Iraqi EFL Teachers' Perceptions of the Utility of Frequent Written Quizzes

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EFL English secondary school teachers frequently use quick written quizzes to motivate their students, reassess the methods and techniques they follow and review the content they have taught. Quizzes allow EFL teachers to accept certain ways and strategies that are directly linked to their course objectives. Frequent quizzes have great impact on both teachers' future perspectives and students' learning growth. Hence, it seems necessary to gather those teachers' opinions about the influence of frequent quizzes on English teaching classes in secondary schools. Sixty EFL secondary school teachers from the Al-Risafa area of Baghdad Governorate have been selected as the sample of the study. A twenty-item questionnaire (pertinent to students' utility of frequent written quizzes) and a ten-item questionnaire (concerned with teachers' usefulness of frequent written quizzes), followed by eight open-ended questions have been administered to the chosen data to elicit the obtained data. The analysis of the two questionnaires and the open-ended questions has shown that frequent written quizzes are an important part of learning and teaching EFL in secondary school classes. They often help in the students' learning progression and teachers' teaching career, i.e. quizzes can boost learning and consolidate teaching EFL.

Key words: EFL secondary school teachers, perception, questionnaire, open-ended questions, frequent written quizzes.
Introduction

Testing is an essential part of the teaching process as it helps teachers assess their students' proficiency and construct compact grounds of understanding how students’ progress in their learning process. This idea is ascertained by Ross (2005: 317) who maintains that "the goal of assessment as an index to learning processes, and by extension to growth in learner ability".

Testing is unavoidable in all spheres of life to measure, examine and verify an activity to realise the nature and steadfastness of the information obtained. In particular, in English language teaching and learning, testing plays a great role in specifying students' educational quality. Further, tests provide teachers invaluable philosophies and suggestions which can yield remedial procedures in the process of teaching English.

Quizzes are one main type of testing which are frequently employed in EFL classes and quiz undertakings have a great influence on the academic fields involving healthier student' performance (Maki and Maki, 2003), amplified class participation and interaction, improved understanding of specified subjects, better attendance in classrooms and improved vigorous learning (Nevid and Mahon, 2009). Further, quizzes enable EFL teachers to adopt specific techniques and strategies that are closely associated with their lesson objectives. Therefore, frequent quizzes have great influence on both teachers' future perspectives and students' learning development. Therefore, it seems necessary to collect teachers' opinions about the use of frequent quizzes in English teaching classes in secondary schools.

Testing

A test is a tool of assessment which measures learner's capacity, knowledge or enactment by producing recognisable behaviour from the test participant as their attempts to yield exact estimates about performance in a composite linguistic activity. In fact, a test is an educational procedure which is designed to identify learner's characteristic behaviour of an individual's linguistic performance (Carroll 1968).

According to Brown (2004: 43), a test is basically an apparatus of assessment which has a group of practices, processes or elements which necessitate the learner's performance. It is manipulated to evaluate a learner's "ability, knowledge or performance in a certain given or limited domain. Some tests measure general ability, while others focus on very specific objectives." On the main, tests are designed to give "a clear picture of the effectiveness and usefulness of particular language teaching methods."

More elaborately, Prodromou (2006: 209) confirms that when prepared at the suitable time and in the right place tests "have a valuable contribution to make in assessing learners' proficiency,
progress, and achievement”. They are also bettered when they "invade essential teaching space, when they are not the final stage of a process of learning but become the beginning, middle and end of the whole process" which involves "the backwash effect: from testing to teaching."

One important component of language teaching is testing learner's language skills and capabilities. Testing has become a fundamental portion of teaching as it offers important data or ideas concerning learners' development and accomplishment in learning process, and gives solutions and suggestions to learner’s problems, learning styles and anxiety stages. In most cases, tests are administered to identify "strengths and weakness in the learning abilities of the students." In language situations, "a test is designed to measure and evaluate students' language proficiency according to different qualities" (Hughes, 2003; 57). [For more information on language testing, see also Brown, 2001]

For pedagogical purposes, tests can be utilised to give chances for learning, "both for the students who are being tested and for the professionals who are administering the tests". Therefore, the test "must be fair, valid, and reliable" as the chief essential requirements (Buck, 2001: 92). A well-prepared test is the one that permits the researcher to "make useful inferences about the test taker's communicative language ability". Likewise, Tomlinson (2005, 44) supports Buck's view stating that "tests are not normally viewed as events in which new learning takes place. But it is perfectly possible for learners to gain new knowledge and to develop new awareness and skills whilst taking a test." In this sense, a researcher should stipulate the test's aim right from the beginning. Specifying the objectives of the test will assist the researcher to select the right items where the emphasis is on the precise information and assigned material.

Quizzes

One essential part of teaching is testing which often supports learners' development in their learning progression. Integrating regular quizzes into classroom activities will possibly provoke student learning. Commonly, a quiz is defined as "the most common classroom test which is a compromise between short-term, subjective evaluation based on daily work and the longer term achievement test"(Mousavi, 2009: 546). Quizzes are often presented as short-answer tests designed for offering students the chance for repossessing exercise, and in return, giving feedback for teachers on the basis of the students' responses. As a result, this will undoubtedly upsurge learning of the assigned material. A quiz is a practice of learners' evaluation that gauges their information, abilities, and aptitudes. It is usually a regular and short form of evaluation that can measure learners' retention and understanding of a "small amount of information". In a course or semester, a quiz can serve as "an informative feedback device allowing both the instructor and the students to see where they are excelling or need
more focus". Hence, to efficiently build quizzes, it is necessary "to establish and understand the learning objectives that are being measured" (McDermott et al., 2013: 1ff).

English teachers regularly resort to quick quizzes or tests to stimulate students, reconsider the ways and techniques they follow and go over material they have taught. Westwood (2008: 76) maintains that some advantages accumulate" when students learn from a quiz or test as they listen to the answers being checked. A limitation of this form of assessment is that it tends only to focus on factual information, rather than on the application or transformation of information."

Roediger et al. (2011:1-36) and Kuo and Simon (2009: 156-160) affirm that research studies on the frequent utilisation of quizzes in English language classes have proved that quizzes are often preferred since they "improve students' attendance, encourage regular and more effective study periods, reduce anxiety, facilitate learning and retention, provide both teachers and students with feedback, and increase students' exam performance." Furthermore, they are preferred by students (particularly the clever ones). However, these studies have also revealed that quizzes sometimes "consume class time, produce superficial/ rote learning, "boost recall of only the tested material" and in specific cases, they "may decrease the quality of feedback" (Hussam, et al., 2018).

Additionally, regular quizzes are valuable in that "schools can gain valuable information about how they are doing … provide the school, teachers, parents, and students with useful feedback on student performance in the class" (Gholami and Moghadam, 2013:36). They generate external motivation for the students as those students strive to get good marks in the semester; they work hard getting ready for the quizzes. Obtaining good marks on these short exams may motivate students and let them prepare more for the coming quizzes and final exams. For Selakovich (1962), recurrent quizzes lead to further class discussion of the given material in the course.

Correspondingly, it is commonly agreed that quizzes are advantageous instruments to develop learning and strengthen what learners have been learning. Brown (2004: 209), in this respect, avers that quizzes are productive as they imply "the information that washes back to students in the form of useful diagnoses of strengths and weaknesses." For teachers, this will affect the way mid-year final tests will be presented. Quizzes mostly enable teachers to identify whether their students are prepared for the coming exam, or not, and if teachers can transfer to the next lecture or not. Most studies remark that quizzes have the importance of keeping students advanced on their studying.

To abbreviate, quizzes can stimulate students' insightful engagement with the course content, increase the growth of significant learning practices, and supply both students and teachers with feedback that endorses learning.
Methodology

Methodology revolves around three main components; the sample chosen, the instrument and method followed in data and results analysis. Methodology provides the researchers with the steps with which they can consider a certain phenomenon related to teachers' perception of frequent quizzes. When the chosen method is utilised appropriately, it can contribute to the development of the general theory of EFLT and provision of remedial solutions.

A. Participants

The sample of this study consists of 60 secondary EFL teachers of Al-Risafa, Baghdad Governorate. They have been chosen to represent the subjects of the study who are required to give replies concerning their opinions of instigating frequent quizzes for writing skill in their classes.

B. Instrument

Two questionnaires are designed to account for the Iraqi EFL secondary school teachers' answers to the given items. The first is a twenty-item questionnaire, designed to elicit the EFL teachers' answers to the items concerning the nature and beneficiality of quizzes for students. The second is a ten-item questionnaire linked to EFL teachers' opinions of the implementation and usefulness of quizzes for those teachers. The respondents are required to given answers based on a five-point Likert's scale ("strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree") intended to appraise their perceptions of the application of frequent quizzes in Iraqi classroom settings in secondary schools. However, the second questionnaire is attached by eight open-ended questions directed to the EFL teachers to see if they want to add more information concerning the employment of the technique of frequent quizzes in their educational settings.

C. Method

The paper follows the qualitative method to analyse data and results obtained; therefore, it is of exploratory and descriptive nature. It aims to account for the under-investigated phenomenon to grow an understanding of an area that is little recognised. It also attempts to specify the implications of the chosen topic (Merriam, 1998: 30-31). By the same token, Tavakoli (2012: 33) affirms that researchers, in quantitative study, intend to consider how the outcomes characterise the overall population, as it deals with "measurement or sampling bias". In other words, the researchers are concerned to understand how EFL teachers react towards the engagement of regular quizzes in their teaching classes (Ali, et al., 2019).
Data Analysis

The Iraqi EFL teachers' responses to the items of the two questionnaires, i.e. for the students and for the teachers, have been collected for analysis and the outcomes discussed. These two questionnaires have been constructed, based on previous research studies (Brown, 2004; Renner, 2006; Church, 2007; Haigh, 2007; Mousavi, 2009; Johnson and Mrowka, 2010; Roediger, Putnam and Smith, 2011 and Öncül, 2017) on the nature, application, advantages and disadvantages of frequent quizzes. To ensure the validity of the two questionnaires, they have been exposed to a jury of experts in Applied Linguistics and ELT. The jury members agreed upon the suitability of these items (see the Appendix). For the reliability of the items of the two questionnaires, most items involved are taken from previous studies mentioned above, after being modified and arranged in the questionnaires (Hussein, et al.,2019) & ( Rahoomi, et al., 2019).

Questionnaire for Students

This questionnaire is concerned with EFL teachers' perceptions of the practicality and beneficiality of frequent quizzes for students. In other words, the twenty items of the questionnaire attempt to provide an answer to the question "how beneficial are frequent quizzes to secondary school students?". Table 1 below gives a clear view of items related to quizzes for students.

It is clear from table 1 that the 60 EFL secondary school teachers fluctuate in their answers to the items concerning the integration of frequent written quizzes in their teaching. Teachers show their strong preference for eight items of the entire twenty. Items 9, 6, 12, 13, 10, 8, 14, and 3 have recorded 52, 51, 50, 49, 49, 48, 44 and 39 answers with (strongly agree) respectively. This means that they completely agree to the idea that frequent written quizzes help secondary school students in their learning process.

Table 1: EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Frequent Written Quizzes for Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Students</th>
<th>Frequent Written Quizzes can</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;help student motivation&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;enhance interaction and discussion among students&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;encourage students to study&quot;</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;improve metacognitive monitoring&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;reduce test anxiety&quot;</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>&quot;motivate students to attend sessions&quot;</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These quizzes can "offer retrieval aids later retention and help revision", "motivate students to attain sessions", "facilitate learning which directly affects academic achievement", "encourage students to be regular and prepare to content effectively", "identify gaps in knowledge and then improve language skills", "provide students with positive feedback in order to reconsider their way of learning", "serve as stimulus that produces reinforcement" and "encourage students to study".

For the second point of the Likert scale (i.e. agree), the sample express their agreement upon items 1, 5 and 16 having 44, 37 and 34 replies respectively. In other words, they agree that frequent written quizzes have a positive influence on students' progression in learning EFL. In this respect, quizzes can "help student motivation", "reduce anxiety" and "arouse competition among students".
The participants show their doubtfulness, carrying the scale point (i.e. not sure) for three items 4, 19 and 11 which record 45, 43 and 33 answers respectively. Put differently, they are not sure whether frequent written quizzes can "improve metacognitive monitoring", diagnose students' difficulties, conceptual errors (i.e. strengths and weaknesses), and help students practice existing knowledge while stimulating interest in learning about new subject matter.

In terms of their dis-preference to certain items concerning the benefit of frequent written quizzes for secondary students, the participants disagree on the idea that these quizzes can "help active learning and improve communication and collaboration between the teacher and students", "enhance interaction and discussion among students", and "stimulate students to focus study effort on difficult material".

Finally, the only item which the participants strongly disagree to is item 18 as 42 subjects affirm that frequent written quizzes cannot "raise students' attention at the end of a class". On the whole, the participants reveal their inclination to most items of the questionnaire; quizzes are useful techniques which help students to achieve optimal learning of EFL.

**Questionnaire for Teachers**

The second questionnaire depicts EFL teachers' perceptions of the application and effectiveness of frequent quizzes for teachers. Put differently, the ten items of the following questionnaire endeavour to provide an answer to the question "how beneficial are these quizzes to secondary school teachers?" Consider table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Teachers</th>
<th>Frequent Written Quizzes can</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>give feedback</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>help teachers consider &quot;their ways of teaching&quot;</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;consolidate what teachers have taught&quot;</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>diagnose student's progression in learning EFL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>identify areas that need to be covered in more depth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>help teachers to plan for the next sessions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second questionnaire concerning the helpfulness of the application of frequent written quizzes for teachers shows that the participants also vary in their answers to the items of the questionnaire. The subjects express their strong agreement to items 1, 7, 3 and 2 with the numbers of 55, 47, 39 and 34. They affirm that frequent written quizzes help EFL secondary school teachers as they can "give feedback", help teachers to measure growth in knowledge, abilities and skills", "consolidate what teachers have taught", and "help teachers consider their ways of teaching".

The participants express their uncertainty (i.e. not sure) about the idea that frequent written quizzes can help "diagnose students' progression in learning EFL" in item 4 in which 33 of the participants give the answers with not sure. Furthermore, they exhibit their disagreement to two items 5 (with 44 answers) and 6 (with 42 answers), affirming that these quizzes cannot "identify areas that need to be covered in more depth" and "help teachers to plan for the next sessions". Finally, the participants show their strong disagreement to two items 8 and 9 with 51 and 49 answers respectively. They reject the idea that these quizzes can "allow teachers to acquaint with sample items used in formal tests" and "require time and effort consuming".

Open-ended Questions

To gain more obvious information about the implementation of written quizzes in EFL secondary school classes, eight open ended questions are directed to the 60 EFL secondary teachers to seek their knowledge about the frequency, duration and inclusion of the written quizzes. These questions are:

1. Do you use frequent written quizzes in your classroom?
2. How often are these written quizzes used?
3. How much time do they require?
4. When do you prefer to use the quiz?
5. What do they include?
6. Do you find difficulty in implementing them?
7. How many quizzes do students actually need in a course?
8. What else do you want to add?
The participants mostly answer that they use written quizzes once a week to give revision to the material presented through the week. In most cases, these written quizzes take 10-15 minutes, usually performed at the beginning of the lesson. EFL secondary school teachers prefer these quizzes to include a sequence of multiple choice, matching, true/false, short answers …etc. They confirm that they find difficulty in building up these types of questions as they are time and effort consuming. Further, social and environmental conditions play a great role in hindering the implementation of these quizzes. For the number of the quizzes their students need, they affirm that the frequency of these written quizzes relies on the students' progress in learning, time available, suitable setting, course objectives, teachers' willingness… etc. They add that school administrators must take the responsibility to provide a healthy environment for teaching EFL. Further, they give reference to the utilisation of online quizzes which save time and effort for both teachers and students.

Conclusion

The analysis of the two questionnaires and the open-ended questions has revealed that frequent written quizzes constitute an essential part of learning and teaching EFL in secondary school classes. They often help in the students' learning progression and teachers' teaching career. If applied well, quizzes can enhance learning EFL and consolidate teaching. As for the utility of frequent written quizzes for the students, Iraqi EFL secondary school teachers confirm that these quizzes can help students retrieve and revise information existing in the long-term memory, encourage them to attain classes, ease learning, motivate them to regularly prepare for classes, develop language skills and provide feedback and reinforcement. They can also motivate students to study harder, reduce their test-anxiety and arouse rivalry among them. Yet, they show their uncertainty concerning the possibility of quizzes to develop students' metacognitive checking and to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The subjects disagree that frequent written quizzes can create a cooperative atmosphere and ensure interaction among the students, or between the teacher and the students. In summary, EFL teacher view quizzes as helpful tools which help students to attain optimum learning of EFL.

For EFL teachers, written quizzes are the best technique by which they can realise the amount of development their students achieved in learning English and the effectiveness of the way they follow in teaching them. The second questionnaire associated with the utility of the use of frequent written quizzes for teachers reveals that these quizzes help EFL secondary school teachers to offer feedback and gauge their students' progress in information and capabilities therefore can consolidate what teachers have taught, and help them reconsider their methods of teaching. Nevertheless, they are not satisfied with the idea that these quizzes can specify areas that need to be covered in more depth. They do not assist teachers to plan for the next lesson. They completely reject the idea that these frequent quizzes are time and effort consuming.
For the open-ended questions, the participants mostly answered that they use written quizzes (lasting for 10-15 minutes) once a week to give revision to the taught material. These quizzes should include an arrangement of multiple choice, matching, true/false, short answers …etc. The subjects assert that they face difficulty in constructing written quizzes as they imply questions involving numerous items. The frequency of these written quizzes depends on the students' progress in learning, time available, suitable setting, course objectives, teachers' willingness… etc.

**Recommendations**

The findings of the paper may be fruitful for teachers in general, and particularly Iraqi EFL secondary school teachers who endeavour to employ regular quizzes to stimulate students to show up in the classes and to reduce their students' learning load. Quiz technique can be included in all types of teaching systems to ensure optimal learning. EFL Teachers can use quizzes as a learning and assessment instrument to provoke student learning. School administrators must take the responsibility to provide healthy settings for teaching EFL. Furthermore, EFL teachers must encourage online quizzes which save time and effort for both teachers and students.
REFERENCES


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### Appendix

### Names of Jury Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Academic Rank and Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prof. Abdlateef Alwan, PhD</td>
<td>Univ. of Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Prof. Abdulkarim Fadhil, PhD</td>
<td>Univ. of Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prof. Fatima Raheem Al-Mousawi, PhD</td>
<td>Maysan University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Asst. Prof. Bushra Sadoun Al-Noori, PhD</td>
<td>Univ. of Baghdad</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Asst. Prof. Ali Arif Fadhil, PhD</td>
<td>Univ. of Baghdad</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Bushra Naema Rashid, PhD</td>
<td>Univ. of Baghdad</td>
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<td>Asst. Prof. Dhea Mizher Khuraibut, PhD</td>
<td>Univ. of Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Asst. Prof. Raed Fadhil Mohammad, PhD</td>
<td>Maysan University</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Asst. Prof. Mazin Jasim AlHilu, PhD</td>
<td>Wasit University</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Asst. Prof. Iqbal Disher Abdul-Sahib</td>
<td>Maysan University</td>
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