An Inquiry Into EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Student Self-Assessment Into Teaching Academic Writing at a Saudi University

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Abstract—This paper aims to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of integrating student self-assessment into teaching writing to EFL students, in the preparatory year at an English language center at a Saudi university. Previous research has indicated that through reflection and metacognition, self-assessment can help students in EFL contexts learn to write and improve the quality of their writing. The bulk of this research, however, simplistically underestimates the socio-cultural context in which learning to write takes place, especially one where the symbiotic relationship between different affordances is far from problematic. Drawing on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, this study explores how these affordances play out in the context of this study and how they impact the quality of learning to write, in EFL contexts. The sample consisted of 53 EFL teachers, exploring their perceptions of, and experiences with, integrating self-assessment into teaching writing to students in the academic English track (ELIS). A mixed methods design was employed, and the findings revealed that although teachers have positive perceptions about self-assessment and encourage its implementation in their writing classrooms, they lack professional support for integrating self-assessment into the various stages of writing. The findings also suggested that the integration of self-assessment into teaching writing is a complex process, and the chaotic relationship between curriculum design, assessment policy, professional development initiatives, and students' and teachers' beliefs, might contribute to a lack of engagement when integrating self-assessment into teaching writing. Finally, pertinent recommendations for teaching writing and future research about integrating self-assessment into teaching writing are suggested.

Index Terms—formative assessment, self-assessment, reflection, metacognition, writing stages

I. INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing appreciation of the role of self-assessment in the attainment of learning outcomes. Educational reforms around the world stipulate the need to integrate self-assessment into education, born out of the belief that it promotes learners' autonomy and reduces teachers' workload. Informed by this vision, EFL institutes and curriculum designers have updated their standards to emphasize the need to promote autonomous learning (Brown, 2005; Gardner, 2000). Moreover, self-directed learning approaches have informed the discourse on the use of self-assessment as an essential component of formative assessment, or assessment for learning (AfL), rather than summative assessment, or assessment of learning (AoL). Self-assessment (hereinafter SA) is rooted in learner-centered approaches (Griffith & Lim, 2010) that encourage students to take responsibility for their learning (Harris, 1997), rather than relying on teachers as the sole source of evaluation. It thus enhances students' participation in the assessment process of their learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998), starting with developing the assessment criteria, reflecting on their work, and judging how well they have performed in relation to these criteria (Boud, 1991; Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009). Writing assessment in SA, therefore, is a bottom-up approach rooted in formative feedback that students can utilize to fine-tune their writing by producing multiple drafts based on a process of reflection, revision, and redrafting (Neilson, 2012). SA can also enhance students' writing performance through reflection and metacognition during the writing process (Neilson, 2012; Lam, 2010). The formative – rather than summative – nature of SA contributes to the learning process and involves both teachers and students in identifying the gaps between current and target performance, thus encouraging students to make plans for improvements (Falchikov & Boud, 1989; Black & Wiliam, 1998). Research has also suggested that SA can be used as an alternative method of assessment (Brown & Hudson, 1998) to replace traditional methods of assessment. Despite this rosy view of integrating SA into teaching writing, researchers (e.g., Gipps, 1999) have warned that SA cannot be implemented in isolation, but rather requires a confluence of key affordances, including curriculum design, assessment policy, and professional development in the context in which SA is enacted. As Lee (2007, p. 206) suggests, successful implementation of SA largely depends on the 'symbiotic relationship' between teaching, learning, and assessment. Elucidating this relationship to help teachers implement SA in their writing classrooms is the aim of this study.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of and experiences with integrating SA checklists into teaching writing. It aims to answer the following research questions:

1) What are EFL teachers' perceptions of integrating SA checklists into teaching essay writing to undergraduate students?
2) What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the perceived challenges of integrating SA checklists into teaching essay writing to undergraduate students?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Self-assessment (SA)

While the literature reveals competing definitions of the term SA, it generally refers to students taking charge of assessing their work in classroom settings (Brown & Harris, 2014). Rather than relying on teachers as the sole source of evaluation, SA encourages students' participation in the assessment process of their learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This can be accomplished by involving students in developing the assessment criteria based on which they gauge their performance and making judgments about how well they have performed in relation to these criteria (Boud, 1991). Another dimension of involving students in SA, as Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) have asserted, is that SA requires students to reflect on their work, judge the extent to which they have met the stated criteria, and then make the necessary revisions. SA, therefore, is integral to self-regulation, which Zimmerman and Schunk (2001, p. 5) describe as students becoming 'metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning'.

The integration of SA into writing entails a decision to subscribe to the tenets of summative assessment or formative assessment. The term summative assessment, or AoL is defined as assessment conducted at the end of a defined instructional period to measure or summarize what a student has learnt (Abeywickrama & Brown, 2010). It usually takes the form of a graded test, measured formally against defined standards (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Accordingly, SA use in summative assessment involves students in assessing their performance by assigning grades against a specific rubric or standards (Falchikov & Boud, 1989). In contrast, SA is formative when it is utilized by the students themselves to detect errors in their work, identify the gap between their current performance and the desired performance, and make plans for improvements (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Formative assessment, or AfL, as Falchikov and Boud (1989) suggested, contributes to the learning process and, as Black et al. (2004) suggested, maximizes the feedback process that can be used to modify teaching and learning activities in order to improve students' learning. It also involves peer assessment and SA in which students or peers are involved as active participants in making decisions about future learning needs, while teachers act as facilitators, helping students decide where they are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there (Stiggins et al., 2004; Broadfoot et al., 2002). As Gardner (2000) posits, teachers can take advantage of the feedback generated by SA to fine-tune their teaching and identify how well their integration of SA into teaching writing, encourages students to reproduce well-drafted essays.

B. Sociocultural Stance on Learning to Write

The theoretical underpinnings of SA as an essential component of formative assessment, or AfL, can be understood in light of Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, which argues that social learning comes before individual development (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). When beginning an activity, students mainly depend on the collaborative dialogues they have with the teacher and other peers involved in the lesson to construct knowledge. These dialogues involve students interacting with the teacher and other peers within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) and receiving instructional scaffolding, allowing them to make the most of their existing knowledge, while also acquiring new knowledge (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In Vygotsky's theory, greater importance is attached to the cultural beliefs and attitudes that affect how learning occurs (Vygotsky, 1978).

Consequently, the formative use of SA in writing involves an interactive process between teachers and students, with students as active participants in making decisions about their learning needs (Stiggins et al., 2004). Teachers ultimately mediate students' learning through assessment and provide students with feedback that helps them fine-tune their writing, by producing multiple drafts based on a process of reflection, revision, and redrafting (Neilson, 2012). Learning to write is thus viewed as an integration of SA facilitated by the 'symbiotic relationship' of teaching, learning, and assessment (Lee, 2007, p. 206). In addition, the different affordances at play in the context in which SA is enacted, including curriculum design, assessment policy, and professional development, impact how teachers integrate SA into practice and how students utilize it to improve their writing (Gipps, 1999).

C. Integrating SA into the Writing Process

Some have argued that learning to write in a second or a foreign language is the most difficult skill (Nunan, 1989). Learners generally find it challenging to generate content organized into cohesive, coherent, and comprehensible texts. The difficulty is exacerbated by learners' inadequate language proficiency that may negatively impact how teachers encourage SA in teaching writing (Richards & Renandya, 2002). The evolution of research in teaching writing has undergone dramatic changes, ranging from focusing on the mechanics of composition, in which learners are viewed as

passive receivers of knowledge, to socio-cultural views of integrating SA into the writing process to promote independent learning. These changes have resulted in two key pedagogical approaches to writing, informing teachers' and students' decisions about the type of assessment to be used, and the pedagogical implications of each approach towards improving students' writing.

1. Writing as a Product

The product approach to writing emphasizes the final composed draft (Nunan, 1989). It regards writing as a product constructed based on a learner's knowledge of the structure of language, and developed through imitating texts provided by the teacher (Badger & White, 2000). Classroom perspectives on this approach have been derived from a combination of structural linguistics and behaviorist learning theories (Silva, 1990) and suggest that learning takes place through reinforcing correct forms of grammatical rules and patterns (Hyland, 2019). Learning to write in this approach consists of four stages: 'familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing' (Hyland, 2019, pp. 3-4). The familiarization stage is concerned with teaching the learners specific grammatical rules and vocabulary. In the controlled writing stage, the learners practice what they have learnt through drills and exercises. Then, in the guided writing stage, the learners imitate or reproduce a model text. Finally, the free writing stage prepares the learners to use the language patterns they have learnt, to create their pieces of writing. One of the notable weaknesses of the product approach, however, is that it pays little attention to the stages of writing, and it tends to equate mastery of the language system with flawless writing (Tuffs, 1993).

2. Writing as a Process

The process approach to writing is a learner-centered approach focusing on how learners compose texts (Tribble, 2003). It acknowledges the cognitive processes of writing (Hyland, 2019) and the stages through which a text is created (Nunan, 1989). The most widely accepted model of writing as a process is the three-stage *planning-writing-reviewing* framework introduced by Flower and Hayes (Flower, 1989). This model regards writing as a 'non-linear, exploratory, and generative process' through which learners go back and forth between different stages of writing, to revise and edit their drafts before submitting the final product (Zamel, 1983, p. 165). In a process-oriented classroom, learners devote a sufficient amount of time to produce texts by completing a set of task-based activities (Tuffs, 1993) that support the learning of specific skills at each stage (Seow, 2002). The teacher's role is to guide learners through the stages of writing, facilitate their writing with emphasis on the flow rather than the form of writing (Hyland, 2019), and provide them with formative feedback on successive drafts as they get closer to their desired final products (Nunan, 2015). While the process approach is widely used in teaching EFL writing, teachers have often voiced empirical concerns about it since it regards all writing as being produced by the same set of processes, pays less attention to grammar and structure, and downplays the focus on the final product (Badger & White, 2000).

Apart from this, the shortcomings of the product approach discussed above have given rise to the appeal of integrating SA into the process approach. Neilson (2012) proposed that the process approach promotes integrating SA into writing through metacognitive activities, including evaluating the content, organization, and purpose of writing. It also enhances learners' reflective activities, enabling them to select writing strategies, monitor strategy use, and assess the effectiveness of those strategies throughout the writing process (Lam, 2010). Wong and Mak (2019) proposed key considerations for facilitating the integration of SA into the various stages of writing, described as the pre-, during-, and post-writing stages. The pre-writing stage involves planning, whereby students identify their strengths and weaknesses, outline the content of writing, and consider how their writing performance will be assessed. Then, in the during-writing stage, students predominantly focus on drafting and revising the first draft of their texts. In the post-writing stage, students are concerned with editing their drafts and proofreading their compositions, culminating in a final draft to be submitted as a summative assessment. In all these stages, teachers can provide scaffolding by offering formative assessment accompanied by annotated feedback concerning the application of the standards of writing agreed upon at the start of the lesson.

D. Previous Research on SA

Despite the growing appreciation for SA in the attainment of learning outcomes in different EFL educational reforms (Brown, 2005; Gardner, 2000), research has highlighted competing findings of teachers' perceptions about its efficacy in improving students' writing. Research has highlighted a shortage of empirical research addressing the lack of synergy between socio-cultural affordances of integrating SA into learning to write in EFL contexts and teachers' perceptions of and experiences with this. In response to the new educational system adopted in Algerian universities, Kadri (2017) conducted a qualitative study to explore EFL teachers' classroom assessment practices and their beliefs about SA. Kadri (2017) concluded that despite teachers' positive attitudes about SA, they admitted that students in their writing classes were not involved in assessment of any kind. Teachers perceived integrating SA into teaching writing to be challenging due to their lack of knowledge and skills on how to put SA into practice and their preference for traditional methods of assessment. Students were also perceived to be unmotivated to take responsibility for their learning and had limited linguistic proficiency. Other challenges pertained to the learning context, including a lack of training and time constraints. With similar objectives, Belachew et al. (2015) investigated Ethiopian EFL teachers' perceptions of integrating SA into teaching writing. They concluded that teachers had positive attitudes about SA and became familiar

with the concept of SA and its role in developing students' reflective habits and enhancing their skills of self-regulation. However, teachers reported that they lacked sufficient training and experience with implementing SA in writing classrooms. Teachers also reported that students in their classrooms lacked second language proficiency and tended to overrate their work compared to the marks they actually deserved; however, additional practice and guidance facilitated an improvement in their SA skills.

The empirical evidence suggests that teachers' perceptions of SA in writing in EFL contexts are relatively underexplored. Very little is currently known about how EFL teachers integrate SA into teaching writing and what challenges exist to its implementation. The present study, therefore, aims to bridge this gap and contribute more broadly to understanding the implications of this on teaching and researching SA in EFL contexts.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed an explanatory, sequential mixed methods design, consisting of collecting quantitative data and qualitative data in two sequential phases (Creswell, 2012). As Creswell (2006, p. 71) suggested, this design entails 'a two-phase mixed methods design' starting with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by a subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data, and then culminating with interpretation based on the combination of both phases.

B. Participants

This research adopted a convenience sampling procedure to select participants for the study, based on potential participants' availability and willingness to contribute to the study (Dörnyei, 2007). In the initial quantitative phase, 53 EFL teachers (35 female and 18 male teachers) completed the quantitative questionnaire. These teachers taught writing to students in different levels of the academic English track (ELIS) and the general English track (ELIA). Six of these teachers (five female and one male teachers) opted to take part in the second qualitative phase and completed the qualitative questionnaire. This questionnaire, completed by teachers who were teaching writing to students of different levels at the ELIS, aimed to elicit their perceptions of the integration of SA into teaching writing, the relevant challenges, and the implications for their practices.

C. Instruments and Procedures

1. The Quantitative Questionnaire

A self-constructed questionnaire was designed by the researchers based on the literature review and then reviewed by an expert EFL teacher for clarity of the items, the suitability of each item to the dimension it belongs to, and the exact wording of the items. Prior to the online distribution of the questionnaire to the target sample, it was piloted with a similar group of teachers in order to increase its validity and reliability (Dörnyei, 2007). All ethical guidelines were considered and the approval was obtained from the case institution to collect the data. The questionnaire was divided into three main parts. The first part asked the participants to sign a consent form, while the second part collected basic demographic information related to gender, years of teaching experience, teaching track, and language level. The third part constituted the main body of the questionnaire, which was divided into three main sections comprising 24 closed-ended items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). At the end of the questionnaire, teachers who were teaching writing to students of different levels at the ELIS and were interested in taking part in a follow-up qualitative questionnaire, were asked to provide their email addresses.

2. The Qualitative Questionnaire

Since the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was challenging for the researchers to meet the participants and conduct face-to-face interviews. Therefore, a qualitative questionnaire comprised of four open-ended questions was used. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to respond and express their viewpoints freely and in as much detail as they wanted. As a result, the researchers were able to obtain rich data (Cohen et al. 2017). Prior to sending the questionnaire to the target sample, it was emailed to an expert EFL teacher for feedback on the clarity and wording of the questions. This piloting stage helped the researchers ensure that the proposed questions elicited sufficiently rich data (Dörnyei, 2007). Teachers were asked to sign a consent form before responding to the questionnaire that was sent to them as a Word document via email.

D. Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was employed to analyze the data gained from the quantitative questionnaire. Descriptive statistical methods, including frequencies and percentages were used to describe the sample according to their demographic characteristics. Furthermore, the mean and standard deviation (SD) was calculated to measure and interpret the responses to each item. The non-parametric chi-square test was also used to determine the differences between the expected and observed frequencies of the responses to each item. In contrast, responses to the qualitative questionnaire were thematically analyzed (see Table 4 and Table 5). The data were manually coded into

common categories, and identical categories were combined to categorize themes and subthemes pertaining to the research questions.

IV. RESULTS

A. Quantitative Data

Question 1: What are EFL teachers' perceptions of integrating SA checklists into teaching essay writing?

To answer this question, the mean values, SD, and chi-square test for the responses of each statement in the first and second dimensions were calculated.

TABLE 1
TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE COURSE SYLLABUS

Statements	Mean	SD	Chi-Square	p-value	Agreement level	Rank
1. I am aware of different teaching methods for teaching writing.	4.04	0.88	45.0	0.000	Agree	1
8. I understand the rationale for including a checklist as a form of SA in teaching and assessing writing.	4.02	0.77	33.9	0.000	Agree	2
3. The course syllabus informs the use of the process approach to teaching writing.	3.58	1.10	35.6	0.000	Agree	3
5. The writing assessment methods, including SA are clearly explained to teachers.	3.45	1.12	16.7	0.002	Agree	4
2. The course syllabus informs the use of the product approach to teaching writing.	3.43	0.95	27.7	0.000	Agree	5
4. The course syllabus informs the use of the genre approach to teaching writing.	3.38	1.10	13.9	0.008	Neutral	6
6. The syllabus policy of integrating SA into teaching and assessing writing is clearly explained to teachers.	3.13	1.04	29.7	0.000	Neutral	7
10. The course syllabus allows ample time for teachers to provide guidance for students on how to practice SA.	2.72	1.06	16.9	0.002	Neutral	8
9. The course syllabus allows ample time for students to practice SA in the classroom.	2.68	0.98	26.3	0.000	Neutral	9
7. The assessment policy allows a percentage of the course grade for SA.	2.43	1.05	19.4	0.001	Disagree	10
Total	3.29	1.00			Neutral	

Table 1 shows that all chi-square values about teachers' views on the course syllabus were statistically significant (p-values < 0.05). This means that there were statistically significant differences between the expected and observed frequencies of the participants' opinions. The general mean value of teachers' views on the course syllabus was (3.29), which falls in the third interval (2.60 –< 3.40) of the 5-point Likert scale, indicating that the general opinion of the teachers was equivalent to 'neutral'. Teachers agreed that they are aware of the key approaches to teaching writing. Teachers also agreed that the course syllabus informs both the product approach and the process approach and that the writing assessment methods, including SA, have been clearly explained to them. Although teachers also agreed that they understand the rationale behind integrating SA checklists into teaching and assessing writing, they were not sure about whether or not the syllabus policy of integrating these checklists into teaching and assessing writing has been clearly explained to them. In addition, teachers were not sure about items 4, 9, and 10. Moreover, teachers disagreed on item 7.

TABLE 2
TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THEIR TEACHING PRACTICES

Statements	Mean	SD	Chi-Square	p-value	Agreement level	Rank
6. I provide students with feedback that supports them in making appropriate revisions.	4.21	0.84	59.5	0.000	Strongly Agree	1
4. I encourage students to work through the stages of writing.	3.89	0.91	59.0	0.000	Agree	2
1. In teaching writing, I adopt the teaching approach informed by the course syllabus.	3.81	0.90	57.1	0.000	Agree	3
5. I guide students through the process of producing multiple drafts of their writing.	3.59	0.99	23.5	0.000	Agree	4
7. I encourage students to practice SA at every stage of the writing process.	3.58	1.01	24.3	0.000	Agree	5
2. I follow the textbook instructions word for word when teaching writing.	3.23	1.19	11.8	0.019	Neutral	6
8. I encourage students to submit SA as one indicator of their overall writing progress.	3.09	1.18	7.7	0.105	Neutral	7
3. I follow my own approach in teaching writing.	3.02	1.10	15.2	0.004	Neutral	8
Total	3.55	1.01			Agree	

Table 2 shows that all chi-square values (except for Item 8) about teachers' views on their teaching practices were statistically significant (p-values < 0.05). This means that there were statistically significant differences between the expected and observed frequencies of the participants' opinions. The general mean value of teachers' views on their teaching practices was (3.55), which falls in the second interval (3.40 -< 4.20) of the 5-point Likert scale, indicating that the general opinion of the teachers was equivalent to 'agree'. Teachers agreed that they adopt the teaching approach for writing informed by the course syllabus, encourage students and guide them to work through the stages of writing, provide students with feedback on how to improve their writing, and encourage students to practice SA at each stage of the writing process. However, teachers were hesitant about items 2, 3, and 8.

Question 2: What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the perceived challenges of integrating SA checklists into teaching essay writing?

To answer this question, the mean values, SD, and chi-square tests for the responses of each statement in the third dimension were calculated.

TABLE 3
TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE CHALLENGES IN SA IMPLEMENTATION

Statements	Mean	SD	Chi-Square	p-value	Agreement level	Rank
4. EFL learners in my classroom believe that it is the teacher's responsibility to assess their writing.	3.79	0.91	41.4	0.000	Agree	1
6. EFL learners in my classroom have limited knowledge of how to assess their writing.	3.74	0.81	72.6	0.000	Agree	2
5. EFL learners in my classroom are unfamiliar with the concept of SA.	3.47	1.03	38.2	0.000	Agree	3
1. It is uncommon to practice SA in my EFL writing classroom.	3.08	1.05	19.4	0.001	Neutral	4
2. I lack sufficient training on how to implement SA in the classroom.	2.77	0.99	7.5	0.059	Neutral	5
3. I lack knowledge of how to guide and support students through the process of SA.	2.45	0.99	12.0	0.007	Disagree	6
Total	3.22	0.96			Neutral	

Table 3 shows that all chi-square values about teachers' views on the challenges in SA implementation (except for item 2) were statistically significant (p-values < 0.05). This means that there were statistically significant differences between the expected and observed frequencies of the participants' opinions. The general mean value of teachers' views on the challenges in SA implementation was (3.22), which falls in the third interval (2.60 -< 3.40) of the 5-point Likert scale, indicating that the general opinion of the teachers was equivalent to 'neutral'. Teachers agreed that students in their writing classrooms lack awareness on how to self-assess their writing and believe that it is the teacher's responsibility to assess their writing; additionally, teachers agreed that these students are unfamiliar with the concept of SA itself. However, teachers were confused about items 1 and 2. Further, teachers disagreed with item 3.

B. Qualitative Data

1. Use of SA in Teaching and Assessing Writing

All six teachers' responses indicated that SA is encouraged in classroom practice as one of the ways of assessing students' writing progress in the classroom; however, it does not count towards students' overall assessment of writing. As teachers' responses suggested, SA is used by the students to enhance their writing performance, but there were no clear guidelines on how it should be used, especially with regards to the formative and summative purposes. Table 4 below presents the themes, categories, and sub categories that emerged from data related to the use of SA in teaching and assessing writing.

TABLE 4
USE OF SA IN TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
SA integration into teaching writing	Different stages of writing	Students grade themselves
		Teacher gives feedback
	Post writing stage (editing)	Teacher assessment
		Students grade themselves
		Peer assessment
	SLOs + exam rating scale	
SA integration into assessing writing	SA checklists	Not provided in the syllabus
	Rubric	Teacher grades the final draft
	Teacher feedback	
	Writing assignments	
	Final writing exam	

All teachers reported the use of SA checklists as a classroom activity integrated into teaching writing. While three out of six teachers proposed integrating SA into the various stages of writing, others preferred to only integrate it into the post-writing stage. Teacher 6 said *'you will have students write a draft to a given prompt, then ask them to apply the checklist to their writing and award themselves grades or give feedback'*. Teacher 2 concurred *'students are asked to write a first draft and use the checklist to assess their writing'*. Teacher 3 added *'I guide students through the stages of writing and ask them to refer to the checklist in each stage'*. More importantly, teachers were confident about the impact of SA on reproducing well-drafted essays. As Teacher 6 indicated *'you might then have them write another draft after recognizing their mistakes and using the checklist once again'*. Teacher 2 also suggested that based on the outcomes of SA *'students are encouraged to write a second draft after revising the previous one based on the checklist and the feedback they got from the teacher'*. Contrary to this, Teachers 1 and 5 suggested the integration of SA checklists into the editing stage. Teacher 1 stated, *'students have to complete the writing task. Then, I revise their writing and spot the mistakes for them, or sometimes I ask them to try to assess themselves, then spot each other's mistakes'*. Teacher 5 clarified, *'the checklist has the ideas or points that the students should include in their writing. So, I ask them to check their writing before submission'*. While Teachers 1 and 5 encouraged the use of SA checklists, they might do so out of compliance with the course syllabus. Therefore, they do not require students to redraft their essays in light of SA outcomes. However, integrating SA into teaching writing for Teacher 4 is achieved by *'combining student learning outcomes (SLOs) with exam rating scales. When working on writing tasks in class, I explain the task (what to write), how to answer it (using checklists), and the marking process (how they will be rated on the task)'*.

Regarding the weight given to SA in the overall assessment of writing, it seems that it is not graded at all by students, and if any, its grade is not taken into consideration towards students' overall writing assessment. Teacher 6 suggested that SA is not considered as an institutionalized practice and, while the course syllabus encourages SA, the assessment policy focuses more on the integration of rubric assessment by teachers rather than students. As she said, *'we are provided with a rubric to follow and grade students' final draft. Sometimes feedback is given, others not'*. Teacher 5 added *'student writing achievement is measured by writing assignments and a final writing exam'*. Teacher 2 commented *'other than a reminder that students must include all "bullet points" when completing writing assignments, a checklist per say is not provided in the given syllabi'*.

2. Challenges in SA Implementation

The data suggested that all six teachers face different challenges when implementing SA in their EFL writing classrooms related to either the students or the affordances within their workplace context. Table 5 below presents the themes, categories, and subcategories that emerged from data related to the challenges in SA implementation.

TABLE 5
CHALLENGES IN SA IMPLEMENTATION

Themes	Categories	Subcategories
SA challenges	Challenges related to students	Lack of awareness
		Lack of motivation
		Lack of language proficiency
		Students' preference for teacher assessment
		Lack of training with SA
	Challenges related to affordances within workplace context	Writing is a challenging task
		Heavy workload
		Intensive course
		Lack of time for training
		SA is an uncommon practice

Teachers commented on different challenges to SA implementation that frequently occur in their writing classrooms. It appears that students' lack of awareness and motivation lead to improper integration of SA into teaching writing. Teacher 5 said '*students lack of awareness about the importance of SA and lack of motivation impede the successful implementation of SA*'. Sharing the same point of view, Teacher 2 commented '*some challenges may include a lack of self-awareness by the student. Another challenge is the lack of motivation to become a better writer*'. Teacher 6 concurred '*students are not possessing enough maturity or self- awareness to be able to judge fairly*'. Lower linguistic proficiency seems to be another issue that negatively impacts the proper utilization of SA in writing by the students. Teacher 4 posited '*if learners' proficiency level is low, it will become challenging to implement SA properly*'. Another dimension of the challenges of SA implementation pertains to students' perceptions of who should assess their work. As noticed by Teacher 3 '*students in my class think assessment is the teacher's job. They prefer to be assessed*'. SA implementation for Teacher 6 is associated with challenges related to lack of training. As she said, '*for students to be able to assess themselves, they need to be trained*'. The difficulty of the writing task itself is another challenge that renders SA challenging for students to utilize for better writing. Teacher 4 indicated that '*writing in general is a challenging task*' and yet '*students are required to produce multiple writing drafts. Although SA helps them revise their writing, they find it challenging*'. The huge course syllabus or '*heavy workload*' is another challenge that is negatively perceived by Teacher 1 as a hindrance to integrate SA into teaching writing. Teacher 6 added '*training students in SA takes time and effort, which is something lacking in the modular system, where I have the students for 6- 8 weeks and then they move on*'. Teacher 5 highlighted another challenge to SA implementation '*it is difficult to apply SA in the Saudi EFL context, where teachers and students are not used to doing so*'.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Misaligned SA Initiatives

The quantitative findings revealed two misaligned initiatives undertaken by the participants of this study and the writing course syllabus on one hand, and the assessment policy on the other hand. That is, the majority of the teachers had positive perceptions about SA and its integration into teaching writing, but they were undecided about the institutional policy towards this. This uncertainty can be discerned by means of the similar findings drawn from the qualitative accounts of teachers' reported practices. Teachers reported an atmosphere in which they felt encouraged to motivate students to use the checklist tables provided towards the end of the writing section in each unit of the textbook. However, the extent to which this encouragement materializes into classroom practice seems to be vague and not clearly identified. Although teachers claim that they encourage students to make use of SA through the checklists in the writing classroom, the course syllabus lacks instructional guidance on how SA should be integrated into the various stages of writing. It appears that teachers are driven by progressive views towards SA while institutional policies seem to be geared towards summative assessment. Official assessment policy seems to pay little attention to the weight of SA in the overall writing assessment. It appears that there is some sort of misalignment between teachers' beliefs, the curriculum, and the assessment policy of integrating SA into teaching and assessing writing. As Lee (2007) suggests, this lack of incongruence seems to be an indication of the lack of a symbiotic relationship between the different affordances that teachers drew upon to support SA implementation in writing classrooms. This finding is in line with the conclusions of Kadri (2017), who found that both Algerian teachers and the educational context do not support the implementation of SA in writing. In the same vein, it disagrees with Belachew et al. (2015) who suggested that Ethiopian teachers were aware of SA, but due to lack of expertise, they did not integrate it into teaching writing. It appears that the participants of this study and the curriculum designers valued students' utilization of SA highly; as Zimmerman and Schunk (2001, p. 5) said, they are 'metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning'. However, both this study and Kadri's (2017) highlight that the context of SA implementation plays a major role in how SA is translated into practice. That is, the institutional focus on AoL tests measured formally against defined standards (Richards & Schmidt, 2010) may render the pedagogical process of catering to students' learning needs, maximizing feedback, and cultivating the role of teachers as facilitators of learning to write virtually ineffective (Black et al., 2004; Stiggins et al., 2004).

B. Integration of SA in Writing

The findings of this theme suggest that the type of pedagogy teachers follow informs how SA can be integrated into teaching writing. It seems that teachers find SA as the optimal fit to teaching writing as a process. The quantitative data revealed that the majority of the teachers agree on integrating SA into their own teaching practices. This includes their willingness to adopt the teaching approach informed by the course syllabus, which is predominantly a process approach. Similarly, the qualitative findings showed that teachers recommend guiding students through producing multiple drafts of their writing and providing them with feedback on successive drafts as they come closer to a desired final product. Teachers also reported that they encourage students to utilize SA checklists provided in the textbook to review their writing and make necessary changes before submission. This finding contradicts previous research (eg. Belachew et al., 2015; Kadri, 2017). Belachew et al. (2015), for instance, found that teachers did not allow time for students to practice SA in the classroom and that they reported no room for SA in their classrooms (Kadri, 2017).

C. Challenges of SA Implementation

The quantitative data revealed that the majority of the teachers were neutral towards the challenges they encounter when implementing SA in their writing classrooms. Teachers predominantly were undecided about several issues in SA implementation, such as the uncommon practice of SA in their workplace and their lack of training on how to integrate SA into teaching writing. Similar views were expressed in the qualitative questionnaire, in which teachers commented on two categories of challenges. The first category was associated with the students, including students' lack of awareness of the importance of SA, students' lack of motivation to engage in SA, students' lack of language proficiency, students' preference for teacher assessment, and students' lack of training in SA. The second category of challenges in SA implementation is associated with several factors related to the workplace context, including heavy workloads, intensive writing course that does not provide sufficient training on SA, and the uncommonness of SA practice in EFL writing classrooms. These findings substantiate findings from previous works, which have highlighted, that teachers negatively perceived factors hindering the successful integration of SA in writing related to the students and the learning context (Kadri, 2017). It seems that integrating SA is not a straightforward process into practice, and the mediating factors mentioned in this study, such as teachers and students' beliefs and knowledge about how to take SA into practice may surface as challenges to its potential benefits. However, the intervention of these factors plays a significant role in addressing these challenges. Students overrated themselves in SAs in Belachew et al. (2015); this was only mitigated by teachers' intervention, such as providing guidance on how students can use SA efficiently to improve their writing. However, teachers' lack of training on how to integrate SA effectively resulted in teachers developing negative perceptions of its potential for students. Guidance and training for students and teachers alike seem to be a prerequisite for smooth integration of SA in writing. As Wong and Mak (2019) posited, teachers can mediate students' challenges to SA during the stages of writing through mini-lessons on integrating SA into teaching writing. As Broadfoot et al. (2002) also suggested, professional development support can play a role in enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills in SA implementation.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study sought to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of and experiences with integrating SA into teaching writing at a Saudi university. In general, teachers reported mixed views about how SA can be integrated into teaching writing in order to enhance formative feedback and improve the quality of students' writing. Teachers seem to have an overly optimistic view about the potential benefits of SA both to teachers and students, but their reported practices revealed several challenges that negatively influenced their perceptions towards SA. Teachers' perceptions of SA reflect the theoretical underpinnings of SA and its implementation in EFL writing contexts. In line with seminal works in the field (e.g., Boud, 1991; Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009), teachers agreed on the importance of students' active engagement in SA design and implementation. This entails individual self-reflective, pair, and group work facilitated by a supportive environment where teachers, curriculum, and workplace professional development collaborate to achieve the goals of integrating SA into teaching writing. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, these mediating factors motivate students to take responsibility for their learning within a functional ZPD. However, teachers reported that their scaffolding was futile in part due to a dysfunctional workplace affordance. That is, although SA is encouraged into classroom practice, the syllabus policy does not provide sufficient information on how to integrate it into the various stages of writing. In addition, successful implementation of SA requires teachers to develop the necessary knowledge and skills (Broadfoot et al., 2002). This cannot be achieved without supportive professional development initiatives that educate teachers on how to translate their theoretical knowledge of SA into propositional knowledge rooted in practice. Another key finding of this study highlighted teachers' awareness of the various challenges in SA implementation and how these seem to be counterproductive to the optimistic views they hold about SA. The reported challenges pertained to syllabus policy, curriculum, and time constraints, rendered SA checklists at the end of writing sections of the textbook an aesthetic appendix. Whilst teachers felt rather powerless to change the dominant AoL practices, their perceptions revealed powerful self-esteem and agency to change the status quo and the institution at large. To cope with these challenges, teachers suggested collaborative collegiality to discuss ways to address these challenges and more effectively integrate SA into teaching writing.

Despite the usefulness of the findings about the complex nature of SA and how different parties involved in teaching and learning writing can mitigate this complexity, the study has several limitations, and the findings should be interpreted in light of these limitations. First, although this study employed an explanatory, sequential mixed-methods design, the small number of participants in both the quantitative and qualitative phases render the generalization of the findings of this study beyond its specific context almost impossible. In addition, robust findings regarding the integration of SA into practice could have been made possible by triangulating observations of live demonstrations of how teachers and students made use of SA checklists in writing classrooms. However, due to the limitations posed by restricted access to the participants due to COVID-19, further research is encouraged to address these limitations.

Based on the reported findings, several recommendations can be made to assist language instructors in integrating SA into teaching writing to EFL students enrolled in the preparatory year at Saudi universities. First, language centers and institutes may want to rethink the design of the English language curriculum in line with the tenets of the socio-cultural theory. In line with this theory, the integration of SA into language textbooks should move beyond the simplistic and aesthetic inclusion of checklists at the end of the writing sections, to explore the more complex nature of SA pedagogy revealed in this study. Second, the symbiotic relationship between the scaffolding provided by different affordances, such as the syllabus design, institutional policies about AfL, workplace professional development, individual teachers, and the teachers' community at large, should be enhanced. Finally, while writing as a process seems to be predominantly practiced in EFL writing contexts, the challenges posed by the limitations discussed in this study can be acknowledged and addressed to facilitate smoother integration of SA into teaching writing. If all these affordances work together, the effective and active participation of students in taking responsibility for integrating SA into the various stages of writing has great potential to improve the quality of their compositions.

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