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Self–assessment in EFL Grammar Classroom: A Study of EFL Learners at the Centre for Languages and Translation, Ibb University

Marwan Saeed Saif Moqbel
Ibb University, marwan_s1977@yahoo.com

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Marwan Saeed Saif Moqbel
Ibb University - Yemen
marwan_s1977@yahoo.com

Abstract:

The present study investigated the implementation of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom to identify the attitudes of EFL learners at the Centre for Languages and Translation, Ibb University towards self-assessment, their perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment, and the problems or difficulties that EFL learners may face while carrying out self-assessment activities. To collect data, the researcher used three instruments: a questionnaire, a structured interview, and a focus group discussion. The questionnaire was administered to (85) EFL learners. Using the stratified sampling technique, the researcher selected randomly (14) learners for the interviews and (21) learners to participate in the focus group discussions. The findings of the study indicated that EFL learners perceive the benefits of self-assessment and have positive attitudes towards it. The study reported that the learners did not have any problems or difficulties while carrying out self-assessment activities, which may be due to the nature of the self-assessment technique and activities used and the sufficient training and guidance that the EFL learners received. The study showed that there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the learners' responses according to the *frequency* of doing self-assessment activities, but not according to the variables *gender* and *proficiency level*. As the study indicated that self-assessment is helpful and has several advantages for EFL learners and that EFL learners have positive attitudes towards it, the researcher recommended that EFL teachers should think about integrating self-assessment into their classrooms.

Keywords: Self-assessment, EFL learners' attitudes, benefits of self-assessment, EFL grammar classroom, self-assessment techniques

التقييم الذاتي لفصول تدريس قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية : دراسة على متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مركز اللغات والترجمة بجامعة إب

مروان سعيد سيف مقبل

جامعة إب – اليمن

marwan_s1977@yahoo.com

مستخلص البحث:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى دراسة تطبيق التقييم الذاتي لفصول تدريس قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية، كلغة أجنبية، للتعرف على اتجاهات متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مركز اللغات والترجمة بجامعة إب، كتقييم ذاتي، ومعرفة إدراكهم لفوائد هذا النوع من التقييم. كما هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على المشاكل أو الصعوبات التي قد يواجهونها أثناء القيام بأنشطة التقييم الذاتي. ولجمع البيانات استعمل الباحث ثلاث أدوات، هي: الاستبانة، والمقابلة المنظمة (المقننة)، والمجموعة البؤرية. حيث وزعت الاستبانة على (85) متعلماً من المستويين المبتدئ والمتوسط، بينما استعمل الباحث طريقة العينة الطبقية العشوائية لاختيار (14) متعلما للمقابلات، و (21) متعلما للمشاركة في مناقشات المجموعة البؤرية. حيث أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يدركون فوائد التقييم الذاتي، وأن لديهم اتجاهات إيجابية نحو هذا النوع من التقييم. كما أظهرت الدراسة عدم مواجهة المتعلمين لأي مشاكل أو صعوبات أثناء القيام بأنشطة التقييم الذاتي، وهو ما يمكن إرجاعه إلى طبيعة أداة التقييم الذاتي، والأنشطة المستعملة، والتدريب الكافي، والتوجيه الذي تلقاه المتعلمون على التقييم الذاتي. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أيضاً وجود فروق دالة إحصائياً في متوسط درجات استجابات المتعلمين، حسب متغير **تكرار** القيام بأنشطة التقييم الذاتي، ولكن ليس وفقاً لمتغير **الجنس** ومتغير مستوى **الكفاءة** في اللغة الإنجليزية. ولما كانت نتائج الدراسة قد أظهرت أن للتقييم الذاتي العديد من الفوائد لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وأن اتجاهات المتعلمين نحو هذا النوع من التقييم إيجابية، فقد أوصى الباحث معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بالعمل على دمج التقييم الذاتي في عملية تدريس وتعلم اللغة الانجليزية.

Introduction and Background

Assessment is an essential component of the teaching and learning process. Its importance emerges from the fact that assessment can improve teaching and can affect students' learning negatively or positively. Its importance also emerges from the purposes it can serve: helping educators to set up standards, assessing students' progress and motivating their performance, providing diagnostic feedback for teachers and students, etc. (Herman et al., 1992). With the emergence of alternative assessment, the importance of assessment has increased due to the role that such approach of assessment can play in engaging students in the learning process, making them more aware of the content and objectives of a course and their strengths and weaknesses, increasing their autonomy, and making them more responsible for their own learning and progress.

The approaches of teaching foreign languages have changed a lot during the last two decades. This led to the appearance of new methods of assessment that require more involvement of students in the process of assessment. In recent years, the shift from teacher-centred to communicative student-centred EFL teaching approaches and methods has called for shifting from traditional assessment methods to alternative assessment methods which are more student-centred (Grabin, 2007). Another factor behind the shift towards alternative assessment might be the limitations of traditional assessment which have led to a growing dissatisfaction with traditional assessment methods and which have made teachers, educators, and researchers start thinking about a more effective and friendly means of assessment, namely alternative assessment which self-assessment is one of its methods. It was hoped that such a shift towards alternative assessment would result in improvement in assessment, which, in turn, could result in improvement of learning (Black & William, 1998).

Apart from these two main factors of the shift towards alternative assessment, there are some more reasons and factors that have raised the interest in using self-assessment in the classroom. It is believed that students learning can be more effective and successful if they are more involved and engaged in their learning (Belachew et al., 2015). Such a belief in the importance of involving students in their own learning has raised the interest in using self-assessment in the classroom (Purwanti, 2015). Besides, it is believed that assessment is the responsibility of both students and teachers,

not the sole responsibility of teachers as Oscarson (1989) argued. This belief in the importance of sharing the responsibility of assessment with students has encouraged teachers to use self-assessment in their classrooms.

Motivation, which is an essential element for learning, can also be considered as a factor that has encouraged teachers to use self-assessment in their classrooms. According to Shahrakipour (2014), self-assessment is characterized by the active participation of students in the learning and evaluation process. Such active participation can make students more motivated as they see themselves to be responsible for their own learning and evaluation.

According to Purwanti (2015), self-assessment has gained much attention in recent years because it emphasizes on the independence and autonomy of the learner, which in long term makes learners independent (Shahrakipour, 2014). In fact, this is the real function of education. It is now internationally believed that education should equip students with the skills required for their long lives. Self-assessment can play an effective role in this regard as Belachew et al. (2015) stated.

In language teaching and learning context, self-assessment is a logical outcome of the increased interest in learner-centred language teaching and self-directed language learning approaches as Birjandi and Hadidi (2012) stated. In modern language education, self-assessment becomes necessary for language learners who should learn to monitor and assess their learning and progress and whether they have reached their goals. This can be achieved with the help of self-assessment techniques, such as diaries and checklists (Köller, 2005).

In Yemen, EFL students, whether at school level or tertiary level, are rarely, if never, placed in charge of rating their knowledge and ability in English. They are evaluated mainly through traditional methods of assessment, tests. This is maybe due to the nature of evaluation system and the distribution of marks that are followed by the education system in Yemen. It may also be because Yemeni EFL teachers do not believe in the effectiveness of self-assessment as an assessment tool or they do not have the necessary skills to implement such kind of assessment (Moqbel, 2014).

The researcher, as an English teacher at the Centre for Languages and Translation - Ibb University, wanted to experiment with self-assessment with a view to sharing the responsibility of assessment with his students and making them more aware of the objectives of the course and more involved in the learning process. At the end of the semester, the researcher felt

interested to identify his students' attitudes towards this type of assessment and the advantages that they got or the difficulties and problems that they might have due to using this method of assessment. Thus, the researcher conducted the current study.

Literature Review

*Self-assessment:

Self-assessment is a process in which students are required to assess their own performance or work and to reflect upon their performance and progress in achieving the desired goals and objectives (North Carolina State Department, 1999). According to Boud and Falchikov (1989), self-assessment refers to "the involvement of learners in making judgments about their own learning, particularly about their achievements and the outcomes of their learning" (p. 529). It is a formative tool (Falchikov, 2005; Geeslin, 2003) that enables students to identify their strengths and weaknesses and that draws their attention to those aspects of their performance that need improvement (Geeslin, 2003). It does not mean that students assess themselves in the form of grades as Moheidat and Baniabdelrahman (2011) stated. It is just a reflection made by students on their performance, ability, or progress. Teachers who use self-assessment usually hope that their students can find "what is missing on their own, figure out what to do next, and then take responsibility for following through on next steps" (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2005, p. 65).

In EFL contexts, self-assessment can refer to the "procedures by which the learners themselves evaluate their language skills and knowledge" (Bailey, 1998, p. 227). It has several applications, such as compositions (either a single one or a collection of compositions), student's participation and portfolios (Geeslin, 2003). It also has various techniques, such as checklists, rubrics, reflection pieces, etc. Teachers should vary applications and techniques to suit the level, ability, and age of students.

*Techniques of carrying out self-assessment:

Students can be engaged in self-assessment of their language skills through a variety of ways and techniques, including checklists, rubrics, reflection pieces (learning logs, journals, and dairies), conferences and interviews (North Carolina State Department, 1999), self-correction (Wragg, 2004), progress cards, and computer-assisted assessment (Oscarson, 1989).

- Checklists: A checklist is "a list of dimensions, characteristics, or behaviours that are essentially scored as 'yes-no' ratings." It indicates that either a particular characteristic or behaviour is present or absent. Checklists often contain more dimensions to be scored than do rating scales (Herman et al., 1992, p. 64). They can be "generic and applied to a skill or can be tailored to specific assignments" (North Carolina State Department, 1999, p. 103). The problem with checklists is that no information is provided on the quality of student performance (North Carolina State Department, 1999). The student just ticks the level of performance that he thinks appropriate according to his own estimate (Oscarson, 1989). According to Wragg (2004), the main use of checklists is to stimulate students' active learning through thinking about their answers and work, which may help them learn more effectively.
- Rubrics: Rubrics are "specific guidelines used to evaluate student work, that is, scoring tools" (OECD, 2005, P. 63). Typically, a rubric contains some assessment criteria and descriptors which describe the different levels of proficiency or knowledge required for each criterion (Griffith & Lim, 2012). There are two main kinds of rubrics: holistic rubrics and analytic rubrics. The holistic rubric "evaluates the overall performance in a qualitative manner" (Griffith & Lim, 2012, p. 6). It can provide one rating for a project or a performance and validate it with a variety of criteria (North Carolina State Department, 1999). Scores on such a scale give an overall impression of student ability or performance, using a 3, 4, or 5 point scale (Griffith & Lim, 2012). The problem with holistic scoring is that it "provides little feedback to help students improve their performance" (North Carolina State Department, 1999, p. 36). The analytic rubric breaks down the performance into different levels or components and scores them individually (Griffith & Lim, 2012; North Carolina State Department, 1999). Points are then calculated to derive a quantitative measure of performance. For example, for a speaking task, a rubric might include the dimensions of pronunciation, fluency, verbal communication, non-verbal communication, and confidence. Analytic rubrics can provide feedback on different components. They make students more aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses because the categories are rated separately (North Carolina State Department, 1999).
- Reflection pieces: Reflection pieces are "written entries in which students reflect on what they have learned and how they have learned it." They are useful tools for students of all levels to monitor their learning and progress

(North Carolina State Department, 1999, p. 104). Reflection pieces can take many different forms, such as learning logs, journals, and diaries.

A *learning log* is a written account in which a learner can keep track of his own activities and progress through the term (Opp-Beckman & Klinghammer, 2006). In learning logs, students can reflect on what they have learnt, what they still have questions about, what was easy or difficult for them, what they have to do to improve themselves, etc. This can be at the level of a particular concept or a unit of a study (North Carolina State Department, 1999). Learning logs can also "help teachers see what their students are learning." (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 349).

Journals are "daily or weekly writing entries by learners in which they reflect on their own learning experiences and progress" (Opp-Beckman & Klinghammer, 2006, p. 104). They are usually written in narrative form. They create teacher-student and student-student interaction beyond the classroom (Nunan, 1992). Besides, journals "involve some reflection but are not as personal as a diary" (Falchikov, 2005, p. 11).

A *diary* is a tool of reflection and analysis. It most usually involves a written record (Falchikov, 2005) where a student can reflect on what he has learnt. According to Falchikov (2005), diaries are appropriate forms of assessment where the focus is on the process of learning rather than the outcome. Diaries promote autonomous learning, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. Through dairies, students can articulate their problems that they have with course content and then get help. Students can also exchange ideas with their teachers, which can help them gain confidence, make sense of difficult materials, and generate original insights (Nunan, 1992). In addition, learning diaries can serve as a tool for autonomous learning, creating opportunities for students to reflect on their learning (Köller, 2005).

- Conferences and interviews: Conferences and interviews take place between students and the teacher: one-on-one, with several students, or with the entire class (North Carolina State Department, 1999). Here, students have an opportunity to assess or talk about their own learning, using previously set criteria. They can even determine goals and expectations with their teacher (Opp-Beckman & Klinghammer, 2006). Besides, teachers can guide their students through asking questions as North Carolina State Department (1999) indicated.
- Self-correction: In self-correction, students are given an answer sheet, i.e., a key. This technique, however, can only work when there is no ambiguity

or where there is a single correct answer. Self-correction is mainly used in tests with closed answers, such as true/false or multiple-choice items, rather than open-ended items. Self-correction method can be of little value for students unless the teacher discusses the incorrect answers with them (Wragg, 2004).

– Progress cards: The progress card is "a simple self-assessment tool which has been used in many different educational settings" (Oscarson, 1989, p. 5). The progress cards are built on the objectives of the course in a way that each group of objectives is graded to represent a level of difficulty. Students proceed according to their improvement on a particular skill or area of learning. Here, a student may use a personal test card on which he ticks off in the student column each language activity that he can perform and the teacher ticks in the teacher column once he feels that the student can prove that (Oscarson, 1989).

– Computer-assisted assessment: With the help of technology, many programmes, materials, and applications have been developed for self-assessed language learning on different areas such as vocabulary and grammar. These programmes or applications provide tools for measuring students' mastery of the language. Usually, a learning hierarchy is formulated and a diagnostic mechanism is built into such programmes or applications so that either the learner himself or the programme can decide when review is needed. Such programmes or applications may also have a testing feature which produces statements indicating each individual student's level (Oscarson, 1989).

To sum up, there are many techniques and activities that can be used to engage students in assessing their own language skills. Teachers may use one or more techniques at the same time depending on the purpose that they want to achieve. Using self-assessment techniques and activities, teachers should be aware that students may not be comfortable with that. Students may need first some training on carrying out self-assessment. Teachers should be always there for students, modelling, guiding them, and providing them with feedback on their work and performance.

*Reliability and validity in self-assessment:

Reliability and validity are two concepts that are usually raised against alternative assessment, including self-assessment (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 340). While some studies such as AlFallay (2004) indicated significant correlation between students assessment and teacher assessment, suggesting that students are able to assess their language proficiency

accurately; some others such as Patri (2002) revealed that there is discrepancy between students assessment and teacher assessment. Yet, the literature showed that "practice, support, and experience are key factors to increase the accuracy of self-assessment" (Chen, 2006, p. 2).

It is true that objectivity and consistency are essential for any assessment, yet dealing with self-assessment purely in the light of these terms is not fair. Oscarson (1989) argued that "the question of subjectivity does not necessarily invalidate the practice of self-assessment techniques in language testing and evaluation and, furthermore, that self-assessment may be motivated by reasons that go beyond mere evaluation" (p. 2). In fact, self-assessment has major functions, values, and advantages that outweigh things like objectivity and consistency. According to Ross (2006), the inclusion of assessment consequences as a dimension of test validity is "a key element of student assessment reform" (p. 4). Based on this, the validity of a test is determined by its consequences for students. In other words, an assessment is considered valid if it contributes to students learning and invalid if it has a negative effect on student learning (Moss, 1998 as cited in Ross, 2006).

Three important factors related to accuracy and reliability of self-assessment should be considered: training, feedback, and clear criteria. If students are trained and get support and guidance on self-assessment, they will be able to self-assess their ability with reasonable accuracy as Carter and Nunan (2001) and Oscarson (1997) stated (as cited in Muñoz & Alvarez, 2007). Similarly, AlFallay (2004) indicated that long periods of practice have a positive effect on the accuracy of self-assessment. According to Muñoz and Alvarez (2007), training may involve explaining for students the purpose and benefits of assessment as well as familiarizing them with self-assessment criteria, tools, and procedures. Muñoz and Alvarez stated that training students on carrying out self-assessment requires following consistent and systematic procedures, emphasizing the importance of carrying out training activities on self-assessment continuously and of providing constant guidance for students on how to conduct self-assessment activities through using self-assessment materials to ensure reliable results. They preferred starting training students on a limited number of language aspects to help them understand self-assessment. The findings of the study made Muñoz and Alvarez conclude that students can self-assess their performance and products accurately and that students have favorable attitudes towards practicing self-assessment.

Feedback is another important factor for obtaining reliable results in self-assessment. It has a positive effect on the accuracy of self-assessment (AlFallay, 2004). According to Ross (2006), feedback on self-assessment is a key issue to help students move from holistic to analytic scoring of their work. Ross thought of giving students feedback on their self-assessments as "a process of triangulating student self-assessments with teacher appraisals and peer assessments of the same work using the same criteria" (p. 9). Through feedback on self-assessment, teachers can make students more aware of the reality and quality of their performance or work.

Defining clear criteria for students to assess their work can also improve the reliability and validity of self-assessment. Teachers need to focus students' attention on specific aspects in their work, developing rubrics that can provide students with a language to talk about their learning. The rubrics should use language that is intelligible to students, addressing competencies that are familiar to students and including performance features that students perceive to be important (Ross, 2006). Ross (2006) also emphasized the importance of teaching students how to apply the criteria, which contributes to the credibility of self-assessment and students understanding of the rubrics. According to Boud (1989), the reliability of self-assessment can be improved through the strategies that can be used to improve marker reliability. Boud stated that self-assessment reliability improvement can be achieved through establishing clear criteria for satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance, using scales in which the categories are clearly defined, and training students to carry out self-assessment on typical examples in the light of the stated criteria.

Boud and Falchikov (1989) identified two different factors related to students' accuracy of self-assessment: students' ability and maturity. Boud and Falchikov reported that abler students can make more accurate assessments and that mature students are quite able to rate themselves in a way which is identical to that of their teachers. Further, the validity of self-assessment can also be affected by how the items themselves are constructed and delivered. According to Oscarson (1997), students can more accurately self-assess their performance if the items are delivered in their mother tongue (as cited in Butler & Lee, 2010) and items that are directly connected to the objectives of the learning tasks are usually more accurate as Butler and Lee (2006) stated (as cited in Butler & Lee, 2010).

According to the Council of Europe (2001), accuracy in self-assessment can be increased when assessment is based on clear descriptors defining

standards of proficiency and/or when assessment is related to specific experience which can be even a test activity. The descriptors should describe concrete tasks and/or degrees of a skill, avoid vagueness, and be clear and brief (Council of Europe, 2001).

*Self-assessment implementation:

Self-assessment should not be a separate process from instruction. Its effectiveness lies in its being an integral part of instruction and learning. Therefore, self-assessment should fit into the schedule of language classrooms. It should be integrated into everyday classroom language activities of writing, listening, reading, speaking, grammar, etc. (Harris, 1997).

According to Falchikov (2003), carrying out self-assessment requires careful preparation, monitoring, and follow-up. In other words, the process of implementing self-assessment in classroom has to pass three main phases which represent a scheme for implementing self-assessment in EFL classrooms: pre-implementation phase, implementation phase, and post-implementation phase. In the pre-implementation phase, the teacher defines the task/activity and its purpose clearly, establishing clear criteria for students to assess their own performances or products. He should provide students with an assessment tool, such as a checklist to give them some guidelines on how to assess their performance or product. The teacher has to encourage impartial self-evaluation of performance or product. In the implementation phase, the teacher demonstrates how to conduct self-assessment. Students do the task/activity and assess their performance or product. The teacher should monitor and help students (if they do the task in the classroom). In the post-implementation phase and after conducting self-assessment, there should be a systematic follow-up through either a written feedback from the teacher on students' work, a journal reflection, a conference, or any other technique (Meihami & Varmaghani, 2013).

There are many factors that should be considered to ensure successful implementation of self-assessment, such as training, feedback, students' age and ability, clear assessment criteria, and manner of implementation. Before asking students to carry out self-assessment activities, teachers should train them on doing that (Fulcher, 2010; Lihui, 2013). Besides, students should be given feedback on their assessment either from their teachers or classmates or both (Lihui, 2013). According to Irons (2008), students will benefit a lot from the feedback that they are provided, especially if they have developed skills in self-assessment. Students' age and ability should be considered as

well when implementing self-assessment. It is true that carrying out self-assessment can be difficult for younger students, but this is not a reason for avoiding self-assessment in the EFL classroom as Wragg (2004) stated. Teachers have to guide and train students on self-assessment and vary the demand of self-assessment according to students' abilities. Teachers can even help students through modelling, focusing their attentions on specific points/aspects by using checklists or breaking the learning goals into smaller objectives and encouraging them to improve their work (OECD, 2005).

In addition, establishing clear criteria for students to use when they assess their own performance or products is essential (Harris, 1997). According to Geeslin (2003), each self-assessment activity or assignment should depend on a clear and specific rubric which is designed in the light of the learning goals of the assignment or activity. The rubric usually reflects the various levels of performance which can be expressed in numbers, letters, or adjectival descriptions. Moreover, to ensure positive effect on learning, self-assessment "needs to be introduced, carried out and monitored in a sensitive and thoughtful manner" (Wragg, 2004, p. 68).

*Advantages of self-assessment:

Self-assessment is an essential element for effective learning (Black & William, 1998). Many advantages can be gained from integrating this type of assessment into language classroom. It can promote students' learning, raise their level of awareness of course content and assessment principles, enhance students' knowledge, and engage students in the process of assessment, which means sharing assessment burden as Oscarson (1989) indicated. In EFL classrooms, self-assessment can help students improve their English language skills: writing (Abbasszadeh, 2012; Birjandi & Tamjid, 2012; Meihami & Varmaghani, 2013; Purwanti, 2015), reading (Alibakhshi & Shahrakipour, 2014; Baniabdelrahman, 2010; Ghaslani, 2015; Moheidat & Baniabdelrahman, 2011), speaking (Abbasszadeh, 2012; Shahrakipour, 2014), and listening (Alibakhshi & Shahrakipour, 2014; Shahrakipour, 2014). It can also create opportunities for interaction between the teacher and students, which is often lost in today's language classrooms (Baleghizadeh & Masoun, 2013; Geeslin, 2003; Irons, 2008). According to Birjandi and Tamjid (2012), integrating a dose of self-assessment into EFL courses will enhance students' involvement in the learning process. As each student has a chance to evaluates his performance periodically, teachers will have the opportunity to comment constructively on students' performance or work and to provide them with formative feedback in a timely manner (Geeslin, 2003).

Self-assessment also encourages active participation of students in their learning and evaluation (Shahrakipour, 2014), which can promote students' autonomy, independence, and life-long learning skills (Honsa, 2013; Shahrakipour, 2014). In addition, it gives students more control over their learning and increases their responsibility towards it (Gottlieb, 2006; Honsa, 2013; Shahrakipour, 2014), directing their learning more effectively (Council of Europe, 2001); making them more involved in their own learning (Gottlieb, 2006), reflective in learning, and more aware of the assessment criteria; and directing them to recognize what aspects of their own work need to be improved (Jones, 2005) and to identify their weaknesses and strengths (Council of Europe, 2001; Honsa, 2013; Shahrakipour, 2014) but not in a way that may damage their self-esteem as Jones (2005) stated. Moreover, self-assessment provides students with more learning opportunities (Irons, 2008) and leads to additional learning gains as Fulcher (2010) stated.

Motivation, which is an essential component for learning, is also an advantage of self-assessment. According to Fulcher (2010), self-assessment can improve students' motivation and self-esteem. Geeslin (2003) argued that self-assessment enhances students' motivation as it makes them gain ownership of the learning process and helps them to identify the desired performance and to monitor their progress towards that performance. Geeslin added that self-assessment can enhance students' motivation due to its formative nature, which can create opportunities for students to focus on specific aspects of their performance and monitor their improvement in those aspects. Besides, self-assessment can improve EFL learners' self-efficacy (Baleghizadeh & Masoun, 2013) learners' learning goal orientation (Baleghizadeh & Masoun, 2014), and students' confidence as Shahrakipour (2014) and Butler and Lee (2010) indicated.

In fact, self-assessment is an effective tool. If implemented systematically and integrated into classroom activities, self-assessment can make students more active, helping them to perceive their own progress (Harris, 1997) and making teacher assessment more beneficial as Birjandi and Tamjid (2012) showed.

What is special about self-assessment is that students usually have positive attitudes towards it as previous studies (such as Belachew et al., 2015; Chen, 2006; Cornelius &Kinghorn, 2014; and Muñoz & Alvarez , 2007) revealed. Besides, self-assessment is not confined to one language skill (i.e., it can affect positively all English skills of learners) or specific level (i.e.,

it can be used with EFL learners of all levels: beginners, elementary, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and also at school or tertiary levels).

All these advantages and benefits of self-assessment really urge EFL teachers to start integrating it into EFL classrooms in order to create more learning opportunities in which their students are more involved, more responsible of their own learning, more motivated for learning, and more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and of the objectives and content of the course.

Importance of Grammar Teaching:

It is true that speakers of a language can speak and write it well without being consciously aware of its grammatical rules (Spratt et al., 2011). However, this can be difficult if not impossible for adult learners of a foreign language. According to Spratt et al. (2011), learning grammatical rules usually makes language learning easier, especially for adult learners, but not for young children. This is why foreign language adult learners are usually taught grammar. In adult language classroom, teachers very often need to teach grammar to their students simply by making them aware of patterns and practicing them (i.e., inductively) or by teaching them grammatical rules and terms (i.e., deductively) (Spratt et al., 2011). Highlighting the importance of grammar teaching, Larsen-Freeman (1991) stated that grammar teaching enables "language students to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately" (p. 280). Similarly, Azar (2007) stated that one important aspect of grammar teaching is that it helps learners discover the nature of language and its patterns "that make what we say, read, hear and write intelligible" (p. 2). In fact, both teachers and students feel that grammar is an important aspect of language learning and teaching and that teaching grammar facilitates more effective language learning as Saaristo (2015) indicated.

In English as a second/foreign language context, English grammar teaching is essential for learners to master the language (Zhang, 2009). Zhang (2009) argued that English language learners who lack grammatical competence can neither use English language accurately nor speak English language fluently. Similarly, Khansir and Farhad (2016) argued that English grammar teaching can help students of English to understand the language. The importance of English grammar teaching for ESL/EFL learners was highlighted by many previous studies. For instance, Eanes (1999) indicated that both faculty and students consider the study of English grammar important. Similarly, Huong (2004) revealed that students believe that

grammar study plays a positive role in EFL learning. Huong also revealed that teachers believe that grammar study is essential to master a foreign language. In the same vein, Peng (2017) indicated that grammar plays a very important role in language teaching and learning. Peng also stated that grammar cannot be neglected in English language teaching and learning. He added that scholastic grammar should be considered as a key position in college English teaching and learning, claiming that for second language learning it is hard to produce grammatically acceptable utterances in writing or communication without learning the grammar of a language.

In Yemen, the study of Ezzi (2012) indicated that Yemeni English teachers believe that grammar is an important part of all English lessons and are with the idea of integrating grammar into all English lessons. Similarly, Dulul (n.d.) indicated that teachers of grammar in Yemeni colleges believe that students need to know grammar in order to use language accurately and correctly. The findings of this study showed that most teachers of grammar in Yemeni colleges teach English grammar deductively. Dulul emphasized the importance of teaching grammar in context. Responding to the important role that English grammar can play in helping students of English to use English accurately and correctly, English grammar is usually taught for Yemeni EFL adult students at universities or centers/institutes which run programs in English language learning. For example, the syllabus of English departments in the colleges of arts or the colleges of education in Yemeni universities includes two or three English grammar courses respectively. At school level, Yemeni students, starting from grade seven to grade twelve, are taught one English course with a focus on English grammar.

The Present Study
Aims and Questions:

The main aim of the current study is to investigate the implementation of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom to identify the attitudes of EFL learners at the Centre for Languages and Translation, Ibb University towards self-assessment and their perceptions of the advantages of using this method of assessment. The study also aims at identifying the problems or difficulties that EFL learners may have or face due to using self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom from the perspective of the learners themselves. The current study attempts to address the following questions:

1. What are the advantages of using self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom from the perspective of EFL learners?

2. Are there statistically significant differences in the means of EFL learners' perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom according to the f*requency* of doing self-assessment activities (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never)?
3. Are there statistically significant differences in the means of EFL learners' perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom according to the variable *Proficiency Level* (elementary and intermediate)?
4. Are there statistically significant differences in the means of EFL learners' perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom according to the variable *Gender* (male and female EFL learners)?
5. What are EFL learners' attitudes towards self-assessment?
6. What are the problems or difficulties that EFL learners may have or face while conducting self-assessment from their point of view?

Significance of the Study:

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no study investigating self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom. Therefore, the current study can be considered one of the first studies to deal with self-assessment method in EFL grammar classroom. Besides, the lack of studies that investigate the implementation of self-assessment in EFL classroom in Yemen raises the need to carry out such a study. If the study indicates that the EFL learners under investigation have positive attitudes towards self-assessment and that they see this method of assessment as helpful and advantageous, it will urge Yemeni English teachers to think seriously about integrating this method of assessment into their EFL classrooms. Moreover, the study sheds light on the problems or difficulties that learners may face while carrying out self-assessment. This will give teachers an idea about the kinds of problems or difficulties associated with self-assessment so that teachers can work with students on them in advance.

Methodology:
The present study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Both numerical and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. Besides, using the case study method and the teacher-as-researcher method, the researcher was allowed to investigate the implementation of self-assessment in depth and in real context.

Participants:

The participants in the current study were elementary and intermediate male and female adult learners who were learning English as a foreign language in the Centre for Languages and Translation, Ibb University. Most of the learners were secondary school graduates who joined the centre to improve their proficiency in English before joining university. They studied English for two semesters to get a diploma in English. In each semester, they had to take four English courses (Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Grammar). Each subject was minimally of 12 classes. Each class was of two hours.

The researcher administered the questionnaire to all learners who were present in the last lecture of the course. For the structured interviews and the focus group discussions, the researcher selected the participants randomly using the stratified sampling technique as it was difficult to interview all the learners of the two levels or to involve all of them in the focus group discussions. Table (1) shows in detail the sample of the study.

Table 1:

Sample of the Study

Instrument	Gender	Level		Total
		Elementary	Intermediate	
Questionnaire	Male	26	17	43
	Female	9	33	42
	Total	**35**	**50**	**85**
Interview	Male	4	3	7
	Female	2	5	7
	Total	**6**	**8**	**14**
Focus Group Discussion	Male	7	4	11
	Female	3	7	10
	Total	**10**	**11**	**21**

Instruments

Making use of the literature - mainly Baniabdelrahman (2010), Belachew et al. (2015), Cornelius and Kinghorn (2014), and Purwanti (2015)- the researcher developed three instruments to collect data for the current study: a questionnaire, a structured interview (See appendix 1), and a focus

group discussion (See appendix 2). The content and the face validity of the items of the three instruments were verified through giving them to two senior colleagues and three more experts. The three instruments were then translated into the mother tongue of the respondents and the translated versions were checked and edited for accuracy through the suggestions of two other experts.

To verify the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher administered it once to a sample of (12) male and female students from the two levels (Elementary and Intermediate), using the split-half method. The researcher assigned the first four items to one half and the second four items to the other half. To calculate (r) of the two halves, the researcher used Pearson Coefficient Correlation (r). The result indicated significant correlation between the two parts of the instrument at the (0.01) level (2-tailed). To adjust the split-half reliability of the tool, the researcher applied the Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula. The result obtained was (r = 0.77) which is acceptable reliability. Regarding the other two instruments, i.e., the structured interview and the focus group discussion, they were piloted to verify their reliability.

Procedures:

The researcher taught two English grammar courses for two levels (Elementary and Intermediate) at the Centre for Languages and Translation, Ibb University. Each course was of twelve classes of two hours. At the end of each class, which usually was allocated for one unit in the course, learners were given a self-assessment checklist which is expressed in can-do statements. Each checklist usually includes five to seven statements. The learners were asked to tick the checklist of each unit after revising the unit at home to indicate what they can do in English in relation to the topic of that unit. The learners were also allowed to write their comments or notes to express their feelings or to indicate how they will overcome their weaknesses or how to enhance their strengths. The instructor usually had a look at the learners' self-assessment checklists and asked them if they needed any help on any point of the previous unit. To ensure that the learners would be honest and sincere, the instructor highlighted the purpose of the self-assessment activities, telling the learners that their responses would not be used for grading them. However, the instructor did not overstate the potential and pedagogical benefits of self-assessment in order not to influence the learners' attitudes towards this type of assessment or their perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment activities.

The three instruments were administered in the final class of the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016. The questionnaire was administered to (85) learners. The researcher explained to them how they have to rate their opinions about the advantages of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom on a five-point scale (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree), encouraging them to express their opinions honestly to ensure true results.

Fourteen students, males and females, from the two levels were interviewed. With each participant, the researcher spent about five to seven minutes. The focus group discussions were conducted with four groups (two groups from each level). All groups were of five learners except one group of the intermediate level which included six learners. For each of the four groups, the researcher spent about ten to twelve minutes. The researcher acted as a moderator for the discussions. To ensure good communication with the participants, both the interviews and the focus group discussions were conducted in their mother tongue. Yet, many of the participants responded to questions in English.

Data Analysis:

To analyse the data collected both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The data collected via the structured interviews and the focus group discussions were analysed qualitatively. The data collected via the questionnaire were computed and analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows (version 17.0). The researcher calculated the descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, percentages, ranges, and minimum and maximum scores) for each item of the questionnaire. Moreover, the researcher used two statistical techniques to analyse the data:

- Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify whether there are statistically significant differences in the means of the learners' responses according to the fr*equency* of doing the self-assessment activities (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never).

- *T*-test to identify whether there are statistically significant differences in the means of the learners' responses according to the variables *Proficiency Level* (Intermediate – Elementary) and *Gender* (Male – Female).

Findings and Discussion

To address the first question, the learners' responses to the items of the questionnaire were analysed, presented, and discussed. The researcher first specified the benchmarks in the light of which the results of administering the questionnaire would be presented and discussed as follows: (4.21 to 5) means strongly agree, (3.41 to 4.20) means agree, (2.61 to 3.40) means not sure, (1.81 to 2.60) means disagree, and (1 to 1.80) means strongly disagree.

The descriptive statistics including means, percentages, standard deviations, ranges, and minimum and maximum scores are presented in Table (2).

Table 2:

Descriptive Statistics of the Questionnaire's Items

#	Item	*M*	*%*	*SD*
1	Self-assessment was helpful to my learning.	4.36	87.29	0.48
2	Self-assessment made me more aware of English grammar course's objectives.	4.46	89.18	0.52
3	Self-assessment helped me identify my weaknesses and strengths in English grammar course.	4.39	87.76	0.56
4	Self-assessment helped me monitor my own improvement in the areas of weaknesses.	4.05	80.94	0.63
5	Self-assessment gave me control over my own learning and made me feel more responsible for it.	4.12	82.35	0.64
6	Self-assessment helped me perceive and monitor my own progress in English grammar course.	4.19	83.76	0.52
7	Self-assessment helped me become more involved in and motivated for learning.	3.88	77.65	0.61
8	Self-assessment allowed me to give more accurate and honest responses about my ability in English grammar as it is not used for marking purposes.	4.33	86.59	0.59

Given the results shown in Table (2), it can be stated that the EFL learners under investigation considered self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom beneficial and advantageous. The learners *strongly agreed* that the self-

assessment that they practiced at the end of each unit of the English grammar course made them more aware of the objectives of the course ($M = 4.46$, Percentage $= 89.18\%$), helped them to identify their weaknesses and strengths ($M = 4.39$, Percentage $= 87.76\%$), was helpful to them ($M = 4.36$, Percentage $= 87.29\%$), and allowed them to give more accurate and honest responses about their ability in English grammar ($M = 4.33$, Percentage $= 86.59\%$),

It is also clear from Table (2) that the learners *agreed* that the self-assessment activities that they practiced at the end of each unit of the English grammar course helped them to perceive and monitor their own progress in the English grammar course ($M = 4.19$, Percentage $= 83.76\%$), gave them control over their learning and made them feel more responsible for it ($M = 4.12$, Percentage $= 82.35\%$), helped them to monitor their own improvement in the areas of weaknesses ($M = 4.05$, Percentage $= 80.94\%$), and made them more involved in and motivated for learning ($M = 3.88$, Percentage $= 77.65\%$).

These findings are consistent with and support those of some previous studies. For instance, Purwanti (2015) indicated that self-assessment helped students to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and mistakes and to enhance their awareness of their own learning development. Purwanti also revealed that students considered self-assessment useful for learning. Baniabdelrahman (2010) and Moheidat and Baniabdelrahman (2011) revealed that self-assessment helped students to be more involved in and motivated for the learning process, to give more accurate and honest responses about their learning, and to direct their learning efforts. Honsa (2013) indicated that self-assessment gave students control over their learning and made them feel more responsible for their learning and was beneficial to their writing. Marhaeni (2007) indicated that students realized that self-assessment is an effective tool to enhance learning.

To answer the second question, the researcher used one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify whether there are statistically significant differences in the means of the learners' perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom according to the *frequency* of doing self-assessment activities (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never). The results of the one-way ANOVA are shown in Table (3).

Table 3:

Results of One-way ANOVA Analysis for the Variable 'Frequency'

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.139	3	1.380		
Within Groups	3.404	81	0.042	32.827	0.000
Total	7.543	84			

Table (3) shows that there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the learners' responses according to the *frequency* of doing the self-assessment activities during the course (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never) at the (0.05) level of significance. The *F*-value was (32.827), indicating significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ since the *p*-value < 0.05 ($p = 0.000$). This means that the learners perceived the advantages of self-assessment differently according to the *frequency* of doing the self-assessment activities, which highlights the importance of implementing self-assessment constantly.

To determine the sources of these differences, the researcher used the *Scheffé* test. The results of the *Scheffé* test are shown in Table (4).

Table 4:

Results of Scheffé Test for the Differences in the Averages According to the Variable 'Frequency'

Frequency(I)	Frequency (J)	M	Mean Difference (I- J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Always	Often		0.04852	0.049	0.808
	Sometimes	4.35	0.55373*	0.076	0.000
	Rarely		0.65789*	0.090	0.000
Often	Always		-0.04852	0.049	0.808
	Sometimes	4.30	0.50521*	0.077	0.000
	Rarely		0.60938*	0.091	0.000

Frequency(I)	Frequency (J)	M	Mean Difference (I- J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Sometime	Always	3.79	-0.55373*	0.076	0.000
	Often		-0.50521*	0.077	0.000
	Rarely		0.10417	0.108	0.818
Rarely	Always		-0.65789*	0.090	0.000
	Often	3.69	-0.60938*	0.091	0.000
	sometimes		-0.10417	0.108	0.818

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table (4) shows that the statistically significant differences are found in the means of the learners' responses between learners who *always* practiced self-assessment activities (M = 4.35) during the course and those who *sometimes* practiced self-assessment activities (M = 3.79) and those who *rarely* practiced self-assessment activities (M = 3.69), but not with those who *often* practiced self-assessment activities (M = 4.30). Table (4) also shows that there were statistically significant differences in the means of the learners' responses between those who *often* practiced self-assessment activities (M = 4.30) and those who *sometimes* practiced self-assessment activities (M = 3.79) and those who *rarely* practiced self-assessment activities (M = 3.69). However, as Table (4) shows, there were no statistically significant differences in the means of responses between learners who *sometimes* practiced self-assessment activities (M = 3.79) and those who *rarely* practiced self-assessment activities (M = 3.69). This indicates that the more learners practice self-assessment activities, the more they perceive the benefits of this type of assessment, and hence, the more they can make use of it. The implication of this is highly significant. To make full and effective use of self-assessment, teachers should integrate this method of assessment into the learning process and use it on a regular basis rather than sporadically.

To answer the third question, the researcher used the *t*-test method to identify whether there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the learners' perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom according to the variable *Proficiency Level*

(elementary and intermediate). The results of the *t*-test are shown in Table (5).

Table 5:
Results of T-test for the Variable 'Proficiency Level'

Level	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Elementary	35	4.22	0.266			
				83	0.016	0.987
Intermediate	50	4.23	0.324			

Table (5) shows that there is no statistically significant difference [*t* (83) = 0.016, *p* = 0.987] between *elementary* EFL learners (*M* = 4.22, *SD* = 0.266) and *intermediate* EFL learners (*M* = 4.23, *SD* = 0.324) at the (0.05) level of significance. This indicates that the variable *Proficiency Level* had no effect on the learners' perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom. This is maybe due to the equality of the respondents' age. The respondents of the two levels were graduates of secondary school and were divided into elementary or intermediate levels according to their achievement on a placement test. Actually, future research is required to investigate the variable *age* in relation to self-assessment. As the current study is not concerned with the impact of self-assessment on EFL learners, it cannot be stated that its results are in line with those of Abbasszadeh (2012), who revealed that self-assessment had the same impact on both intermediate and beginner language learners or in contrast with those of Alibakhshi and Shahrakipour (2014) and Shahrakipour (2014), who revealed that the impact of self-assessment on language learners' English receptive skills was greater for intermediate language learners compared to beginner language learners.

To answer the forth question, the researcher used the *t*-test method to identify whether there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the learners' perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom according to the variable *Gender*. The results of the *t*-test are shown in Table (6).

Table 6:
Results of T-test for the Variable 'Gender'

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	43	4.18	0.302			
				83	1.215	0.228
Female	42	4.26	0.296			

Table (6) shows that there is no statistically significant difference [*t* (83) = 1.215, *p* = 0.228] between EFL *male learners* (*M* = 4.18, *SD* = 0.302) and *female learners* (*M* = 4.26, *SD* = 0.296) at the (0.05) level of significance. This indicates that the variable *Gender* did not have any effect on the learners' perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom. In other words, regardless of gender, EFL learners have similar perceptions of the benefits of self-assessment, and hence, they can make use of such an assessment method. Using the variable of gender as a base for comparison, the researcher found that the result of the present study is in consistency with that of Sapsirin (2014), who revealed that there was no significant difference in the way males and females self-assessed their writing ability.

Results of the Structured Interviews:

The purpose of the structured interview was to identify the EFL learners' attitudes towards self-assessment in EFL grammar classroom and also to identify their experience with and their opinions about this type of assessment (See appendix 1). Question one asked the interviewees whether the concept of self-assessment was new to them before starting this course. While six participants (42.86%) stated that the concept was new to them, eight participants (57.14%) stated that they were already familiar with the concept. Yet, all of the participants confirmed that they had never experienced self-assessment before starting this course. when they were asked if they had ever been asked to assess themselves in EFL classrooms (question 2).

Question three intended to identify whether the learners feel that they are able to assess their ability in English. Here, most the participants expressed their fear of assessing their ability in English. Yet, (78%) of them answered, "Yes," stating that with the help of checklists they found it pretty easy to self-assess their ability in English grammar. Two participants added to their answers that it was no matter whether they were able to assess their ability in English grammar or not. What matters for them is that self-assessment

checklists made them aware of their ability in English grammar as they stated. This heightens the fact that self-assessment is more about learning than about assessment. In this, the study is somewhat contradictory to Cornelius and Kinghorn (2014), who indicated that the learners feel that they are not good assessors of their own language ability. This, of course, may be due to the different nature of self-assessment activities and techniques used in the two studies. In contrast, Butler and Lee (2010) revealed that the learners' ability to assess their performance improved over time.

Responses to question four indicated that the learners have a desire to be involved in the assessment of their learning. All the participants stated that learners should participate in the process of assessment. In line with their answers to this question, all the participants thought that teachers should not be in sole charge of assessing their learning (question five), except one elementary participant who answered, "No," stating, "Assessment is the job of teachers." In general, the present study is in line with Cornelius and Kinghorn (2014), who revealed that students had a strong desire to be involved in the assessment of their work, but in contrast to Marhaeni (2007), who indicated that students felt like they do not have the right to do the job of the teacher. Marhaeni argued that students are not ready to assess their own work due to cultural and psychological factors.

When the participants were asked if they thought that there should be more self-assessment activities in EFL classroom (question six), most of them, (71.43%), stated that one self-assessment activity per unit was enough, i.e., the same number that they did in the EFL grammar classroom upon which the present study was based. The responses of the other participants were as follows: two elementary participants said, "It is ok as long as it's easy and doesn't take a lot of time"; one intermediate participant said, "It's ok especially if it is easy and purposeful like that one we practiced via checklists"; and another intermediate participant said, "Why not, I feel happy when the teacher looks at my self-assessment checklist and explains again the points I crossed as I could not do," highlighting the importance of feedback from the teacher on students' self-assessment.

Question seven asked the participants whether they recommended using self-assessment in all courses (Speaking, Writing, Reading, and Grammar). All the participants said, "Yes," except one elementary participant who said, "No" (the same participant who stated that assessment is the job of teachers). Yet, some participants wondered whether that would be in the form of checklists. When the researcher told them that there are other techniques of

self-assessment, they expressed their worries about using the other techniques of self-assessment, which raises the importance of selecting appropriate self-assessment techniques in the light of students' age, ability, and level. It also raises the importance of training students and providing them with guidance and enough practice to carry out self-assessment activities. This point was asserted by Baleghizadeh and Masoun (2014), Belachew et al. (2015), and Honsa (2013).

The last question of the structured interview aimed at identifying how learners felt towards self-assessment activities. In general, responses to this question indicated that EFL learners felt comfortable with doing self-assessment activities. Out of the eight intermediate learners being interviewed, four said, "Yes," one said, "It was exciting," two said, "To some extent," and one said, "Sometimes," expressing how worried he felt when he found that he could not do a lot of things. Out of the six elementary learners being interviewed, four said, "Yes," one said, "To some extent," and one said, "No," indicating that he did not feel comfortable with doing self-assessment. This result is consistent with previous research, such as Belachew et al. (2015) and Chen (2006) who indicated that students felt comfortable about assessing their own performance.

The results of the structured interviews indicated that the EFL learners had already had an idea about self-assessment but they had never been asked to carry out self-assessment activities in EFL classrooms. Although most of the participants expressed their fear of being unable to assess their ability in English grammar, they stated that they could use self-assessment checklists to assess their ability in English grammar, expressing their desire to be involved in the process of assessing their learning and ability in English to share teachers such responsibility. Although the interviewee learners agreed on increasing self-assessment activities to all English courses, some participants expressed their fear of being unable to carry out self-assessment activities in the other English courses or to use other self-assessment techniques. This raised the importance of training and selecting self-assessment techniques in the light of students' ability. In general, the interviewee learners confessed that they enjoyed carrying out self-assessment activities in the English grammar course. Given this result, it can be stated that the EFL learners had positive attitudes towards self-assessment. In this, the current study is in line with some previous studies, such as Belachew et al. (2015) and Cornelius and Kinghorn (2014).

Results of the Focus Group Discussions:

The main purpose of the focus group discussions was to identify the problems or difficulties that learners might have while carrying out self-assessment activities from their point of view (See appendix 2). The first question was asked to identify the problems or difficulties that the learners faced while doing self-assessment activities. All the groups' participants stated that self-assessment checklists were so helpful that they faced no problems or difficulties to carry out self-assessment activities. What must be mentioned here is that the teacher explained clearly to the learners the purpose of carrying out self-assessment activities and how to fill in self-assessment checklists at the first class. For that part of self-assessment form, which asks the leaners to write their comments, the teacher encouraged the learners to use their mother tongue to ensure that they could communicate their thoughts, opinions, feelings, etc. easily and clearly. The self-assessment technique also played a positive role in this regard. The learners found it easy to fill in the self-assessment checklists which were written in simple can-do statements.

In contrast, some previous studies reported that students usually face difficulties or obstacles when carrying out self-assessment activities. For instance, Honsa (2013) referred to inadequate language ability and mother tongue interference as obstacles faced by students when carrying out self-assessment in writing. Similarly, Belachew et al. (2015) indicated that teachers reported some challenges of implementing self-assessment in writing classroom, including poor background of language in general and writing skill in particular. Marhaeni (2007) reported on a study which indicated that students struggled hard to do self-assessment in English, referring to some reasons behind that: self-assessment is new for the students, students mentally are not ready for it, English grammar is difficult that it is impossible for students to self-assess their own grammar, and students believe that the assessment is the job of teachers.

The second question asked the participants to reflect on the benefits that they got from self-assessment activities that they practiced. The participants confirmed that they found self-assessment activities beneficial. Their answers to this question affirmed the responses to the questionnaire items. In other words, the focus group discussions participants confirmed that self-assessment helped them to monitor their progress, see their improvement, know the objectives of the grammar course, identify their weaknesses and strengths, and focus on the important points and aspects of the course.

The last question of the focus group discussion asked the participants about their perceptions of self-assessment. Generally, the participants stated that the self-assessment activities were good and useful and they do not mind doing self-assessment, indicating that they had positive attitudes towards self-assessment checklist technique. The idea of being part of the assessment process, which was raised during the focus group discussions, was admired by the participants.

In general, the results of focus group discussions highlighted the benefits of self-assessment and the positive attitudes of students towards self-assessment reported in the literature. Although some previous studies reported some challenges and difficulties faced by students while self-assessing their performance or products, the focus group participants of the current study reported no difficulties or problems, which may be due to the nature of the self-assessment technique used and limiting the self-assessment activities to ticking statements of checklists to indicate what the learners can or cannot do in English grammar.

To sum up, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on the effectiveness and the pedagogical advantages of self-assessment in language teaching and learning and education as well. Regarding the generalization of the results of the current study, one should take into account the participants of the study, the self-assessment technique, and the English language system under investigation, i.e., English grammar. In other words, the generalization of the results of this study should be limited to comparable participants and other aspects of the study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on the effectiveness and the pedagogical advantages of self-assessment in language teaching and learning and education as well. The study highlighted, in alignment with the literature, that self-assessment is helpful for learning English grammar and has many important benefits for English language learners, including making learners more aware of course objectives; helping learners to monitor their progress, to identify their weaknesses and strengths, to monitor their improvement in the areas of weaknesses, to become more involved in and motivated for learning, and to give more accurate and honest responses about their learning and ability; and giving learners more control over their own learning and making them feel more responsible for it. The study also revealed that EFL learners have positive attitudes towards self-

assessment and like to be involved in the process of assessing their own learning. Moreover, the study showed that to help EFL learners carry out self-assessment, teachers should train them on that, provide them with clear guidelines, and select appropriate self-assessment techniques and activities.

As the findings of the present study revealed that self-assessment has several benefits for English language learners and that the learners see it beneficial and advantageous and enjoy participating in the process of assessment, EFL teachers are strongly recommended to integrate self-assessment into their EFL classrooms. The researcher suggests the following recommendations to be considered to ensure effective self-assessment in EFL classrooms:

– Integrating self-assessment into EFL classrooms, EFL teachers should consider students' level, age, and ability.
– Before starting to use self-assessment, EFL teachers should train their students on carrying out such type of assessment.
– Teachers should also provide students with constant guidelines and feedback on self-assessment activities.
– To make full and effective use of self-assessment, teachers should integrate this method of assessment into the learning process and use it on a regular basis rather than sporadically.
– It is not recommended to use self-assessment for grading purposes to ensure that students will give accurate and honest responses about their English ability and learning. Yet, EFL teachers should think about how to encourage students to participate in self-assessment exercises as it was reported that students are unwilling to take part in self-assessment exercises if they are not weighted for formal assessment purpose (Boud, 1989, p. 21).

The researcher suggested conducting further research on self-assessment in EFL classroom in Yemen considering some other skills and using some other techniques to confirm the results of the present study. Researchers can also investigate some other areas related to self-assessment. For example, they can investigate the barriers to integrating self-assessment into EFL classroom, the perceptions of EFL teachers of self-assessment in EFL classroom, or the impact of implementing self-assessment on EFL students' achievement in exams.

Study Limitations:

The current study was limited in its rather simple implementation of self-assessment. It just investigated the implementation of one technique of self-assessment, namely checklists, in EFL grammar classroom to identify EFL learners' attitudes towards self-assessment and their perceptions of the advantages and the difficulties of using this technique in EFL classroom. It was also limited to a number of EFL learners at the Centre for Languages and Translation, Ibb University, Yemen.

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Appendix (1)

The Structured Interview Questions

#	Items
1	Is the concept of self-assessment new to you since starting this course? <div dir="rtl">هل مفهوم التقييم الذاتي كان جديد عليك قبل دراسة هذا المقرر؟</div>
2	Have you ever been asked to assess yourself in EFL classrooms? <div dir="rtl">هل سبق وأن طُلب منك تقييم نفسك في فصول تدريس اللغة الانجليزية؟</div>
3	Do you feel that you are able to assess your English language ability? <div dir="rtl">هل تعتقد بأنك قادر على تقييم قدراتك في اللغة الانجليزية؟</div>
4	Do you think that learners should participate in the process of assessment? <div dir="rtl">هل تعتقد أنه من الجيد إشراك الطلاب في عملية التقييم؟</div>
5	Do you think that the teacher should be in sole charge of assessing your learning? <div dir="rtl">هل تعتقد أن المُدرس هو المعني الوحيد بعملية التقييم؟</div>
6	Do you think that there should be more self-assessment activities in the EFL classroom? <div dir="rtl">هل ترى أنه يجب أن يكون هناك الكثير من أنشطة التقييم الذاتي؟</div>
7	Do you recommend using self-assessment in all courses? <div dir="rtl">هل تُوصي باستخدام التقييم الذاتي في كل المقررات؟</div>
8	Did you enjoy self-assessment activities that you implemented during the term? <div dir="rtl">هل استمتعت بأنشطة التقييم الذاتي التي قمت بها خلال الفصل؟</div>

Appendix (2)

The Focus Group Discussion Questions

#	Items
1	Think back over the past semester, what difficulties or problems you usually face when you do the self-assessment activities? <div dir="rtl">في ضوء أنشطة التقييم الذاتي التي مارستها خلال الفصل، ما الصعوبات أو المشاكل التي واجهتها أثناء القيام بأنشطة التقييم الذاتي؟</div>
2	What are the benefits that you got from self-assessment activities you practiced in English grammar classes? <div dir="rtl">ما الفوائد التي حصلت عليها من أنشطة التقييم الذاتي التي مارستها في مقرر قواعد اللغة الانجليزية؟</div>
3	How do you feel about self-assessment? <div dir="rtl">ما انطباعك حول التقييم الذاتي؟</div>