destroyed, and they were not being protected anywhere. In 1985, almost every country agreed to stop catching whales. This means that whale populations are slowly rising again.

Q1. Read and mark the sentences true (T) or false (F) : (3pts)

1. Many kinds of life are disappearing from oceans because of pollution. ()
2. The death of oceans is a natural disaster. ()
3. Most countries agreed to stop catching whales in 1985. ()

Q2. Answer the following questions: (4 pts)

1. What is the result of over-fishing?

.....

2. Why were whales caught centuries ago?

.....

Q3. Complete: (2 pts)

- 1. The worst time for whales was:
.....
- 2. In 1985, almost every country agreed
to:.....

Q4. Find from the text above: (5pts)

- 1. **The same meaning of:** a. hundreds of yea..... b. quantities:
- 2. **The opposite of:** a. life:B. slowly:
- 3. **The underlined pronouns refer to :**
_ Line (2) they :.....

_ Line (7) they :
- 4. The underline phrase **over -fishing** means:
.....
- 5. Give example of man-made disaster:
.....

Part two: Vocabulary (12 points)

Q1.finish the following sentences with one of the words in the list. (3pts)

Get rid of nets organization population get to know stain

- 1. Fishermen use to catch Fish.
- 2. I am going to invite my new neighbours for lunch tothem
- 3. UNRWA is an international that helps Palestinian.
- 4.Children usually..... their clothes with chocolate.
- 4. 5. Birth rate rising.
- 6.Let's..... that old chair and buy a new one.

Q2. Match the following words with its opposite from the box: (2 pts)

Bad	friend	right	falling
-----	--------	-------	---------

1. enemy : 2. Rising:
3. wrong : 4. Good:.....

Q3. Complete the following table: (3pts)

<u>Verb</u>	<u>Noun</u>
Choose
.....	Action
clean

<u>Noun</u>	<u>Adjective</u>
Accident
.....	voluntary
Medicine

Q4. Circle the correct answer in the followings: (4 pts)

1. Have you seen my phone? I've beenit all day ?
 a. look b. looking at
 c. looking for 2. You should Your parents
 when they get old .
 a. look up b. look after c. look like
 3. The food victims badly need food , clean water and help.
 a. medicine b. medical
 c. health 4. Do you have a For our
 next project ?
 a. choice b. choose c. chose
-

Part Three: Language (16 points)

Q1. Change the following sentences into passive: (4pts)

1. My father is washing the car.

.....

2. Modern technology was making the job easier.

.....

3. We are not playing football.

.....

4. People were using fire for cooking.

.....

Q2. Choose the correct answer: (5pts)

1. If I..... you, I would visit the dentist.

- a. was
- b. am
- c. were

2. If you revise your lessons regularly, you pass your exams.

- a. would
- b. will
- c. have

3. If water, it changes into steam.

- a. boil
- b. had boil
- c. boils

4. Today is my son's birthday. I 'm going to buy.....a present.

- a. He
- b. him
- c. her

5. This is the carmy father bought last week.

- a. which
- b. who
- c. that

Q3. Rewrite the following sentences replace with indirect object . (2 pts)

1. I bought some sweets to my mother.

.....

2. Hassan gave his mobile to Kamal.

.....

Q4. Rewrite the following sentences use the words between brackets: (5 pts)

1. My mother told us a story. We enjoyed it very much. (which)

.....

2. Sad changes are caused by pollution. (often)

.....

3. The government is building new schools. (new school)

.....

4. Sara (not / understand) her homework , she (ask) her teacher . (type 1)

.....

5. A few fish are found now . (correct)

.....

Part four: Writing (8 points)

A) Re-arrange the following: (1 point)

1. need –I –more –visit –money –I –if –will –bank –the

.....

B) Punctuate the following : (2pts)

1. wood plastic and cloth are all materials

.....

2. how much is the tuna please

.....

D) A man-made lake is now being constructed in your area. Classify the following ideas into advantages and disadvantages with this project.

- Selling fish outside our area is bringing money into the community.
- A beautiful little town is being lost
- Fish farms are producing good food for many people
- Eight thousand people are being thrown out of their homes
- These new industries are providing a lot of new jobs.
- Lots of good farmland is being flooded.
- Two thousand homes are being destroyed.
- The new lake is providing water for all

(4 pts)

Advantages	Disadvantages

Then write a complete paragraph about the advantages of this project (2 pts)

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

GOOD LUCK.

Appendix C

The Observation Template



State of Palestine Ministry of Education

General Administration of Educational Planning Department

of Monitoring and Evaluation



Differentiation of Questions during Instruction

Types of Questions	N.	Item	Repetition (Description)	Repetition How many times. (Number)
Answering the teacher's questions requires:				
Questions that measure levels of recall and Comprehension	1.	Remember facts or definitions or characteristics of a previously or currently learned concept.		
	2.	Give examples of a concept that has previously been learned or is currently being learned		
	3.	The student redefines concepts/facts/generalizations in his or her own language.		
	4.	Remembering information and organizing it into a logical or chronological sequence.		
	5.	Linking new knowledge to previous knowledge.		

	6.	Interpreting a given or written text, or interpreting concepts, facts, and generalizations.		
Questions that measure the level of application and use of knowledge	7.	Apply new knowledge (e.g. principle, law, generalization) directly.		
	8.	Comparing positions/ideas/concepts.		
Questions that measure higher levels of thinking	9.	Arriving at a generalization by studying a group of examples or phenomena.		
	10.	It requires the use of characteristics of the general situation to reach conclusions regarding a particular example or phenomenon.		
	11.	It involves making a judgment by comparing facts or information.		
	12.	There is no specific answer. It might have more than one answer. It provokes thinking.		
	13.	Solving a problem (solving the question requires overcoming a specific obstacle).		
Emotional Questions	14.	Expressing his attitudes, feelings, or interests regarding a specific incident/situation/issue.		
Questions that measure metacognitive skills	15.	Clarifying his thoughts, (what exactly do you mean? Is it possible to talk more about this point? What do you mean by this word?)		
	16.	Increasing students' awareness of their own thinking, (What are you assuming here? What are the reasons that made you think this way?)		
	17.	The teacher gives the students time to think about the answer.		