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Examination of Iraqi EFL Teachers' Attitudes, Intentions, and Practices Regarding Formative Assessment

Ali Hazim Jawad[1]

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the attitudes and practices of Iraqi EFL teachers regarding formative assessment (FA). A total of 102 teachers from primary school to university filled in the Arabic version of Teachers' Conceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment Questionnaire. The questionnaire was translated from English into Arabic first and was validated using confirmatory factor analysis (Hazim Jawad, 2020). Findings showed that a 7-factor model had acceptable fit indices (GFI=0.90, CFI=0.91, RMSEA=0.05). Descriptive statistics were used to explain Iraqi EFL teachers' attitudes and intentions regarding FA. Findings showed that the majority of Iraqi teachers believe that formative assessment is a useful procedure for measuring students' learning and is helpful in their education. They also indicated that they have a positive attitude towards FA and are willing to use it. Correlational analysis showed that Affective Attitude, Instrumental Attitude, Subjective Norm, Controllability, and Self-Efficacy were strong predictors of intentions to use formative assessment. However, only Instrumental Attitude had a small significant correlation with the Behavior Scale. In other words, those teachers who believe that FA is useful in improving students learning tend to actually employ FA in their teaching. Findings also showed that female teachers have more positive attitudes towards FA and tend to use it more in their teaching. Implications of the findings for improving English language teaching are discussed.

Keywords: Formative assessment, Iraqi EFL teachers, Teachers' Conceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment Questionnaire, Theory of planned behavior.

1. Introduction

Educational assessment is an important part of the process of teaching and learning. According to Stiggins and Conklin (1992), regularly teachers spend up to half of their time in the classroom,

[1] English Department, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq. Email: a7823095395@gmail.com

assessing and analyzing the learning of students. Scholars' and practitioners' interest in evaluation has always been very strong, and in recent years, evaluation has been one of the key objectives of educational research. As a consequence, the way students are assessed in the classroom has undergone numerous worldwide adjustments.

The assessment tools used in the classroom in the 21st century go beyond traditional quizzes with paper and pencil. It has many more tasks and is used for various uses such as diagnosis, monitoring, grading, feedback, instructional improvement, motivation, and other (MacMillan, 2014). Formative assessment (MacMillan, 2014) is one of the forms of classroom evaluation aimed at "gathering evidence of student learning and providing feedback to teachers and modifying educational approaches to improve achievement" (p. 93).

Formative assessment, a commonly promoted practice in teacher education, is defined as a process for examining one's own teaching. The utilization of formative assessment, whether it is continuous or occasional, is meant to tell and improve teachers' understanding while developing their own teaching practice (Yorke, 2003). Traditionally, formative assessment is supported through the processes of reflection and/or self-assessment. Both of these approaches are widely utilized in education as a way for guiding preservice teachers looking inward to further develop their understanding of pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge (Van Zee & Roberts, 2001).

Formative assessment plays an important role in the improvement of student learning and achievement. As Heritage (2007) asserts, effective use of FA can provide sufficient information to move learning forward. The utilization of FA improves students' knowledge and skills (Bennett, 2011). Nevertheless, there is a limited understanding and application of FA in the context of upper education (Duckor, 2014), despite the pressure on universities to reinforce their teaching and; therefore, improve the quality of student learning assessment (Hattie, 2009).

Popham (2014) stresses the term "process" in his concept of FA, stating that it is a calculated process rather than a test. FA is a structured mechanism in which instructors use test-related proof of student status to change their current instructional practices or students to modify their learning strategies (Popham, 2014). Therefore, a pupil is regarded as an active participant responsible for their learning in FA. It offers students the opportunity to prepare their further acts on the suggestions of the teacher. Nevertheless, Shavelson (2006) made a somewhat contradictory statement about the efficacy of FA based on his experience of introducing and researching its effects:

> After five years of work, our euphoria has become a fact that FA, like so many other changes in education, has a long way to go before a majority of teachers can learn it. In other words, producing positive outcomes in the application of FA is a very long and complicated process and its success does not occur automatically (p. 65).

Other researchers have shown that teachers in general are not familiar with different modes of assessment (Watmani, Assadollahfam, & Behin, 2020). School assessments are of two types of

formative and summative and both play important roles in education. One major challenge for teachers is to balance formative and summative assessments in their teaching. Since the most important purpose of assessment in education is to support learning (Black & Wiliam, 2006), the value of formative assessment becomes clear. In some countries, like Hong Kong, the educational system has made some changes in the assessment modes of teachers with more emphasis on the formative assessment by making it an inherent part of teaching (Yan & Cheng, 2015). However, pressure from the top of the hierarchal system cannot be effective if those who have to implement formative assessment, i.e., teachers, do not want to employ it in their classes (Rink & Mitchell, 2002). Teachers' unwillingness for conducting formative assessment can be due to their lack of knowledge or negative beliefs about the subject (Brown, Hui, Yu, & Kennedy, 2011).

Therefore, it is clear that successful implementation of formative assessment in schools depends on teachers' understanding, participation, and support as teachers' views have a significant impact on any change in educational systems (Hallinger, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to gain an understanding of teachers' attitudes, intentions, and practices regarding formative assessment. There have not been many studies on the factors which influence teachers' intentions concerning formative assessment and the impact of attitudinal factors on their formative assessment practices.

Formative assessment identifies learners' strengths and weaknesses, enhances their motivation and metacognition, and provides feedback to inform both teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Empirical studies have shown that integration of formative assessment into teaching has a clear and notable impact on students' achievement and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2009; Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004). Although, these benefits of formative assessment are well-accepted among educators, conducting it is a very difficult task and it cannot be added to the teaching practices quickly. Teaching is a very personal task and teachers have their own teaching philosophies and thus their attitudes and beliefs about formative assessment greatly impact their practices (Harrison, 2013).

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1985, 1991) is a theoretical framework which attempts to predict behavior based on individuals' attitudes, emotions, and intentions. According to TPB, three factors including attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control affect behavior through intentions. This means that those who approve a behavior, have positive subjective norms (social pressure from others), and enjoy a high level of perceived behavioral control (one's perception of the difficulty of and control over performing the behavior) are more likely to perform the behavior. This study employed TPB to identify the contribution of significant factors (affective, subjective norms, control, etc.) to the behavior of performing formative assessment in Iraqi teachers.

2. The present investigation

Most of the studies published on the FA concentrated on the advantages and influences that may affect classroom engagement and the effect of the FA on student learning achievement (Ghazizadeh & Motallebzadeh, 2017). There has not been any in-depth study conducted to describe in detail the understanding of FA by teachers and how their perspective affects their ways of doing follow-up actions. The perception of the teachers' in FA certainly affects the kinds of input they provide as well as the actions they take to follow up. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate the attitudes, intentions, and practices in conducting FA in Iraqi EFL classrooms. Also, the study intends to highlight the applicability of FA in EFL classrooms in terms of the use of the correct FA strategy to match the objective or the purpose of the assessment. The study aims to pinpoint the pedagogical implications of using FA. To the best knowledge of this researcher, no study was applied with reference to the contributions of attitudes, intentions, and practices regarding FA to student learning improvement in Iraqi universities and schools.

2.1. Research Questions

1. What are Iraqi EFL teachers' attitudes towards FA?
2. How frequent do Iraqi EFL teachers use FA?
3. To what extent are different components of attitudes to FA related to the application of FA?
4. Do Iraqi teachers' attitudes to FA differ in terms of sex and level of education?

3. Methodology

3.1.Participants and Setting

In order to collect the required data, 102 Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers of different ages and gender who taught at various levels in primary schools (26.5%), high schools (20.6%), private institutes (24.5%), and universities (28.4%) in Iraq were recruited. The participants were all non-native speakers of English whose first language was Arabic. 59% of the participants were female and 41% were male. They ranged between 23 and 65 years in age (M= 36.24; SD= 9.35).

3.2 Instrumentation

In order to collect data for the purposes of the present study, the Teachers' Conceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment Questionnaire (TCPFAQ; Yan & Cheng, 2015) was employed. The instrument contains 40 Likert-type items on a 6-point scale (*Strongly disagree, Disagree, Slightly disagree, Slightly agree, Agree, Strongly agree*). The Arabic translation of the questionnaire was used in this study. TCPFAQ is composed of seven subscales of Affective Attitude Scale (7 items), Instrumental Attitude Scale (10 items), Subjective Norm Scale (5 items), Controllability Scale (4 items), Self-Efficacy Scale (6 items), Intention Scale (6 items), and

Behavior Scale (2 items). The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the entire questionnaire with 40 items was .93. The alpha reliabilities for the subscales are reported in Table 9. Participants were asked to read each item carefully and indicate to what extent they agree with each item. The validity of the Arabic version was also examined with confirmatory factor analysis.

3.3 Procedure

To survey teachers' attitudes, the Teachers' Conceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment Questionnaire (Yan & Cheng, 2015) was translated from English into Arabic by the researcher. The Arabic version was evaluated by two other English teachers who were proficient in both Arabic and English and their corrections and comments were implemented. The corrected Arabic version was then back-translated into English by another English teacher proficient in both languages. The two English versions were then compared for discrepancies. Modifications were made based on the discrepancies between the original English version and the back-translated English version.

The participants received the required information regarding the purpose of the study and the importance of their responses. Before the test, a short introductory text in Arabic about formative assessment was given to the participants. This was done to make sure that all the participants know what formative assessment is and to have a common understanding of its basics. Then the questionnaire was distributed via the Google Forms and respondents answered the questionnaire using their smartphones, tablets, or personal computers without any supervision. The data were analyzed using SPSS 21 to first investigate the validity and reliability of the ATCPFAQ. Descriptive statistics were then computed in order to analyze the data and answer the research questions.

4. Analyses and Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics of the scales

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the Affective Attitude Scale of the A-TCPFA. Items in this subscale refer to teachers' feelings and fondness for formative assessment. The Affective Attitude refers to feelings or emotions which follows performing formative assessment. Items such as "I like Formative Assessment", "Formative Assessment is an enjoyable process", and "Formative Assessment is interesting" are under this subscale. The numbers in Table 1 show the percent of endorsement for each response option. As Table 1 shows, the majority of the teachers 'slightly agree' and 'agree' with all the items in the Affective Attitude Scale. The means for the items are very close and in the range of 4.40 to 4.95. This finding indicates that all items are almost equally liked by the teachers.

Table 1
Responses to Affective Attitude Scale items (expressed as % of the total sample)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
1	1	1	6	33	47	11	4.60
2	2	2	7	26	43	19	4.65
3	1	0	4	17	53	24	4.95
4	0	1	7	32	41	18	4.70
5	0	3	16	28	42	10	4.40
6	1	4	7	33	41	12	4.48
7	1	1	7	22	41	27	4.84

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the Instrumental Attitude Scale of the A-TCPFA. Items in this subscale refer to teachers' attitudes concerning the educational values and consequences of performing formative assessment in terms of its worthwhileness and the time and effort that it takes. Items such as "Formative Assessment can raise students' interest in learning", "Formative Assessment can offer an accurate appraisal of students' performance", and "Formative Assessment can integrate learning and teaching with assessment" are under this subscale. The numbers in Table 2 show the percent of endorsement for each response option. As Table 2 shows, the majority of the teachers 'slightly agree', 'agree', and 'strongly agree' with all the items in the Instrumental Attitude Scale. The means for the items are very close and in the range of 4.42 to 4.87. This finding indicates that teachers almost equally agree with all the items in the subscale. That is, they agree that formative assessment is useful in teaching.

Table 2
Responses to Instrumental Attitude Scale items (expressed as % of the total sample)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
8	0	3	12	25	43	16	4.58
9	0	1	7	31	39	21	4.73
10	0	2	10	24	40	22	4.70
11	1	3	6	26	46	17	4.66
12	1	1	9	25	44	19	4.70
13	2	6	11	23	45	12	4.42
14	0	5	7	21	43	23	4.73
15	1	1	8	22	39	28	4.83
16	0	0	8	27	34	30	4.87
17	0	3	8	22	46	20	4.73

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the Subjective Norm Scale of the A-TCPFA. Items in this subscale refer to teachers' attitudes concerning the pressure from outside to perform formative assessment. Items in this category are like "Officials of the Education Bureau believe that Formative Assessment should be implemented", "The principal of my school believes that Formative Assessment should be implemented", and "Parents of my students believe that Formative Assessment should be implemented". The numbers in Table 3 show the percent of endorsement for each response option. As Table 3 shows, the majority of the teachers 'slightly agree', 'agree', and 'strongly agree' with all the items in the Subjective Norm Scale. The means for the items are very close and in the range of 4.40 to 4.89. This finding indicates that teachers almost equally agree with all the items in the subscale.

Table 3
Responses to Subjective Norm Scale items (expressed as % of the total sample)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
18	0	1	9	20	40	29	4.88
19	1	0	6	24	39	29	4.89
20	0	4	16	29	35	14	4.40
21	0	2	5	25	40	27	4.86
22	0	2	5	25	42	26	4.86

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for the Controllability Scale of the A-TCPFA. Items in this subscale refer to teachers' perceptions of the control they have over performing (or not performing) formative assessment and the time and methods of their formative assessment practices. Items in this category include "I can decide the frequency of implementing Formative Assessment", "I can decide the timing of implementing Formative Assessment", and "I can decide whether or not to implement Formative Assessment". The numbers in Table 4 show the percent of endorsement for each response option. As Table 4 shows, the majority of the teachers 'slightly agree', 'agree', and 'strongly agree' with all the items in the Controllability Scale. The means for the items are very close and in the range of 4.56 to 4.91. This finding indicates that teachers almost equally agree with all the items in the subscale.

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Table 4
Responses to Controllability Scale items (expressed as % of the total sample)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
23	0	1	7	37	44	10	4.56
24	0	2	6	34	40	17	4.65
25	1	1	1	24	48	25	4.91
26	0	3	11	31	32	22	4.60

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for the Self-Efficacy Scale of the A-TCPFA. Items in this subscale refer to teachers' capabilities and skills in performing formative assessment and the necessary training and materials that are required for formative assessment. Items in this category include "I have received sufficient training to implement Formative Assessment", "I can design appropriate assessment tasks for Formative Assessment", and "I have enough time to implement Formative Assessment". The numbers in Table 5 show the percent of endorsement for each response option. As Table 5 shows, the majority of the teachers 'slightly agree' and 'agree' with all the items in the Self-Efficacy Scale. The means for the items are very close and in the range of 4.50 to 4.72. This finding indicates that teachers almost equally agree with all the items in the subscale.

Table 5
Responses to Self-Efficacy Scale items (expressed as % of the total sample)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
27	0	2	9	34	46	9	4.51
28	1	0	4	37	39	17	4.66
29	1	1	9	33	37	18	4.60
30	0	2	9	32	35	21	4.65
31	0	3	16	25	37	17	4.50
32	0	5	6	23	43	22	4.72

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics for the Intention Scale of the A-TCPFA. Items in this subscale refer to teachers' willingness in performing formative assessment and including it in their teaching. Items in this category include "I am willing to try to implement Formative Assessment", "I am willing to integrate Formative Assessment into my teaching", and "I am willing to design appropriate assessment tasks for Formative Assessment". The numbers in Table 6 show the percent of endorsement for each response option. As Table 6 shows, the majority of

the teachers 'slightly agree', 'agree' and 'strongly agree' with all the items in the Intention Scale. The means for the items are very close and in the range of 4.56 to 4.80.

Table 6
Responses to Intention Scale items (expressed as % of the total sample)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
33	1	3	1	28	51	15	4.72
34	0	2	7	31	42	17	4.66
35	0	4	12	26	31	25	4.56
36	0	2	12	30	29	26	4.66
37	2	1	4	27	39	26	4.80
38	0	3	6	30	32	28	4.77

Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics for the Behavior Scale of the A-TCPFA. Items in this subscale refer to teachers' frequency of performing formative assessment in their teaching in the six months prior to filling in the questionnaire. There are only two items under this subscale: "In the past six months, how often have you implemented Formative Assessment?" and "In the past six months, please estimate how frequent you have implemented Formative Assessment in your teaching?" The numbers in Table 7 show the percent of endorsement for each response option. The means for the items are close and in the range of 3.39 to 3.81. The two items ask the same thing in different words. In Item 39, teachers are supposed to answer more specifically indicating whether they employed FA *Every day*, *Almost every day*, *Most days*, *A number of days but less than half*, *Some days*, or *Never* in the past six months prior to answering the questionnaire. In Item 40, the same question is asked but teachers are asked to indicate their frequency of using FA using adverbs of *Very frequent*, *Frequent*, *Sometimes*, *Seldom*, *Rarely*, *Never*. However, in the Behavior Scale, the categories had different descriptions. Since the items in the scale asked about teachers frequency of using FA the descriptors were defined as: *Everyday*, *Almost Every Day*, *Most Days*, *A Number of Days but Less than Half*, *Some Days*, and *Never*. This finding indicates that teachers implement formative assessment at least a number of days in their teaching.

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Table 7
Responses to Behavior Scale items (expressed as % of the total sample)

	Everyday	Almost everyday	Most days	A number of days, but less than half	Some days	Never	Mean
39	9	8	15	33	29	5	3.81
40	14	14	22	22	23	4	3.39

4.2 Inferential statistics

Male and female teachers were compared in terms of their attitudes towards formative assessment. As Table 8 shows, in the overall scale, and in the subscales female teachers have more positive attitudes towards formative assessment. Independent samples t-tests were run to compare the means of male and female teachers on the subscale of the Arabic version of Teachers' Conceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment Questionnaire and the overall scale. All the mean differences were significant (p<.01) except for the Affective Attitude Scale. Female teachers had more positive attitudes towards FA and reported to employ it more often than male teachers.

Table 8
Subscale means with respect to gender

	Gender	N	Mean
Affective	Male	43	31.93
	Female	59	33.11
Instrumental	Male	43	44.88
	Female	59	48.52
Subjective	Male	43	22.53
	Female	59	24.89
Control.	Male	43	17.53
	Female	59	19.62
Self-Efficacy	Male	43	25.97
	Female	59	28.89
Intention	Male	43	26.34
	Female	59	29.55
Behavior	Male	42	7.92
	Female	59	6.69
Total	Male	42	176.83
	Female	59	191.32

Table 9 shows the coefficients of correlation between the subscales of the questionnaire. As is evident from the table, all the subscales except the Behavior Subscale correlate highly with each other. There was a negative correlation of r= -.19 between age and the overall A-TCPFA score. Although the correlation is not statistically significant, it shows an interesting pattern. Younger teachers have a more positive attitude towards formative assessment.

A one-way analysis of variance comparing the means of teachers working in primary schools (M=192.11, SD=22.10), high schools (M=178.09, SD=3.65), universities (M=183.87, SD=13), and private institutes (M=185.68, SD=15.69) on the overall scale showed no significant difference among them F (3, 97) =1.85, p=.14. This indicates that (although primary school teachers have a higher mean) teachers of different types of institutions do not differ in their attitudes and intentions towards formative assessment significantly.

Table 9
Correlations between the subscales of the A-TCPFA

	Affect.	Inst.	Subj.	Control.	Self-Effc.	Intent.	Behav.
Affect.	.73	.58**	.50**	.44**	.35**	.56**	.11
Inst.		.84	.63**	.61**	.50**	.69**	.20*
Subj.			.81	.80**	.69**	.69**	.05
Control.				.83	.70**	.77**	.08
Self-Effc.					082	.59**	.16
Intent.						.81	.17
Behav.							.77

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5. Discussion

This study aimed at disclosing Iraqi teachers' attitudes, intentions, and practices regarding formative assessment. A total of 102 Iraqi teachers filled in the Arabic version of Teachers' Conceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment Questionnaire (A-TCPFA). Descriptive analysis of the data revealed that the majority of Iraqi teachers at different levels and institutions from primary school to university have positive attitudes towards FA and use it in their practice. Analysis of the seven subscales of the questionnaire provided different pieces of information regarding various aspects of FA among Iraqi teachers.

Teachers' responses to the items in the Affective Attitude Scale showed that the majority of the teachers 'slightly agree' and 'agree' with all the items in this scale. The means of the individual items indicates that all items are almost equally liked by the teachers. In other words, the majority of Iraqi teachers like formative assessment. The highest mean was for Item 3:

"Formative Assessment is interesting" and the lowest mean was for Item 6: "Formative Assessment facilitates a better learning atmosphere". This means that while teachers agree that FA is interesting they are less sure if it is valuable in teaching.

Descriptive statistics for the Instrumental Attitude Scale showed that the majority of Iraqi teachers believe that formative assessment is a useful procedure for measuring students' learning and is helpful in their education. The highest mean was for Item 16: "Formative Assessment can improve the quality of teaching and learning" and the lowest mean was for Item 13: "Formative Assessment helps students to understand their strengths and weaknesses through feedback from teachers".

Analysis of the Subjective Norm Scale revealed that the majority of Iraqi teachers believe that there is some pressure from outside on them to perform formative assessment. The highest pressure is from the principals of schools and officials of the Education Bureau and the least pressure is from students' parents.

Controllability Scale showed that the majority of Iraqi teachers believe that they have control over their formative assessment practices and enjoy their freedom in selecting their time, frequency, and methods of formative assessment. The highest mean was for Item 25: "I can decide whether or not to implement Formative Assessment" and the lowest mean was for Item 23: "I can decide the frequency of implementing Formative Assessment". This means that teachers are free in choosing to use formative assessment or not but once they choose to use it they become somewhat obliged to perform it at some intervals.

Self-Efficacy Scale showed that the majority of Iraqi teachers believe that they have the required skills and materials for conducting formative assessment. The highest mean was for Item 32: "I have sufficient skills to implement Formative Assessment" and the lowest mean was for Item 31: "I have sufficient supporting materials (e.g., handbook, DVD) to implement Formative Assessment". This means that most teachers believe they can perform formative assessment but they are somewhat hampered by the lack of resources. Item 31 "I have sufficient supporting materials (e.g., handbook, DVD) to implement Formative Assessment" received some noticeable "Slightly disagree" (16%) responses. This indicates that the lack of supporting materials to conduct formative assessment might be an issue for Iraqi teachers.

Analysis of the Intention Scale indicated that teachers almost equally agree with all the items in the subscale. In other words, the majority of Iraqi teachers are willing to perform formative assessment. The highest mean was for Item 37: "I am willing to make effort to implement Formative Assessment" and the lowest mean was for Item 35: "I am willing to design appropriate assessment tasks for Formative Assessment". This means that most teachers are willing to perform formative assessment but some of them do not want to make new materials and tasks for FA. Items 35 and 36 received 12% "Slightly disagree" responses. These two items are "I am willing to design appropriate assessment tasks for Formative Assessment" and "I am willing to adjust the assessment methods to meet the requirements of Formative Assessment". This indicates that 12% of the

teachers are rather unwilling to design relevant tasks and adjust their old assessment methods for formative assessment.

Descriptive statistics for Behaviour Scale revealed that the majority of teachers indicated that they used formative assessment "a number of days but less than half" and "some days". A noticeable percentage of teachers also stated that they used it "most days". This indicates that 12% of the teachers, in practice, do use formative assessment in their teaching to a relatively large extent.

Parametric statistics showed that female teachers have more positive attitudes towards formative assessment. They had higher means on the overall scale and on the subscales. All the mean differences were statistically significant except for the Behavior Scale. This indicates that while female teachers like formative assessment more than male teachers and believe they have the necessary skills to implement it their frequency of using FA is not much different from male teachers. Comparison of teachers by their institution types showed no significant differences between teachers of different institutes in their attitudes towards FA. And finally, a negative non-significant small correlation (r=-.19) was found between age and overall A-TCPFA scores. This finding shows that younger teachers are slightly more willing to use FA in their teaching.

Findings showed that teachers with higher affective attitudes tend to have higher instrumental attitudes, higher subjective norms, higher perceived controllability, higher self-efficacy, and higher intentions and willingness to perform formative assessment. However, all these subscales have small correlations with the Behavior Scale. In other words, those with more positive attitudes, affect, controllability, etc. do not tend to employ formative assessment in their teaching. The correlations between the Behavior Scale and other scales of the questionnaire are small and non-significant (except for the Instrumental Scale). That is, those teachers who believe that formative assessment has some educational benefits for the learners are more inclined to use it. This is in line with Yan and Cheng (2015) who also found very small correlations between the Behavioral Scale and the other scales of the TCPFA (from .07 to .23). In other words, affective attitude, subjective norm, controllability, self-efficacy, and intention do not predict the actual use of formative assessment among teachers.

Teachers' intentions to conduct FA were most strongly associated with controllability (r=0.77) and instrumental attitude (r=0.69) and subjective norm (r=0.69). This is in contrast to Yan and Cheng (2015) who found a weaker correlation between subjective norm and intention (r=0.41). This also in line with Armitage and Conner's (2001) who found that attitudes were the strongest predictor of intentions followed by perceived behavioral control and subjective norm. This study contradicts their research in that the correlation between subjective norm (social pressure or important others' opinions) and intention is strong. It means that Iraqi teachers' intentions to conduct formative assessment are associated more with external factors than internal factors.

This study differs from Armitage and Conner's (2001) report in that controllability showed a stronger correlate of intention than instrumental attitude. This finding is different from Jan and Cheng (2015) and Yan (2014) who found that self-efficacy had a stronger predicting power on

teachers' intentions to conduct FA. Dixon and Haigh (2009) also observed that teachers with higher self-efficacy were more willing to try new initiatives in their assessments. It would appear that when considering assessment practices, teachers regard their own capacities, i.e., whether they have the necessary skills, as the first concern. Teachers are more likely to conduct the assessment practices when and if they feel confident with that particular assessment approach.

Examination of the item means and percentages for the Affective Attitude Scale showed that a relatively high percentage of respondents like formative assessment and enjoy conducting it. The descriptive statistics for the Instrumental Attitude Scale showed that the majority of the respondents believe that formative assessment is a valuable educational tool which benefits the learners. Results also showed that teachers are to some extent under pressure from the educational authorities and school principals to perform formative assessment. Analysis of the Controllability Scale items showed that Iraqi teachers have control over the method and frequency of conducting formative assessment in their classes. Descriptive statistics for the Self-Efficacy Scale showed that Iraqi teachers think they have the necessary skills and training to conduct formative assessment. Analysis of Intention Scale items showed that many teachers are willing to perform formative assessment. Analysis of the responses to the Behavior Scale showed that many Iraqi teachers use formative assessment at least a number of days in their teaching.

Further analysis of the data with parametric statistics showed that female teachers generally have more positive attitudes towards formative assessment compared to their male colleagues. correlational analysis showed a small negative correlation between age and attitudes regarding formative assessment which indicates that older teachers have slightly less positive attitudes towards formative assessment. One-way analysis of variance showed although primary school teachers are more inclined to like and use formative assessment there is not a statistically significant difference among teachers of primary schools, high school, university, and private institutes. Correlational analysis showed that while the first six subscales of the A- TCPFAQ correlate highly with each other, they have small correlations with the Behavior Scale. That is, attitudes, fondness for formative assessment, controllability, etc. do not necessarily predict the application of formative assessment among teaching.

This study contributed to our understanding of Iraqi EFL teachers' attitudes, intentions, and practices regarding formative assessment. The study showed that instrumental attitude was the only significant correlate of teachers' formative assessment practices and the other factors including affective attitudes, subjective norm, controllability, self-efficacy, and intention have very small and non-significant correlations with formative assessment practices. Furthermore, the study showed that although the majority of Iraqi teachers have positive attitudes concerning formative assessment and like it, they do not apply it very often in their EFL classes.

It seems that external and contextual factors should be considered in investigating teachers' formative assessment practices. More empirical research in this direction is needed (Yan & Cheng, 2015). Female teachers had more positive attitudes and reported to use formative assessment more than male teachers. However, there was no significant difference between teachers of different

levels (primary school, high school, university, and private institutes) in using formative assessment although primary school teachers reported slightly higher levels of attitude and practice.

The findings of this study have important implications for the professional development of teachers in Iraq. Changing assessment cultures in the classroom among teachers is very demanding and requires the investment of a huge amount of resources. Even if the resources are given nothing will change if teachers do not change their conceptions of assessment. Findings of this study revealed that among the six first subscales of the questionnaire only the Instrumental Attitudes Scale is a good predictor of actual formative assessment use among Iraqi teachers and the other subscales do not contribute much to the prediction of formative assessment applications. Therefore, it seems that convincing teachers that formative assessment is a useful tool in prompting learning and improving achievement is the most convenient way to encourage teachers to apply formative assessment. The next best predictors were intention and self-efficacy. That is, willingness to use formative assessment and the necessary training and education for performing it are other determinants of formative assessment use.

If teachers know that formative assessment can help them diagnose students' learning difficulties, they can use the assessment outcomes to redesign teaching to improve students learning and they will be more willing to utilize formative assessment in their teaching process. Likewise, self-efficacy should be enhanced by equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills. Professional training programs should be enriched by knowledge and skills about formative assessment.

The findings showed that although teachers have positive attitudes and like formative assessment, they do not apply it widely. Only 9% of the teachers reported using it ‘everyday’ and 8% reported to use it ‘almost every day’. The majority of the teachers (62%) reported that they use formative assessment ‘a number of days’ and ‘somedays’. Other researchers have also reported such a pattern among teachers (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ofsted's, 2008; Tan & Towndrow, 2009; Yan & Cheng, 2015). Yan and Cheng (2015) posed the question of why teachers’ positive attitudes to formative assessment have not affected their classroom practice? Their explanation for this phenomenon is:

> Teachers probably still regard formative assessment as an added component, which needs extra time and resource, rather than an integrated part of regular instruction. A suggestion for teacher training might be generated from this study: to change teachers' beliefs on the relationship between formative assessment and regular instruction. Teacher training should strive to foster such a change in teachers 'minds, as well as to equip them with the necessary skills so that teachers are willing and capable to treat formative assessment as an integrated part of regular instruction rather than an added component that competes with other components for teaching time (p. 134).

In order to popularize formative assessment in schools and among ELT teachers, teachers should be convinced, based on evidence from research, of the positive impact of formative assessment and its role in enhancing learning, and then it should be included in teacher education programs. Furthermore, through teacher training programs teachers must become aware of the link between formative and summative assessment. Usually, teachers consider them as two distinct modes of assessment while information from one mode can inform the other. Skills are using both modes of assessment in combination towards the same purpose should be the focus of teacher training programs (Yan & Cheng, 2015).

5.1 Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of this research and any interpretation and generalization should be done with caution. First, the conclusions and the figures obtained from this study are based on only 102 teachers who filled in the questionnaire on Google Docs. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to all Iraqi EFL teachers especially the more traditional ones who do not use the internet and social media. Second, teachers' formative assessment practices and attitudes were examined using self-report data, and some sort of faking and social desirability answering might be involved. Future studies should focus on collecting objective measures of teachers' practices and attitudes that are free from the response biases associated with self-report measures. Specifically, qualitative research and mixed-method studies are should be done to better understand Iraqi teachers' attitudes towards FA. Besides, larger populations of teachers from all regions of the country and with different levels of familiarity with using the internet and social media should be selected for investigation.

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Appendix A

Dear Colleague:
The following questionnaire is designed to examine your attitudes about formative assessment. Please read each statement carefully and specify to what extent you agree with them. Your answers are confidential. Thanks for your help in advance.
Age: ..... Gender: Female ☐ Male ☐
Experience: ……..years
Place of teaching: Primary school ☐ High school☐ Private institute☐ University ☐

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I like Formative Assessment. ارغب تقيم مستمر						
2	Formative Assessment is an enjoyable process. التقييم التكويني هو عملية ممتعة.						
3	Formative Assessment is interesting. التقييم التكويني مثير للاهتمام.						
4	Formative Assessment makes my teaching easier. التقييم التكويني يجعل التدريس أسهل.						
5	Formative Assessment encourages students to help each other. يشجع التقييم التكويني الطلاب على مساعدة بعضهم البعض.						
6	Formative Assessment facilitates a better learning atmosphere. يسهل التقييم التكويني بيئة تعليمية أفضل.						
7	Formative Assessment is worthy of my effort. التقييم التكويني يستحق جهدي						
8	Formative Assessment can raise students' interest in learning. يمكن أن يثير التقييم التكويني اهتمام الطلاب بالتعلم.						
9	Formative Assessment can offer an accurate appraisal of students' performance. يمكن أن يقدم التقييم التكويني تقييمًا دقيقًا لأداء الطلاب.						
10	Formative Assessment can integrate learning and teaching with assessment. التقييم التكويني يمكن أن يدمج التعلموالتدريس مع التقييم.						

11	Formative Assessment encourages students to work harder. التقييم التكويني يشجع الطلاب علىاعمل بجد اكثر.						
12	Formative Assessment can offer a fair appraisal of students' performance. يمكن أن يقدم التقييم التكويني تقييماً عادلاً لأداء الطلاب.						
13	Formative Assessment helps students to understand their strengths and weaknesses through feedback from teachers. يساعد التقييم التكويني الطلاب على فهم نقاط القوة والضعف لديهم من خلال ملاحظات المعلمين.						
14	Formative Assessment can encourage autonomous learning of students. يمكن أن يشجع التقييم التكويني التعلم المستقل للطلاب.						
15	Formative Assessment can improve student' confidence in learning. التقييم التكويني يمكن أن يحسن الطالبالثقة في التعلم.						
16	Formative Assessment can improve the quality of teaching and learning. يمكن أن يؤدي التقييم التكويني إلى تحسين جودة التعليم والتعلم.						
17	Formative Assessment can improve teaching efficiency. التقييم التكويني يمكن أن يحسن كفاءة التدريس.						
As far as I know, the following stakeholders believe that Formative Assessment should be implemented. على حد علمي ، يعتقد أصحاب المصلحة التاليون أنه يجب تنفيذ التقييم التكويني.							
18	Officials of the Education Bureau مسؤولو مكتب التعليم						
19	The principal of my school مدير مدرستي						
20	Parents of my students أولياء أمور طلابي						
21	My students طلابي						
22	My colleagues زملائي						
23	I can decide the frequency of implementing Formative Assessment. يمكنني أن أقرر تكرار تنفيذ التقييم التكويني.						
24	I can decide the timing of implementing Formative Assessment. يمكنني تحديد توقيت تنفيذ التقييم التكويني.						

25	I can decide whether or not to implement Formative Assessment يمكنني أن أقرر ما إذا كنت سأنفذ التقييم التكويني أم لا						
26	I can decide the method of the implementation of Formative Assessment. يمكنني أن أقرر طريقة تنفيذ التقييم التكويني.						
27	I can integrate Formative Assessment into the teaching and learning process. يمكنني دمج التقييم التكويني في عملية التعليم والتعلم.						
28	I have received sufficient training to implement Formative Assessment. لقد تلقيت التدريب الكافي لتنفيذهاالتقييم التكويني.						
29	I can design appropriate assessment tasks for Formative Assessment يمكنني تصميم مهام التقييم المناسبة للتقييم التكويني						
30	I have enough time to implement Formative Assessment. لدي ما يكفي من الوقت لتنفيذ التكوينيتقدير.						
31	I have sufficient supporting materials (e.g., handbook, DVD) to implement Formative Assessment. لديّ مواد داعمة كافية (على سبيل المثال ، كتيب ، DVDلتنفيذFormative تقدير.						
32	I have sufficient skills to implement Formative Assessment. لدي مهارات كافية لتنفيذ التكوينيتقدير.						
33	I am willing to try to implement Formative Assessment. أنا على استعداد لمحاولة تطبيق التقييم التكويني.						
34	I am willing to integrate Formative Assessment into my teaching. أنا على استعداد لدمج التقييم التكوينيفي تدريسي.						
35	I am willing to design appropriate assessment tasks for Formative Assessment. أنا على استعداد لتصميم التقييم المناسبمهام التقييم التكويني.						
36	I am willing to adjust the assessment methods to meet the requirements of Formative Assessment.						

	أنا على استعداد لضبط طرق التقييملتلبية متطلبات التكوينيةتقدير.						
37	I am willing to make effort to implement Formative Assessment. أنا على استعداد لبذل جهد لتطبيق التقييم التكويني.						
38	I am willing to encourage students to participate in Formative Assessment. أنا على استعداد لتشجيع الطلاب علىالمشاركة في التقييم التكويني.						
39	In the past six months, how often have you implemented Formative assessment? في الأشهر الستة الماضية، كم مرة قمت بتنفيذ التقييم المستمر؟	1- Everyday 2 - Almost everyday 3- Most days 4- A number of days, but less than half 5- Some days 6- Never					
40	In the past six months, please estimate how frequent you have implemented Formative Assessment in your teaching? في الأشهر الستة الماضية، يرجى تقدير عدد المرات التي قمت فيها بتنفيذ التقييم المستمر في تعليمك؟	1- Everyday 2 - Almost everyday 3- Most days 4- A number of days, but less than half 5- Some days 6- Never					