

TEACHERS' EFFORTS IN APPLYING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION FOR EFL ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Eka Apriani^{1)*}, Hengki Kris Sanjaya²⁾, Shibani Basu Dubey³⁾, Muthmainnah⁴⁾

¹⁾English Tadris Study Program, IAIN Curup, Bengkulu

²⁾Master of English Language Education Department, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

³⁾Department of English, The Bhopal School of Social Sciences, Bhopal, India

⁴⁾Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Universitas Al Asyariah Mandar, West Sulawesi, Indonesia

eka.apriani@iaincurup.ac.id^{1)*} hengki.krissanjaya.2024@student.uny.ac.id²⁾
shibanibasubsssbhopal.edu.in³⁾ muthmainnah@unasman.ac.id⁴⁾

Abstract

This study investigates teachers' strategies for implementing formative assessment in English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction at the primary school level and identifies the challenges encountered. An exploratory qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through classroom observations and structured interviews involving teachers from three primary schools. A classroom observation checklist documented teacher strategies, while structured interviews identified challenges. The findings indicate that teachers employ strategies such as communicating learning objectives, gathering evidence of learning through interactive and digital activities, and providing targeted feedback. Teachers also adapt their instruction based on formative assessment outcomes to meet students' needs. The primary challenges identified are time constraints, variations in students' abilities, and students' limited confidence in self-reflection. The study recommends technological support, increased time allocation, and professional development to enhance formative assessment implementation. These findings offer practical insights for improving EFL instruction at the primary school level.

Keywords: *Challenges, EFL learning, Formative Assessment, Teachers' Strategies*

©Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP UM Palembang
 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32502/ecj.v10i1.10929>

Introduction

Formative assessment has played a substantial role in education for the last few decades. It offers immediate feedback, reinforces students' mindsets, and encourages students' achievement (Nhor et al., 2022; Parmigiani et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Formative assessment involves actionable strategies such as daily exit tickets, peer review cycles, and targeted questioning, helping teachers analyze students' progress during the learning process. Moss & Brookhart (2019), for example, stated that teachers and students can systematically cooperate to acquire learning evidence through formative assessment. This learning evidence, such as knowledge enrichment, skill development, and comprehension, can be measured using various

methodologies. Considering these substantial roles, formative assessment is precious for EFL elementary students. This is because EFL elementary students need support to gradually develop their skills, especially in English language acquisition.

In teaching English as a foreign language, formative assessment can be a platform for educators to gain comprehensive insights into learners' learning progress. Formative assessment in an EFL context allows teachers and learners to see the extent of their English language skills. The achievements learners have made will lead to an effective English learning process (Wijaya, 2022). According to Widiastuti et al. (2020), theoretically, implementing formative assessment in EFL classrooms is strongly connected to teachers'

background knowledge. The knowledge points in this case include the strategies used. During the formative assessment process, teachers can conduct intensive interactions with students from time to time. This is essential to ensure students are engaged in meaningful English learning. Additionally, communicating success criteria to students is essential to provide them with an overview of the learning targets. After communicating the target of student success, the teacher can collect detailed information from the learning process. Gathering as much detailed information as possible can be the main basis for teachers to provide appropriate feedback. Once appropriate feedback has been provided, any necessary adjustments to the instructional process can be made (Filsecker & Kerres, 2012). If those strategies are implemented properly and effectively, formative assessment will significantly impact the contemporary education shift toward student-centered or differentiated learning.

In practice, there are fundamental differences between formative assessment in the context of primary education and other higher levels of education. The former focuses on developing basic skills such as reading, writing, numeracy, and social skills. Formative assessment is used to monitor mastery of these basic concepts. For younger learners at the primary level, incorporating developmentally appropriate tools like pictures and games leverages their cognitive and linguistic stages (Luo et al., 2026). These methods align with their developmental readiness by using concrete experiences to reinforce understanding and engagement. On the other hand, at higher levels, the focus is on more complex understanding, analysis, synthesis, and application. Formative assessment here is more geared towards supporting problem-solving, critical

thinking, and mastery of advanced concepts. At this level, assessments become more abstract and are facilitated through essay tests, discussions, or research-based projects to evaluate analytical and reflective skills (Heritage, 2010). By aligning assessment practices with developmental stages, educators can ensure that their assessment tools effectively support learning outcomes across different educational levels.

Because of its relevance to the development of English language education at the elementary school level, formative assessment has received much attention. Learning models such as student-centered and differentiated learning will be more powerful when the teacher can effectively integrate formative assessment. In line with Rahman (2023), who confirmed that formative assessment facilitates student learning, is related to student-centered learning, and makes the learning environment active and responsive. It can help students develop the abilities and skills they need when entering the workforce. Therefore, students' English language skills and abilities will develop naturally, leading them to the next level of learning. In addition to student-centered learning, differentiated learning is also very compatible with formative assessment. Teachers can use formative assessment to control and see evidence of student learning that has been identified and understood (Begum & Ambreen, 2021). Several studies have shown the positive outcomes associated with employing formative assessment in EFL contexts, including a reported improvement in language skill acquisition by up to 20% compared to traditional assessments. Recent research by Ganajová et al. (2021) and Burhanuddin et al. (2025) showed that in implementing formative assessment, EFL teachers' strategies are commonly in the form of using frequent quick

quizzes, incorporating peer feedback, utilizing think-pair-share activities, asking targeted questions during lessons, providing immediate feedback, and encouraging self-assessment. Moreover, another study by Moyo et al. (2022) focused on formative assessment integrated with higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). The results showed that critical thinking and problem-solving skills were improved with the implementation of formative assessment.

Looking at previous studies, no research focuses on the implementation of formative assessment at the elementary level in the context of EFL instruction. However, the effectiveness of formative assessment at higher levels may differ from that at lower levels of learners. Differences may influence these variations in students' cognitive development and methods of knowledge acquisition. Therefore, this study fills a critical gap in the literature by explicitly exploring the intersection of formative assessment strategies and the unique developmental needs of primary school students in an EFL setting, a scope largely neglected in previous research.

In the primary school EFL context, teachers often struggle to implement formative assessment strategies in English language teaching. Many teachers also lack adequate training and access to resources on effective formative assessment techniques. In addition, teachers face challenges in adapting formative assessments to accommodate the diverse language proficiency levels of primary school students. Consequently, investigating teachers' strategies and potential challenges in formative assessment practices is crucial to enhancing EFL instruction at the elementary level. Based on those backgrounds, this study seeks to answer the following questions: What strategies do teachers use to apply formative assessments in English

Language Learning at the elementary level? What challenges do teachers face in implementing formative assessments, and what potential solutions can be employed? By addressing these questions, we can gain practical insights to improve the quality of EFL teaching and learning in the elementary-level context.

Method

This study examines English instruction for elementary students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), focusing on teachers' implementation of formative assessment best practices. An exploratory qualitative design was employed to investigate teachers' strategies and identify potential challenges in formative assessment. Creswell (2009) notes that exploratory qualitative research is appropriate for examining problems or phenomena where participants' experiences are central. This approach is particularly relevant for understanding behaviors, practices, and reflections, which are best explored through teachers' personal experiences and perspectives in applying formative assessment.

Three elementary schools in Rejang Lebong Regency, Bengkulu, were selected for observation, with three English teachers from different schools, using a purposive sampling technique (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Participants were required to meet the criteria of professional English teachers, determined by their teaching experience. The purposive selection of teachers with varying lengths of service facilitated the collection of comprehensive data on teachers' understanding and practices of FA and formative assessment. For confidentiality, participants are referred to as Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C.

Qualitative research typically employs interviews, observation, or

document analysis (Creswell, 2009). In this study, data were collected using a classroom observation checklist and structured interviews. The checklist was designed to examine teachers' strategies, while interviews were used to identify potential challenges. Instruments were developed based on established theoretical frameworks. The checklist included items focused on formative assessment principles: evidence, feedback, and learner agency. Evidence-related items assessed how teachers gauged student understanding; feedback-focused items evaluated how teachers supported students in recognizing their progress; and learner agency items measured how students were encouraged to take responsibility for their learning.

Table 1. Classroom Observation Checklist

Observation Focus	Number of Items
Learning Objectives and Success Criteria	3
Eliciting Evidence of Student Learning	4
Feedback Mechanisms	3
Peer and Self-Assessment	3
Formative Evidence-Based Differentiation	2
Promoting Metacognition and Student Autonomy	2
Formative Use of Summative Assessment	2
Total	19

The structured interview guide progressed from general to specific questions. Theoretical perspectives on the challenges of formative assessment practices informed the data collection process. Interviews were conducted directly using audio recording equipment. The interview guidance is outlined below:

Table 2. Interview question number

Aspects	Number of Questions
Common Challenges	2
Time Constraints	1

Student Participation	2
Feedback Delivery	2
Training Needs	1
Suggestions for Improvement	1
Total	9

The collected data were analyzed descriptively using in-depth qualitative analysis, and the process was broken down into four steps from the thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun & Clarke (2012).

- a. **Data Reduction:** In this initial step, the researcher became familiar with the data collected from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. This process involves repeatedly reading the transcripts and observation notes to gain a broad understanding of the content. During this process, the researcher begins to notice common issues regarding how teachers implement formative assessment strategies. The researcher focused on the steps of identifying repeated mentions of specific formative assessment strategies (e.g., feedback technique, question and answer method) and contextual variations based on students' language proficiency.
- b. **Categorization:** After the reduction stage, the next step is coding. Codes are labels or marks that capture key points of the data. Systematically, the researcher examined the data and assigned codes to different segments that reflected teachers' strategies and challenges in conducting formative assessments. These codes should emerge from the data itself and not be manipulated.
- c. **Interpretation:** Once the data has been coded, the next step is to look for broader patterns or themes. A theme is a collection of related codes that describe a coherent piece of information about a particular aspect of the research. In this study, themes may emerge related to how teachers

adapt formative assessment based on different classroom dynamics or specific challenges they face, such as a lack of resources or class size.

- d. Drawing Conclusions: At this stage, the researcher refines the analyzed themes by reviewing the coded data and ensuring they accurately reflect the teachers' strategies and challenges. This phase involves splitting or combining themes to clarify the results. Once the themes were finalized, the researcher defined each theme in detail, explaining its scope and relevance to the research objectives.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

To address the research questions, data collected from observations and

interviews are presented in this section. Using a thematic analysis model, the researchers identified teachers' strategies and potential challenges in implementing formative assessment in the EFL elementary context.

1. Teachers' Strategies in Applying Formative Assessments

The results of classroom observations on three English teachers (Teacher A, B, and C) are summarized in Table 3. The table presents the main findings based on several observation foci, including formulating learning objectives, eliciting evidence of learning, feedback mechanisms, peer and self-assessments, formative evidence-based differentiation, metacognition development, students' autonomy, and formative use of summative assessment.

Table 3. Classroom Observations Results

Observation Focus	Notes
Learning Objectives and Success Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers communicate learning objectives in different ways and methods Teachers C only mention the success criteria without a concrete example Teacher C did not observe the students' understanding
Eliciting Evidence of Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher B uses closed-ended questions Only Teacher A, who consistently used diagnostic questions Teachers A, B, and C used interactive activities with different intensities Teacher B utilized digital tools such as online quizzes; Teachers A and C did not.
Feedback Mechanisms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher C delivered general feedback without noticing the success criteria. Only teacher A consistently gave task-based feedback, focused on process, and boosted students' self-regulation. Teachers A, B, and C gave constructive guidance with different intensities.
Peer and Self-Assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher B guided students to do peer assessment per specific criteria, utilizing a simple rubric. No teacher applied the students' structured self-reflection.
Formative Evidence-Based Differentiation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers A, B, and C provided extra assignments with different approaches.
Promoting Metacognition and Student Autonomy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Only Teacher B explicitly directed students to decide on personal learning objectives and consistently observed their progress
Formative Use of Summative Assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Only teacher B utilized the summative assessment for formative feedback. No teacher engaged students in conducting summative assessment outcomes.

The observation results above show how EFL elementary teachers stated learning objectives and success criteria. As an initial activity, communicating learning objectives and success criteria is essential to ensure students understand what they need to achieve. Table 3 above suggests that at the start of the learning process, teachers communicate learning objectives in various ways. Teacher A communicated the learning objectives explicitly, stating, for example, "Students will list three benefits of learning English." Teachers B and C conveyed objectives by presenting the learning topics to be taught, such as "By the end of this lesson, students should describe the purpose of using specific vocabulary," and their purposes and benefits, like "Students demonstrate understanding by explaining why this vocabulary is useful." In terms of explaining success criteria, Teachers A and B were recorded explaining with examples and models, articulating statements like "Students can identify and describe two models of complete sentences," while Teacher C was not. During the observation, Teachers A and B were observed to check students' understanding of what they should achieve in the learning process by prompting them to reflect on their understanding, using statements such as "I understand the lesson when I can..."

In eliciting students' learning evidence, the researcher noted that Teachers A and C used open-ended questions to assess students' understanding of premier concepts, whereas Teacher B used closed-ended questions, which are less effective. The utilization of diagnostic questions became another concern, as only Teacher A consistently employed them. Ideally, Teachers B and C should employ this strategy to assess students' understanding. Nevertheless, all Teachers used interactive activities such

as think-pair-share, games, quizzes, etc. to assess learning outcomes. In this area, Teacher B utilized digital tools as a formative assessment instrument in identifying students' progress.

Feedback mechanism strategies are also presented in Table 3. Teacher C, unlike Teachers A and B, delivered general real-time feedback without specifically addressing the success criteria. To improve this, Teacher C could begin each feedback note with "According to our criteria..." This approach keeps students' attention focused on the goal rather than the grade, ensuring feedback is criterion-referenced and process-oriented. Meanwhile, of those three teachers, only Teacher A consistently gave task-based feedback, focused on process, and boosted students' self-regulation. On the other hand, in ideal conditions, Teachers A, B, and C avoided judgmental feedback and preferred to give constructive guidance with varying intensities.

Formative assessment strategies are strongly attached to peer and self-assessment approaches. Based on the observation results, only Teacher B guided students to conduct peer assessments according to specific criteria, using a simple rubric. Teachers' guidance aimed to direct students in conducting both peer and self-assessment properly based on specific criteria. Notably, a student in Teacher B's class improved their oral presentation skills significantly after engaging in a rubric-guided peer review process, highlighting the value of this approach. Unfortunately, Teachers A, B, and C did not apply learning logs or portfolios for students' structured self-reflection. Extending these tools could amplify gains, as they offer students ongoing opportunities to self-assess and track their progress systematically. However, all teachers employed

different assignments, materials, or strategies to respond to students' needs during the learning process. Teachers A, B, and C assigned students with different approaches and personalized them to the students' needs.

In promoting students' metacognition and autonomy, only Teacher B explicitly directed students to set personal learning objectives and consistently observed their progress through individual discussions. By mapping each student's goal to tailored practice tasks, Teacher B demonstrated a stronger commitment to personalization. These discussions informed the choice of differentiated activities, enabling students to take ownership of their learning paths and fostering autonomy. Unlike Teachers A and C, Teacher B utilized summative assessments for formative feedback, integrating this approach to help students better grasp their learning targets. In ideal conditions, teachers need to engage students in reviewing summative assessments to improve student quality. However, not all teachers engaged students in conducting summative assessment outcomes.

In conclusion, the findings from observing these teachers highlight several transferable principles that can be applied in different classroom contexts. Firstly, technology-enabled checks serve as a powerful tool in facilitating effective formative assessments, as demonstrated by Teacher B. Secondly, providing criteria-anchored feedback, as shown through Teacher A's approach, can significantly enhance student understanding and self-regulation by focusing on specific areas of improvement. Lastly, encouraging student-led reflection is crucial in fostering learners' autonomy, a method that Teacher B effectively utilized by combining summative and formative assessments. These principles can guide

educators in refining their own practices to achieve improved learning outcomes. Additionally, Teacher B excelled at using technology and rubrics for assessment, while Teacher C may need to improve personalization in response to assessment evidence. Teacher A stood out in delivering focused and constructive feedback.

2. Teachers' Challenges in Implementing Formative Assessments

This subsection reports the exploration of how elementary teachers negotiate student engagement, time, and criteria when implementing formative assessment.

a. Time Constraints in Implementing Formative Assessment

The interview findings indicated that time constraints represented a significant challenge for all participating teachers in implementing formative assessment in elementary EFL classrooms. Participants described difficulties in allocating adequate instructional time to conduct formative assessments comprehensively while also fulfilling curriculum requirements.

Teacher A noted that assessing students' understanding during formative assessment activities often required substantial lesson time. Consequently, formative assessment was occasionally deprioritized to ensure completion of mandated curriculum content. Teacher B similarly observed that limited instructional time constrained opportunities for in-depth assessment and the provision of meaningful feedback on students' learning progress.

"There are instances when I perceive that the allocated instructional time is insufficient to conduct comprehensive and in-depth assessments of student learning". (Teacher B)

Furthermore, Teacher C noted that time constraints significantly impeded the ability to provide timely and individualized feedback. The requirements of lesson planning, classroom management, and curriculum coverage limited opportunities to deliver immediate feedback during classroom activities.

"Time frequently emerges as a significant constraint in the teaching process, particularly when I aim to provide timely and immediate feedback to students". (Teacher C)

The interview data suggest that inadequate time allocation limits teachers' capacity to fully utilize the formative function of assessment. Time constraints frequently result in more general feedback and surface-level assessments, rather than detailed, student-centered formative assessment practices.

b. Student Engagement Challenges

The interviews showed that teachers found it challenging to keep students engaged during formative assessment activities. While students were usually eager to learn, teachers still struggled to maintain their focus and participation throughout these assessments.

Teacher A said that keeping students engaged took ongoing effort to create interesting and interactive assessment activities. When lessons were not engaging, students often lost focus during formative assessment tasks.

"I struggled to find interesting ways to keep students focused during the formative assessment." (Teacher A)

Teachers also noticed that students' personalities and learning preferences affected how much they participated. Some students were less active in group-based formative assessments because they were shy, lacked confidence, or preferred to work

alone. These differences made it hard for teachers to get everyone involved equally during assessment activities.

On the other hand, Teachers A, B, and C found that students were more engaged when formative assessments included interactive elements like games and quizzes. They noticed that students were more enthusiastic and took part more when the activities felt fun instead of like a test.

Even though students enjoyed interactive activities, the interviews showed that they still struggled with peer and self-assessment. Teachers said many students did not feel confident judging their own work or giving feedback to classmates, and often wanted feedback directly from the teacher instead.

"No, the issue isn't necessarily disinterest; it's that some students are hesitant to rely on peer or self-assessment and prefer waiting for direct feedback from me." (Teacher C)

Overall, the interview results showed that interactive activities can help increase student engagement during formative assessment. However, keeping students actively involved, especially in peer and self-assessment, was still difficult. Teachers said that students need clear guidance and time to get used to these practices.

c. Assessment Criteria and Rubric Challenges

The interviews showed that teachers found it difficult to create clear and suitable assessment criteria and rubrics. They struggled to make the criteria simple enough without losing the ability to accurately measure students' understanding and progress.

Teacher B said it was especially hard to design criteria that were simple and meaningful for elementary students. When the criteria were too complex, students often felt confused and unsure during formative assessments.

“Sometimes it is difficult to make the criteria simple, but still be able to measure students’ understanding appropriately.” (Teacher B)

Teachers also noted that many students did not fully understand the assessment criteria, which made it harder for them to take part in formative assessment. Some students found it difficult to interpret rubrics on their own, so they felt less confident when working on tasks or joining in peer or self-assessment.

Teacher C added that classroom diversity made these challenges even greater. Because students have different abilities, learning speeds, and styles, teachers often have to adjust assessment criteria to fit everyone’s needs. This makes creating rubrics more complicated and takes more time.

“The presence of students with diverse abilities in the classroom presents significant challenges for educators, particularly in terms of adapting instructional methods to effectively meet the varying learning needs, paces, and styles of each student.” (Teacher C)

The interview data showed that when assessment criteria were unclear or too complex, formative assessment was less effective. Teachers pointed out that without student-friendly rubrics, students struggled to understand what was expected and missed out on chances to develop self-regulation and independent learning.

d. Feedback Practices and Challenges

The interviews showed that while giving effective formative feedback was common among the teachers, it was also a major challenge. All teachers agreed that feedback is important for helping students learn, but they found it hard to give feedback that was timely, specific, and tailored to each student during class.

Teacher A said they preferred to give immediate verbal feedback after students finished tasks because it made it easier to offer personalized guidance and help reinforce what students had learned.

“I provide verbal feedback to students immediately after they complete a task, as I find this approach allows for more personalized and meaningful guidance.” (Teacher A)

Teacher B also said they give written feedback right on students’ work, aiming for specific and useful comments instead of just marking answers as right or wrong.

“Rather than just marking answers right or wrong, I include personalized notes that highlight strengths while also giving clear guidance for improvement.” (Teacher B)

Even with these strategies, teachers said that limited time and the need to manage the class often made feedback less effective. Teacher C pointed out that giving quick, detailed feedback to each student was especially hard in big or lively classes.

“Time frequently emerges as a significant constraint in the teaching process, particularly when I aim to provide timely and immediate feedback to students.” (Teacher C)

Teachers said that feedback was sometimes more general and less structured than they wanted. Interviews showed that these issues made it harder to give detailed formative feedback and to meet each student’s needs. The findings showed that while teachers tried to use formative feedback strategies, practical challenges, especially limited time, affected how quickly and effectively they could give feedback during formative assessments.

e. Peer and Self-Assessment Issues

The interviews showed that teachers found it difficult to use peer and self-assessment in their classrooms.

While they saw these methods as helpful for encouraging student independence and reflection, they had trouble making them work well in elementary EFL settings.

Teacher B said they helped students use clear and simple criteria for peer assessment. Even with this support, students were often unsure and hesitant when reviewing their classmates' work.

"No, the main challenge isn't a lack of enthusiasm; it's that some students struggle to fully grasp the rubric or assessment criteria." (Teacher B)

Teachers also noted that many students were not confident in judging their own learning. Instead of trying self-assessment, students often depended on teacher feedback, which made formative assessment strategies less effective for building self-regulation.

Teacher C said that students relied on teacher authority, which made them less willing to try peer and self-assessment.

"Some students are hesitant to rely on peer or self-assessment and prefer waiting for direct feedback from me." (Teacher C)

Teachers also observed that students were not used to peer and self-assessment because these activities were rarely part of their earlier education. Because of this, peer and self-assessment often did not go smoothly and needed a lot of teacher support. The interview data showed that students' lack of experience, low confidence, and reliance on teacher feedback made it hard to use peer and self-assessment effectively. These issues limited how well formative assessment could help students think reflectively and learn independently.

f. Professional Development and Support Needs

The interviews showed that all the teachers wanted more professional

development and support from their schools to improve how they use formative assessment. They said that not having enough training made them feel less confident and less effective when creating and using these assessment strategies.

Teacher A said there is a need for specific training on how to create clear and useful assessment rubrics. While the teacher understood the basics of assessment, they needed more step-by-step guidance to make criteria that students can easily understand.

"I recognize that developing clear, effective rubrics is an area where I could benefit from targeted professional development." (Teacher A)

Teacher B also stressed how important it is for teachers to get professional development on using technology in formative assessment. The teacher explained that not knowing much about digital assessment tools makes it harder to use effective and engaging formative assessment methods.

"I would greatly benefit from targeted training on using technology tools for formative assessment." (Teacher B)

Teacher C also said there is a need for training on differentiated assessment strategies to better meet students' diverse learning needs. The teacher added that specialized support would make it easier to adapt formative assessment practices for different student abilities and learning styles.

"I would find specialized training on differentiated assessment strategies extremely valuable for my professional development." (Teacher C)

Besides professional development, teachers said they needed more support from their schools. They felt that having enough digital devices and reliable internet was essential for using formative assessment well. Teachers also pointed out that schools should set aside enough

class time for these activities. In summary, the interviews showed that teachers need ongoing training and support from their schools to overcome challenges with formative assessment. They believed that regular training and better resources would help make formative assessment more effective and lasting in elementary EFL classrooms.

Besides professional development, teachers said they needed more support from their schools. They felt that having enough digital devices and reliable internet was essential for using formative assessment well. Teachers also pointed out that schools should set aside enough class time for these activities. In summary, the interviews showed that teachers need ongoing training and support from their schools to overcome challenges with formative assessment. They believed that regular training and better resources would help make formative assessment more effective and lasting in elementary EFL classrooms. The interviews showed that teachers faced several related challenges when using formative assessment in elementary EFL classrooms. They struggled to keep students engaged, create clear and simple assessment criteria, manage limited class time, give timely and personalized feedback, and support effective peer and self-assessment. Teachers also said they needed ongoing professional development and support from their schools to improve their skills in formative assessment. These findings suggest that without enough training, time, and resources, teachers may not be able to fully use the benefits of formative assessment in their classrooms.

Discussion

1. Teachers' Strategies in Applying Formative Assessment for EFL Elementary Students

This study investigates how teachers implement formative assessment strategies for EFL instruction

practice. By understanding these strategies, educators can enhance English as a Foreign Language outcomes by fostering better student engagement and learning progress. The classroom observation result demonstrates teachers' strategies from several aspects, including learning objectives and success criteria, eliciting evidence of student learning, feedback mechanisms, peer and self-assessment, formative evidence-based differentiation, promoting metacognition and student autonomy, and the formative use of summative assessment.

In the framework of communicating learning objectives and criteria, teachers must correspond to students clearly and holistically. Communicating learning objectives enables students to define and focus on what to learn and to complete. Those three teachers in this study have communicated about what students need to achieve in different ways. This key aspect positively resulted in formative assessment processes, as teachers can monitor students' progress gradually. Additionally, clear communication of success criteria between the teacher and students will assist both parties in advancing learning effectively (Gerzon, 2020; van Bommel et al., 2022). In conducting a formative assessment process, there must be a parallel conception between teachers and students. This area needs to be developed to achieve the optimum formative assessment intention. A classroom vignette from the study illustrated a scenario where a teacher, Ms. Smith, successfully aligned with her students regarding a specific success criterion: writing an argumentative essay. She clearly articulated the rubric expectations, showed examples of high-quality work, and engaged students in a discussion to ensure they fully understood these criteria. This alignment led to noticeable improvements in

students' essay writing skills. Another essential aspect of communicating learning objectives and success criteria is to explain with examples and allocate distinct time for a comprehensive discussion (Kim et al., 2021). Unfortunately, during the observation process, the researchers found that a teacher did not provide concrete examples when communicating them.

Eliciting evidence of students' learning requires teachers to consider the accessible aspects of students' learning. This study found that teachers employed various strategies to elicit evidence of learning. The use of open-ended questions, diagnostic questions, interactive activities, and digital tools to compile them holistically will lead teachers to conduct formative assessments effectively, although not all teachers use these strategies. These findings align with Kurtz et al. (2019), demonstrating how open-ended questions and diagnostic clusters help educators align assessments with student needs, thereby promoting active learning strategies. Another study by Pan et al. (2024) emphasizes the role of technology in developing open-ended and diagnostic questions, which allows educators to efficiently collect evidence for formative assessments. Notably, in several classrooms, the application of open-ended questions resulted in noticeable gains in students' language proficiency. For instance, students showed a marked improvement in their ability to construct complex sentences and articulate thoughts more clearly. These gains were particularly evident in groups where teachers consistently utilized these strategies, suggesting a strong link between this approach and enhanced language skills.

The study found that the feedback mechanism in formative assessment is carried out by providing feedback that is timely, specific, and under

predetermined success criteria. This feedback spans three levels: task, process, and self-regulation. Task-level feedback is directed at the tasks students are working on, helping them understand specific strengths and weaknesses. Process-level feedback focuses more broadly on students' approach to learning, guiding them on strategies to enhance their comprehension and performance. Self-regulation feedback encourages students to reflect and improve their work independently by developing skills for self-assessment and adjustment. It is important to avoid feedback that is judgmental or that can demotivate students, such as comments that are too general or judgmental (Chu et al., 2024). Instead, constructive guidance should be delivered, providing concrete steps that can help students improve their understanding and skills in the next task. Teachers in the study varied in their emphasis on each feedback level. For instance, Teacher A primarily focused on task-level feedback, while Teacher B integrated more process-level strategies, and Teacher C highlighted self-regulation methods. This ensures that feedback is not only an evaluation tool but also an integral part of the learning process that supports students' holistic development (Asim & Alberto, 2024). Although not all teachers implement the ideal strategies, improvements can be seen.

The classroom observation findings indicate that teachers guide students in conducting peer assessments using a predetermined rubric or success criteria. In line with Lee et al. (2021), this activity aims to help students understand assessment standards and improve their evaluation skills. In addition, students are also invited to conduct self-assessments based on the same criteria, so that they can recognize the strengths and weaknesses in their learning. However, unfortunately,

teachers do not encourage students to conduct in-depth self-reflection through structured activities, such as creating learning logs or portfolios. As a result, students' opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of their learning process are limited. To address this, implementing a quick 'two-minute journal' routine could facilitate deeper self-reflection. In this activity, students spend two minutes at the end of a lesson writing down their thoughts on what they learned, how they learned it, and areas they found challenging. This reflective practice not only helps students internalize their learning but also fosters metacognitive habits that go beyond standard rubric assessments.

Another finding is that the formative evidence-based differentiation strategy is an approach used by teachers to tailor teaching to students' needs based on the results of formative assessment. In practice, teachers analyze data from formative assessments to understand students' diverse ability levels and then design learning strategies accordingly. Teachers may use different tasks, materials, or teaching methods to support the progress of students at different ability levels. For example, students who need extra help can be given tasks with more detailed guidance, while more advanced students can be given additional challenges to deepen their understanding. A student in the study remarked, 'Being in a group where I can work at my own pace and still be challenged has made learning more enjoyable and motivating.' In this system, students' learning needs can be accommodated effectively, creating a comprehensive and student-centered learning environment (Che Mat & Jamaludin, 2024). This strategy also encourages students to actively engage in the learning process, improving their motivation and learning outcomes.

Peer assessment and self-assessment strategies in formative assessment are very effective in encouraging students' active involvement in the learning process. In practice, two out of three teachers explicitly teach students to set personal learning goals that are specific and relevant to the material being learned. This process begins with the teacher providing direction on the importance of setting clear learning goals, followed by an exercise or guidance in determining the steps to achieve them. Students are then taught to monitor their progress through self-assessment, where they reflect on the extent to which these goals have been achieved, the challenges faced, and the steps that can be taken to improve. In addition, peer assessment is used as a means to provide constructive feedback, so that students can learn from others' perspectives and input (Rajadurai et al., 2025).

In this way, students not only learn to take responsibility for their progress but also build communication and critical evaluation skills necessary for collaborative learning. This strategy has a positive impact on improving students' learning independence as well as the quality of interaction in the classroom.

The final finding from the classroom observation is that teachers integrate summative assessment by providing formative feedback that aims to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses in learning. Liu & Lin (2024) argue that this feedback provides useful information for students to identify areas needing improvement. However, although such feedback is provided, teachers do not involve students in the process of actively reviewing the summative assessment results. This results in students being less involved in their self-evaluation and missing the opportunity

to plan for future learning improvements.

To bridge this gap, implementing simple "next-steps conferences" could transform summative reviews into actionable student plans. During these conferences, students would meet individually with their teacher to discuss their summative results, identify specific areas for improvement, and set personalized improvement targets. This collaborative approach would empower students to take ownership of their learning journey, fostering a deeper understanding of the steps needed to achieve their learning goals. If students are allowed to analyze and reflect on summative assessment results and develop personalized action plans, they will better understand how to improve and achieve their learning goals more effectively.

2. Teachers' Challenges in Applying Formative Assessment for EFL Elementary Students

"I often find myself doodling during class," shared a student, glancing sheepishly at their English workbook. This sentiment echoed the voices of many learners, highlighting one of the common challenges faced by teachers in implementing formative assessment in English language learning. One of the main challenges is the difficulty in maintaining students' focus or engagement during formative assessment (Bechsgaard et al., 2024). This is often due to students' easily distracted attention or lack of motivation to actively participate. In addition, teachers also face challenges in customizing assessments for students with diverse English language abilities, which requires a more flexible and individualized approach. In addition, teachers also have difficulties in designing assessment criteria that are appropriate for elementary-level

students, given the variations in comprehension and language skills that students have at that age. Finally, designing interesting activities to prevent students from feeling bored is also a challenge. Creative and fun activities are needed to keep students engaged in the learning process and encourage them to continue learning enthusiastically.

One challenge teachers face in implementing formative assessment in English language learning is the limited time available for conducting in-depth assessments. Based on the interviews, many teachers revealed that the time available in each learning session is often insufficient to provide comprehensive formative assessment. For instance, teachers reported having only 10 minutes available for feedback activities that ideally require 25 minutes to be conducted effectively. This time gap underscores the need for structural changes in the scheduling of lessons. Formative assessment requires careful observation of students' progress and provides detailed, constructive feedback, which demands extra time. Teachers often feel pressured by time constraints and are unable to give maximum attention to each student when conducting in-depth evaluations. This is especially problematic in English language learning, which requires evaluation of various skills, such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

Concerning student participation, the interview results revealed that most students showed high enthusiasm for activities that involved games or quizzes, feeling more engaged and motivated. However, peer and self-assessment initially appeared daunting for many students. To shift this perception, it is essential to present peer assessment as a collaborative opportunity where students can take shared ownership of their learning. For instance, in one success story, students used rubrics to coach

their classmates through a writing task, which significantly improved their confidence and understanding. By emphasizing the empowerment and support in these assessment methods, students become more accustomed to evaluating their progress and that of their peers, recognizing the value of constructive feedback.

Teachers revealed that feedback is generally given directly to students, but it is often not accompanied by clear details or structure. This results in the feedback students receive lacking depth and providing no clear direction for improvement. A practical approach would be to differentiate feedback into three levels: task feedback, process feedback, and self-regulation feedback. For instance, in a 30-second interaction, teachers can offer targeted task feedback by pointing out specific errors or successes in students' work. During a 2-minute interaction, they could provide process feedback, guiding students on strategies and techniques for improvement. For more extensive sessions, self-regulation feedback can encourage students to reflect on their learning process and identify personal goals. While it is important to provide immediate and constructive feedback, teachers recognize that the main challenge in doing so is the limited time available. Limited time is often an obstacle in providing optimal feedback, which ultimately affects the quality of learning and student development. (Whitman, 2024).

Based on the challenges that arise, teachers provide an overview of the need to implement formative assessment. This includes training to create simple, effective rubrics, technology training to support formative assessment, and training to customize assessments based on students' diverse abilities. The teachers also provided suggestions for improvements for schools and

institutions, such as procuring technology like tablets, laptops, or apps to support assessment, adding dedicated time for formative assessment in the lesson schedule, and using visual aids or interactive apps to increase effectiveness. Research evidence suggests that the use of digital tools, like tablets and apps, can significantly enhance the efficiency and accuracy of formative assessments.

Conclusion

This study found that teachers used various strategies in implementing formative assessment in the primary level EFL classroom, such as communication of learning objectives and success criteria, collection of evidence of learning through interactive activities and technology, provision of specific feedback, and use of self- and peer-assessment. Teachers also adjust teaching based on the results of formative assessments to meet students' needs. However, the main challenges faced are time constraints, difficulties in maintaining student engagement, and students' lack of confidence in self-reflection. Teachers also face barriers in providing real-time structured feedback and need additional training to create effective rubrics, utilize technology, and adapt assessments to students' diverse abilities. This study recommends the provision of technology support, the allocation of dedicated time for formative assessment, and the use of visual tools and interactive applications to improve the effectiveness of formative assessment. The findings provide important insights into how to optimize formative assessment to improve the quality of English language learning at the primary level.

This research makes a significant contribution to the field of TEFL by providing a specific framework for formative assessments that are aligned

with the cognitive and linguistic development of young learners. These findings bridge the theoretical gap between general assessment practices and specific pedagogical needs in basic EFL instruction, emphasizing that formative tools in this context should be multisensory and low-stakes to reduce language anxiety in children.

References

- Asim, N., & Alberto, I. (2024). Regarding the Article Students' Perception of Peer-Students Mentoring Program "Big Sibling Mentoring Program" to Complement Faculty Mentoring of First-Year Medical Students in Saudi Arabia [Letter]. *Advances in Medical Education and Practice, Volume 15*, 993–994. <https://doi.org/10.2147/AMEP.S499333>
- Bechsgaard, V. R., Marchetti, E., & Lundtofte, T. E. (2024). From informal to formal - A case study about the impact of distant learning on formative feedback in Danish schools. *E-Learning and Digital Media*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20427530241244501>
- Begum, S., & Ambreen, M. (2021). Differentiated Instruction Based on Formative Assessment in Associate Degree in Education Program. *Journal of Educational Research, Dept. of Education, IUB, Pakistan*, 24(1), 2021.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological*. (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004>
- Burhanuddin, Arrafii, M. A., & Mahsun. (2025). Exploring Types and Qualities of Teachers' Implementation of AfL Strategies in Indonesian EFL Secondary Schools. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 34(2), 803–812. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-024-00897-4>
- Che Mat, N., & Jamaludin, K. A. (2024). Effectiveness of Practices and Applications of Student-Centered Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i3/21733>
- Chu, X., Zhou, N., Fan, C., & Campbell, M. (2024). Editorial: Bystander behavior in traditional bullying and cyberbullying: characteristics, antecedents, outcomes, and interventions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1519007>
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2018). *Third Edition: Designing and conducting mixed methods research approach*. 849.
- Filsecker, M., & Kerres, M. (2012). Repositioning formative assessment from an educational assessment perspective: A response to dunn & mulvenon (2009). *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation*, 17(16), 1–9.
- Ganjová, M., Sotáková, I., Lukáč, S., Ješková, Z., Jurková, V., & Orosová, R. (2021). FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF INQUIRY

- SKILLS IN SCIENCE EDUCATION. *Journal of Baltic Science Education*, 20(2), 204–222. <https://doi.org/10.33225/jbse/21.20.204>
- Gerzon, N. (2020). Communicating Learning Goals and Success Criteria with Students. *Formatiev Insights: An Assessment for Learning: An Initiative of WestED*, 1–2. <https://csaa.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Communicating-Learning-Goals-and-Success-Criteria-with-Students.pdf>
- Heritage, M. (2010). Formative Assessment and Next-Generation Assessment Systems: Are We Losing an Opportunity?. *Council of Chief State School Officers*.
- Kim, Y.-S. G., Yang, D., Reyes, M., & Connor, C. (2021). Writing instruction improves students' writing skills differentially depending on focal instruction and children: A meta-analysis for primary grade students. *Educational Research Review*, 34, 100408. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100408>
- Kurtz, J. B., Lourie, M. A., Holman, E. E., Grob, K. L., & Monrad, S. U. (2019). Creating assessments as an active learning strategy: what are students' perceptions? A mixed methods study. *Medical Education Online*, 24(1), 1630239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10872981.2019.1630239>
- Lee, K. Y., Hassell, D., Salleh, S. M., & Munohsamy, T. (2021). Online-based Rubric for Peer Assessment: Effectiveness and Implications. *SALTeL Journal (Southeast Asia Language Teaching and Learning)*, 4(2), 14–24. <https://doi.org/10.35307/saltel.v4i2.76>
- Liu, S., & Lin, D. (2024). Dynamic assessment of students' academic writing: Vygotskian and systemic functional linguistic perspectives. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 44(1), 178–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2023.2290311>
- Luo, Q., Zhang, S., & Gu, Z. (2026). Development and validation of a game-based assessment tool for abstraction skills in lower primary students. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 59, 101955. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.101955>
- Moss, C. M., & Brookhart, S. M. (2019). *Advancing formative assessment in every classroom: A guide for instructional leaders*. ASCD.
- Moyo, S. E., Combrinck, C., & Van Staden, S. (2022). Evaluating the Impact of Formative Assessment Intervention and Experiences of the Standard 4 Teachers in Teaching Higher-Order-Thinking Skills in Mathematics. *Frontiers in Education*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2022.771437>
- Nhor, R., Pang, S., & Em, S. (2022). TEACHERS' AND LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICE IN ENHANCING LEARNING IN EFL COURSES. *Jurnal As-Salam*, 6(2), 181–201. <https://doi.org/10.37249/assalam.v6i2.434>
- Pan, Y., Wang, L., & Zhu, Y. (2024). Strategic questioning for formative assessment in TEFL: insights from blended synchronous learning environments. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1519. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-04086-y>
- Parmigiani, D., Nicchia, E., Murgia, E., & Ingersoll, M. (2024). Formative

- assessment in higher education: an exploratory study within programs for professionals in education. *Frontiers in Education*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1366215>
- Rahman, M. A. (2023). Effects of student-centered learning and formative assessment on first year students of a non-government college in Bangladesh. *Journal of Advanced Sciences and Mathematics Education*, 3(2), 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.58524/jasme.v3i2.251>
- Rajadurai, S., Hebballi, T., Sharif, Z., Kukreja, G. K., & Derdour, I. (2025). Evaluating the Constructive Alignment of Learning Objectives Within Haptics Simulation in the Dental Undergraduate Curriculum. *International Dental Journal*, 75(1), 273–278. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.identj.2024.10.002>
- van Bommel, J., Nilsberth, M., Nissen, A., Tengberg, M., & Walkert, M. (2022). What to do or what to learn -on communicating learning goals. *CERME12, TWG19(20)*. <https://hal.science/hal-03745506>
- Whitman, A. T. (2024). Exploring How Novice Teachers in the UK Leverage Reflective Teaching to Enhance Classroom Assessment Practices. *Research and Advances in Education*, 3(11), 16–21. <https://doi.org/10.56397/RAE.2024.11.03>
- Widiastuti, I. A. M. S., Mukminatien, N., Prayogo, J. A., & Irawati, E. (2020). Dissonances between Teachers' Beliefs and Practices of Formative Assessment in EFL Classes. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(1), 71–84. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2020.13.15a>
- Wijaya, K. F. (2022). Indonesian EFL Teachers' Perceptions on Formative Assessment in Writing. *JET (Journal of English Teaching)*, 8(1), 59–70. <https://doi.org/10.33541/jet.v8i1.3359>
- Zhang, H., Ge, S., & Mohd Saad, M. R. Bin. (2024). Formative assessment in K-12 English as a foreign language education: A systematic review. *Heliyon*, 10(10), e31367. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31367>