The Impression of Formative Assessment in the Immediate EFL Learning Improvement: Investigation of Pre-service Teachers' Percipience in English for Teachers Course

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Abstract

Formative assessment has been often encouraged recently as a pivot component in the methodology of evaluation but the student's views of how this affects the improvement of language learning in some countries are disregarded in a way. Therefore, the following study investigates the experiences of students (pre-service teachers) in formative assessment and the tools used for its implementation. Student assessment is determined following the learning outcomes that answer the questions of what students are supposed to know at the end of the course. Therefore, through various activities and tasks that receive answers to these questions, the teacher evaluates the knowledge and skills of the students in the English language course. The study aims to display the impact of formative assessment in ameliorating learning and to figure out the assessment tools used to assess the students. The study analyzed students' perceptions and their approach to formative assessment utilization. The Formative Assessment appears as a dignified way to raise the quality of learning, and as a result, the students achieve their goal to pass the exam successfully and get high grades. To acquaint their perspectives, 85 students as study respondents took part in the research in which both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The quantitative research data from the questionnaire were analyzed through the SPSS platform, while the qualitative research data extracted from the focus group are presented through descriptive analysis, in the form of quotations. The findings of the questionnaires evinced the students' views on formative assessment and further, data from focus group discussions validated the reasonableness of what the students perceived in the questionnaire. Implications recommended that in addition to the tiresome work of continuously preparing during the teaching, EFL teachers can meet the individual needs of the students depending on the differences they have among themselves.

Keywords: assessment tools; class activities; EFL learning; formative assessment; teaching methodology

1. Introduction

Teachers, teacher educators, and researchers often discuss what happens in classrooms around the world without inviting students to take part in these discussions (Bloemert et al., 2019).

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To avoid such limitations, this study refers exclusively to the student's perceptions of the importance of formative assessment in improving EFL learning. The best way for each teacher to achieve her/his goal in professional development is to find the English language level proficiency of each learner through diagnostic testing and try to adapt to their individual needs. Whatever enables the evidence of this, be it summative assessment, formative assessment, diagnostic testing, traditional teaching methods mixed with modern ones, and many others, teachers should try to find and put them into implementation during the teaching process.

English Foreign Language (EFL) is either a compulsory or an elective course in all academic study programs in the departments of the University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova (UFAGJ), but also in all institutions of higher education in the Republic of Kosovo. The prominence of EFL is reputed the same in almost all non-English speaking countries, as we often find it depicted as an academic language, an international language and a language of professional development, and even more. As such, it is scrutinized by educators and education policy-makers. "The upward trend in communication between non-native speakers of English from different cultural backgrounds and the growing interest in local and global considerations has shifted attention to the investigation of English as an international language" (Tajeddin et al., 2019, p. 128). However, learning and teaching EFL requires special attention. The ascendancy of this is the goodwill the students show to acquire the target language. Learning English motivates students to further educational and professional advancement. As Candan and Inal (2020) claim, around the world, we witness a dramatic increase in the number of people who speak English as a foreign language, and it is not surprising that this rapid increase, over the past centuries, has changed the importance given to language teaching in countries (p.119). The study focuses on the impact of formative assessment in improving the learning of the English language and what are the tools used in this assessment. Attempts to achieve this goal will lead to proving positive results that would serve every English foreign language teacher. In addition to the positivity of this form of assessment in general, it especially gives priority to students who learn English as a foreign language in the classroom, since the possibility to use English outside the classroom is limited.

Based on the study of Kültür and Kutlu (2021), formative assessment practices were found to be beneficial in terms of contributing to learning processes and encouraging students to express themselves in the classroom (p.155). English language learning is based on the learning of four skills such as reading and writing, speaking, and listening. These skills are brought together and connected to achieve the ability to communicate. Moreover, each skill requires dedication to implementing different activities in the classroom and outside of it. Therefore, at the beginning of the semester, the teacher plans and designs the syllabus including teaching methods and evaluation methodology to reach the learning outcomes.

1.1. Formative Assessment to Differentiate Instructions

When EFL teachers start to work in a different culture, whether in their own country or abroad, they mostly face students with different understanding levels and need to adapt approaches accordingly (Üney & Dikilitaş, 2022, p.20). Moreover, the study conveyed by Akcan (2016) found that teachers' concerns are primarily related to classroom management, implementation of the

communicative approach in classrooms, unmotivated students, and students with learning disabilities (p.62). According to DeLuca and Lam (2014), diversity is primarily understood as differences in student abilities, culture and race, and English proficiency. Learning styles, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, and body image are understood as considerations of other students' characteristics, as well (p.3). "Diversifying assessment usually involves educators changing a more familiar assessment to a different approach" (O'Neill & Padden, 2022, p.399).

1.2. Syllabus of the Course English Language for Teachers

The *English Language for Teachers* course is designed for students who are about to begin or have recently completed an initial teacher training course. It suggests a way of looking at all teaching and learning that can help teachers decide how to put together teaching sequences. The course of English language for teachers, among others also foresees the evaluation methodology in the syllabus. Assessment tools such as portfolios, rubrics, and written reports are those that contain a continuous assessment of activities that are monitored by the teacher, such as class activities, homework, presentations, seminars, discussions in groups, answering questions, writing tasks, midterms, etc. that are compatible with learning outcomes. Indeed, the learning outcomes initiate the assessment methods and help the teacher to be constantly aware of the student's achievements or setbacks. The assessment helps students to extract the maximum benefit from their periods of formal learning, involving both structured and unstructured processes for gathering evidence and making judgments about students' competence and performance (Masuku et al., 2021). English Language for Teachers is a compulsory course in the third year of the primary program in the education department at UFAGJ. The course has five credits and the student loading time for a semester that lasts 15 weeks is 111 study hours. The literature used in the course is Jeremy Harmer's book entitled How to teach English and the additional material necessary to exercise the appropriate activities for formative assessment application.

According to the Statute of UFAGJ, applicants are not allowed to attend part-time studies. On the other hand, institutional legal regulations do not foresee any punishment or suspension for students who do not follow the lectures regularly. The only thing that the students consider they face is the direct submission/participation in the final exam, where the teachers are not at all flexible about the assessment methods. "There is still very little evidence of how washback from the test format affects learning and teaching activities in foreign language learning" (Sundrarajun & Kiely, 2010, p.101). That is, the teacher designs the written exam including questions from all the lectures, and also the verbal evaluation based on the answers that the students gave in the written test. This way of evaluation seems to be very difficult for students to pass. From all this that was emphasized, we conclude that formative assessment is very important for a successful result in EFL learning.

1.3. Activities of Formative Assessment in the EFL Learning Class

Based on the learning outcomes of what the student should achieve at the end of the semester, in the syllabus of the course English Language for Teachers, the teacher plans classroom activities, homework, midterm tests, presentations, discussions, written tasks, speaking

discussions, dialogues, and quizzes. For each activity, the teacher takes notes and gives continuous feedback to the student to summarize the final success with a final grade. To realize all this, students must be regular in lectures and follow the educational process step by step. One of the statements of the study by Akpur (2021) about students' participation is that, as they practice and participate in activities more, they will more likely get much more feedback from their teachers and the more in-depth they learn, the more masterfully they can cope with complex and ambiguous situations (p. 148). Thus, classroom participation is a very important factor in yielding positive learning outcomes for students and further developing their abilities (Ghalley & Rai, 2019). According to Mutlu (2021), the purpose of assessment is not only to understand what students know about any particular subject and traditional assessment methods cannot fulfill the assessment task goals necessary to meet 21st-century expectations (p.61).

Learning in the classroom in small groups, in large groups, in pairs or individual work has its advantages, as long as the teacher manages, monitors, and evaluates the work in groups accurately. Burke (2011) states that group work does not have to yield "group hate" and as long as the instructor is properly prepared to introduce and facilitate group involvement and participation, group work can produce very positive and lasting results (p.93). According to Ismail et al. (2022), providing frequent feedback during the learning process is regarded as an efficient technique for motivating and encouraging students to learn a language more successfully.

2. Literature Review

As Ghorbanpour et al. (2021) claim, assessment and evaluation are essential components of teaching and learning in English language arts (p.36). Ghazizadeh and Motallebzadeh (2017) think that because the summative assessment has not proved to be effective in discovering the learners' areas of weaknesses, formative assessment is increasingly becoming the focus of concentration on educational assessment and in the professional improvement of teachers (p.179). As an effective learning-improvement strategy and a useful teaching-aid, formative assessment (FA) has recently received growing attention in the EFL classroom (Zeng & Huang, 2021, p.1). "The needs for assessment and evaluation process can be used as the basis for developing curricula and classroom practice that are responsive to learners' needs" (Meidasari, 2015, p.224). According to Riswanto et al. (2022), teachers' applied methodology and teaching style preferences, directly and indirectly, affect how they design and administer their assessments in the classroom. The teaching methodology and also methods of evaluation are planned in the syllabus at the beginning of each semester. As Bloemert et al. (2019), understanding students' perspectives on the foreign language (FL) curriculum could be considered a vital step in curriculum design and lesson planning (p.371). Next, Yan et al. (2021) confirm that planned assessment opportunities are built in the classroom and this allows teachers to reflect on gathering the evidence.

Evaluation and assessment are two same issues whose approaches work differently. Assessment includes the variety of activities that are carried out during the period of the educational process and that require feedback, while the evaluation is the final product of this process. As Crossouard (2011) mentions, "formative assessment is intended to benefit and support

learning and is often distinguished from summative assessment, which involves reporting on learning, whether in classroom and school contexts or wider national accreditation frameworks" (p.59). According to Mejdasari (2015), even though the terms assessment and evaluation are often used interchangeably, in actuality they are two parts of the same process (p. 224). The assessment from which the students receive feedback over some time helps to find the deficiencies and difficulties they may have. As Widiastuti and Saukah (2017) emphasize, "assessment can be used to reinforce the student's learning achievement and to motivate the students to learn and develop their understanding of the learning material further and more deeply" (p.51).

The topic of the effect of assessment is still relevant in this rapidly changing, as many experts argue that the mechanism of language teaching and learning has a causal connection with the evaluation (Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021). Teacher education is, therefore, necessary to enhance teachers' assessment literacy and to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills about assessment for learning (AFL), (Lee & Coniam, 2013, p.45). The study conducted by Prastikawati et al. (2022) concludes that during teaching practicum, pre-service EFL teachers encounter interesting and expressive changes in their conceptions of assessment during teaching practicum. Pre-service EFL teachers appraise assessments for the purpose of improvement and accountability (p.623). The study conducted by Lutovac and Flores (2022) revealed four major conceptions of assessments, assessment is about feedback and reflection, assessment needs to be personalized and demonstrate students' learning, assessment needs to take into account students' invested effort and assessment fails to measure students' success or failure. Together, feedback and reflection form a loop that supports ongoing learning and development. Feedback provides information on performance, which leads to reflection and self-awareness, which then guides future learning and improvement. This cycle of feedback, reflection, and learning is a key component of effective assessment and helps to promote deep and meaningful learning. Assessment needs to be personalized and demonstrate students' learning because every student has unique learning needs and styles, and a one-size-fits-all approach to assessment is unlikely to be effective for all learners. When assessment takes into account students' invested effort, it sends a message that hard work and persistence are valued and rewarded. This can help to create a positive learning environment that encourages students to put in the necessary effort to succeed. Assessment that focuses solely on a limited set of skills, knowledge, or abilities can provide an incomplete picture of student performance and progress. This can result in an assessment that fails to accurately measure student success or failure.

2.1. Formative Assessment Effects on EFL Learning Improvement

Because the formative assessment is meant to be the method used to monitor student learning and at the same time provide continuous and immediate feedback to students, it can be concluded as a great help for students to improve, in this study EFL, learning and its skills. First, it helps students to assess the progress they are making toward the goals they are focused on, leading to increased motivation. Second, it helps students identify their needs to strengthen or improve based on the ongoing feedback they get. Further, formative assessment promotes active

learning by encouraging students to take an active role during the activities and tasks implemented. It also supports differentiated instruction since makes teachers prepare for the diverse learning needs of their learners which meets every student's needs. At the same time, give teachers an opportunity to understand the learning needs of learners. According to all these points, formative assessment plays a significant role in EFL learning improvement by using different activities and ongoing feedback.

According to Monib et al. (2020), in the education field, innovations have been witnessed in procedures to assess students' performance where summative assessment is gradually changing to formative assessment-alternative assessment (p.7). "Formative assessment is simply a phenomenon that occurs in the moment-to-moment interaction between teachers and students" (Filsecker & Kerres, 2012). "Formative assessment plays an important role in the improvement of student learning and achievement" (Jawad, 2020, p.146). Xiao and Yang (2019) argue that the formative assessment activities students experienced in the classroom and the feedback they received helped them develop deeper understanding and self-regulation skills in learning English (p.40). Students continuously understand their weaknesses and strengths over time and with feedback from teachers.

With the implementation of formative assessment activities, the students' individual preferences are matched. According to Cauley and McMillan (2009), formative assessment is actually far more, and using that particular technique allows teachers to understand how valuable formative assessment is to student learning. "Increasing formative assessment and providing detailed feedback can enhance the quality of the student's assignments" (Ghanbari & Nowroozi, 2021). The various activities of formative assessment are of the implicit understanding, considering the flexibility that the teacher may use. Then, the complexity of the tasks in the formative assessment depends on the skills and abilities that the students have shown during the continuous feedback. Torres (2019) believes that language teachers may feel overwhelmed when searching for different types of techniques to use in the classroom due to the complexity of the assessment. According to Ismail et al. (2020), by assessing students during the lesson, the teachers can aid them to improve their skills and examine if they are progressing or not (p.20). "The micro-analyses of the classroom process reveal interactional features of discussions and presentations which reflect what is already well-established in policy and practice: oral presentations are an effective way of assessing speaking skills" (Sundrarajun & Kiely, 2010, p.113). Results from the study conducted by Mutlu (2021), both experimental groups that used paper-based homework or online homework were found to be more successful than the control group that used no homework at all (p.61).

> Teachers need to clarify learning goals and task criteria not only by making clear the purpose of and criteria for judgment of any individual task but also by making clear the relationship of particular tasks to the overall management of the classroom—i.e. making the 'social rules' of the classroom as transparent as possible, in addition to the purpose and criteria of individual tasks (Torrance & Pryor, 2001, p.628).

As a result, the findings of (Riswanto et al., 2022) study show that high levels of the core of self-assessment (CSA) enable EFL university learners to be more active in all class activities. In such a situation, university learners feel more responsible for their tasks and assessments. Eventually, the biggest effect of formative assessment is the reduction of test anxiety.

2.2.Previous Research on Formative Assessment

Many researchers have investigated formative assessment impact, its role, and the tools of formative assessment. Table 1 summarizes some definitions from different researchers, which show the importance of continuous feedback in language improvement. Moreover, the studies conducted by researchers listed in Table 1 show that through formative assessment, students understand their continuous results from which they draw conclusions about where they should focus more in order to achieve the right success. Above all, for the importance of formative assessment in student motivation.

Table 1

Formative Assessment Statements

Authors	Definitions
Higgins (2010)	"Formative assessment is defined as 'work that a student carries out during a course for which they get feedback to improve their learning, whether marked or not" (p.5).
Black & Wiliam (1998)	"……. improvement in classroom assessment will make a strong contribution to the improvement of learning" (p.7).
Cauley & McMillan (2009)	"Formative assessment is a process through which assessment-elicited evidence of student learning is gathered and instruction is modified in response to feedback" (p.1).
Evans et al. (2014)	"The outcome of any formative assessment should be one that ultimately helps improve student learning through familiarising students with the levels of learning required, informing them about gaps in their learning and providing feedback to guide the direction of learning" (p. 296).
Bhagat & Spector (2017)	"Formative assessment is feedback provided to the learner during an instructional sequence or learning activity that is aimed at helping the learner succeed" (p. 312).
Sanaeifar & Nafari (2018)	"Focusing on positive role of formative and especially dynamic assessment on reduction of test anxiety can help teachers and learners to

	overcome this troublesome phenomenon in their learning language journey" (p.539).
Ozan & Kincal (2018)	"When the teacher evaluated formative assessment practices as a whole, the teacher also noted that formative assessment was a useful strategy for increasing students' learning and achievement" (p.110).
Dmitrenko et al. (2021)	"The implementation of the high-level formative assessment demonstrates a significant difference in students' motivation and a positive interrelationship between having high-level formative assessment procedure and motivated learners" (p.48).
Moyo et al. (2022)	"…….. FA (Formative Assessment) helped to improve students' motivation in learning, whereas the other teachers considered FA as strategies that provide an opportunity for learning improvement" (p.12).

Language teaching is a multi-dimensional process in which a number of important components are in interaction to build linguistic knowledge (Sarıgöz & Fişne, 2018). Anderson and Palm (2017) think that studies on how to support teachers in their implementation of formative assessment as a regular and inherent part of their common teaching practice, and its impact on long-term learning, are necessary (p.93). Moreover, timely and informative feedback is essential for formative assessment to be effective although the amount and timing of feedback should be appropriate for a particular learner (Bhagat & Spector, 2017, p.312). The findings of Zeng and Huang's (2021) study show that "teachers lack deep formative assessment-related knowledge" (2021, p.10). Teachers are also very busy because of the daily workload and because of the pressure to improve student's grades. On the other hand, by using formative assessment, teachers understand that students are continuously engaged and that this engagement has a positive impact on improving student learning.

2.3.Research Question

The focus of the study was to understand the views and impressions of the respondents on the effect of formative assessment in improving EFL learning. However, in order to understand the role of formative assessments in this approach, assessment tools have been elaborated throughout the study. Therefore, to extract the right findings, the study developed the following research questions:

What is the effect of formative assessment on EFL learning improvement?

Which formative assessment tools and activities are used in the English class?

3. Methodology

The study uses mixed research methods. The quantitative method is used to extract the results from the data of the questionnaire. The qualitative method brings out the descriptive analysis of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, but also a focus group discussion with the respondents. Creswell (2009) emphasizes that the study may begin with a quantitative method in which a theory or concept is tested followed by a qualitative method involving detailed exploration with few cases or individuals (p.31). The qualitative method brings out the descriptive analysis of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, but also a focus group discussion with the respondents. In qualitative research, Mohajan (2018) claims that we need more emphasis on explaining why people think and behave in certain ways (p.39).

3.1. Instrument and Implementation Procedure

Initially, a revision of the syllabus of the course English language for teachers was carried out. The evaluation methodology that aimed to realize the knowledge and skills of the students that they would achieve according to the learning outcomes, was a guide to design the questionnaire. To construct the questions of the questionnaire, the assessment tools provided by the syllabus were used, such as classroom activities, midterms, homework, discussions for speaking skills, writing tasks and presentations, not leaving aside participation and attendance in lectures and exercises and also the information of the syllabi. Questionnaire was piloted by distributing it to 9 students in order to test its reliability and it was understood that the questions measure what the study intends to measure are valid. The questionnaire begins with general questions, such as gender, the passing threshold and the evaluation method with which the students were assessed in the course of English language for teachers. There are 12 closed questions and 2 open-ended questions. Respondents could choose among five options on the Likert scale on questions 1, 2, and 12 from totally agree-agree-neither agree or disagree- disagree to totally disagree, and from 3rd to 11th questions they could choose among 6 options on the Likert scale, from always-usually-often-sometimes-rarely to never. The same questions were used for focus group discussions. As mentioned above, among the first questions, the students had to underline whether they were evaluated through formative assessment or summative assessment. Those who underlined the option of summative assessment had to overcome all the questions and answer the last open-ended question. The results of the closed questions in the questionnaire were analyzed through SPSS, while the 1st and 2nd open-ended questions and the opinions of the students in the focus group were presented in the form of quotes on descriptive analysis. The purpose of the focus group discussion was to elicit the opinions of the respondents, specifically to give the reasonableness of the results obtained from the questionnaire.

3.2. Sample

There were 85 respondents who answered the questionnaire. The respondents are students who have completed their third year of studies in the primary program of the Department of Education in UFAGJ. One of the first questions was for respondents to confirm the evaluation method in this course, formative or summative assessment. Out of 85 in total, 14 respondents declared that they had been evaluated through summative assessment, which meant that they had

submitted to the final exam because they had not participated in the lectures because they were working. Therefore, they had to comment directly on the last open-ended question of the questionnaire, skipping all other questions. Anyway, not all of them had given opinions, so in the findings section you will get the comments of only 7 of them. Accordingly, the questionnaire was totally completed by 71 respondents who confirmed they followed the course properly and accumulated the necessary points, thus were evaluated through formative assessment. To carry out the focus group, 12 of these students volunteered to take part in the discussion. The idea was to understand in more detail the reason for the answers of the respondents in the questionnaire. Moreover, in addition to the activities as assessment tools the teacher had defined in the syllabus, many others were highlighted during the focus group discussion, such as dialogues, classroom teaching practice, quizzes, crosswords, questions and answers, etc.

Respondents showed how they are evaluated for the tasks they do and how this continuous feedback helps them understand how much they have achieved, what are their shortcomings they need to work on to improve, and also how they manage to increase their English language level proficiency by being engaged continuously. The findings of the focus group are presented in quoted form, in the original way what was said by the respondents, whose request to be anonymous was respected. Therefore, findings appear with the initials DE1 to DE12, referring to the department of education and the number of 12 respondents to the focus group. The general data of the course are described in table 2, which shows the importance of the subject in the primary education program. In previous years, the students studied both English language I and II, which courses provided them with knowledge about grammar methods and the four skills of the English language: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Table 2 shows the ECTS of the course which stands for The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. It is used as a tool in European Higher Education Area to make courses more transparent and help students to move between countries in Europe and in case they want to study for a period abroad, the ECTS will be recognized.

Table 2
Data of the Course Description

Department	Education	
Study program	Primary	
Course title	English Language for Teachers	
Course description	Mandatory	5 ECTS
Teaching hours	15 weeks; 2 Lectures + 1 Exercise per week	

4. Results and Discussion

The data below are not included in the statistical package of SPSS, so they are presented in Figure 1. These are some data from the first questions of the questionnaire, which the respondents were asked to answer by marking them directly without having to choose the options.
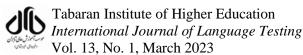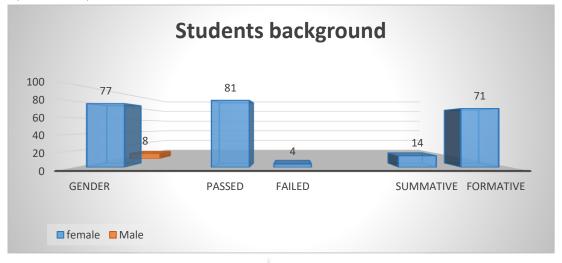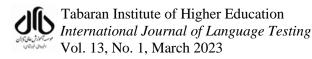
Figure 1.
Gender, Pass/Fail, Assessment Method

Out of the total number of 85 respondents, only 9.4% were men and 90.6% were women. This is a phenomenon in our country since education programs such as teaching are popular for girls. Without counting the commitments that the profession requires, the vast majority perceive it as a part-time job because they only compute teaching hours. Since 14 out of 85 of the respondents confirmed they have been evaluated through summative assessments, there were 71 questionnaires analyzed through SPSS statistical package. At the time when the research was conducted, 4 out of 14 claimed that they had not passed the exam yet, because they have not attended the lectures and exercises of the course and they failed the final exam. From the given data, it can be seen that the students who were evaluated throughout the semester, accumulating points from activities in and out of class had successfully passed the exam. The results of the 12 questions of the questionnaire are presented two by two based on the same attitudes they have. In Table 3, the students indicate the willingness of the teachers to inform them in advance about the syllabus, respectively about the assessment methodology, and what the students will be able to know at the end of the semester.

Table 3
Syllabus Introduction

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	71	1.85	.94
Q2	71	3.88	.94
Valid N	71		

According to Table 3, about 87% of the respondents agree they were informed in time about the evaluation methodology planned in the syllabus. However, the answers to the next

question are very contradictory, since about 82% disagree and totally disagree about the notification of learning outcomes. We expect the students who were part of the focus group discussions to tell us the reason for these results.

Table 4

Participation in Course Lectures and Exercises

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q3	71	1.98	.81
Q4	71	4.70	.81
Valid N	71		

The data (Table 4) show that the teacher highly values participation in lectures since all the respondents chose the option always, usually, or often. The respondents have affirmed otherwise about the participation in the exercises. The data are distributed to options sometimes, rarely, or never. Here the doubt arises as to why the teacher does not value participation in exercises as in lectures.

Table 5

Activities and Class Assignments

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q5	71	2.02	.95
Q6	71	1.92	.97
Valid N	71		

Based on the data in Table 5, classroom activities seem to be of particular importance. Class assignments are among the main tools of formative assessment because the students claim that the teacher usually evaluates the activities in the classroom.

Table 6

Assessment of Homework

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q7	71	2.26	1.10
Q8	71	2.42	1.14
Valid N	71		

According to Table 6, students are systematically engaged with homework and the teacher usually evaluates it as a tool assessment, so students show readiness and are aware of the points that will be added to them from homework. The findings in Table 7 show the responsibility students have for presentations. In addition to the way of working on the presentation, the students are also evaluated during this activity for their speaking skills, as in Table 7 you can see data of the 2nd question.

Table 7
Presentation and Speaking Skills

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q9	71	1.50	.69
Q10	71	2.05	.90
Valid N	71		

Table 8
Midterms and Writing Skills

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q11	71	1.87	.79
Q12	71	1.83	.86
Valid N	71		

Writing activities and semi-semester tests/midterms are also activities that are continuously done in class or even as homework as presented in Table 8. Around 85% agree or totally agree that with the tests during the semester, they collect the maximum points to pass the final exam and also get high grades.

4.1. The Findings of the Open-ended Question

Q13: What other activities not mentioned in the questions above in the questionnaire are included in the classroom or outside of it during the semester that affects your final evaluation?
Not all students expressed their opinions on this question. In many cases, students feel burdened by completing questionnaires, so it is expected that students do not give much importance and do not show readiness to write. Nevertheless, the following are the original opinions of the respondents who gave their opinions on this question.

Table 9

Findings of the 1st open-ended Question of Students Evaluated by Formative Assessment

Q13: What other activities not mentioned in the questions above in the questionnaire are included in the classroom or outside of it during the semester that affects your final evaluation?
Compiling the lesson plan is an activity that we do in class. Students are given the opportunity to continue it at home, but it is a task that we must have in our portfolio.
We often write essays. Topics are sometimes our choices and sometimes assigned by the teacher. We are evaluated for academic writing, coherence of writing, grammar, vocabulary, etc.
We sometimes do post-reading activities, such as summarizing, drawing conclusions, and reflecting on what was learned. The teacher does this activity for reading comprehension and evaluates student understanding of information from the text.
We often repeat the lesson in role play. The evaluation is done by giving the message of the character who plays and not of the individual who plays the role. We usually play the role of the teacher, performing certain elements, such as physical appearance in class and movement, voice and approach to a student with special abilities, group work assignment, activity through a certain method or strategy, general presentation behavior, etc.
Quizzes are one of the activities we like the most. Students express enthusiasm during this activity as we often compete with each other.
Crosswords are also part of the activities we are evaluated from. Crosswords push us to learn a sentence and vice versa. Complex and compound words are often part of learning from crosswords, and we also gain general knowledge.
Videos – for communication purposes. Videos are frequently shown in the classroom. The main goal is to practice pronunciation, either to get a message out of the story, or some specific information.
Reading skills for comprehension check. Questions and answers are frequent activities that we do in class. This activity is interactive between the students, without the teacher being involved.
I like when the teacher assigns characters and scenarios for us to act out, so we practice and perform our role-plays in front of the class. Both teacher and classmates provide feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar usage. I like when role-plays are related to real-life situations.
Quiz is the most interesting activity in EFL classes. It helps to identify our strengths and weaknesses and also allows the teacher to meet our needs. I think quizzes can build our confidence which can be useful in future assessments and exams.
PowerPoint presentations encourage our creativity and critical thinking because we organize information, identify key points and present them in a clear and concise manner. It is a great opportunity for us to use English and it is a common form of communication in classroom settings.

There were only 7 questionnaires in which are found the respondents' opinions, presented in the form of quotes as shown in Table 10. In general, they refer to their challenge to be evaluated directly through the final exam, which is stressful for them since they have not followed the lectures and activities during them.

Table 10

The Findings of the Open-ended Question: Respondents Evaluated with Summative Assessments

Q14: You have confirmed you were evaluated for the final exam through summative assessment. Briefly explain how the teacher assesses you for the final grade!
"Because it was impossible for me to attend the lectures during the semester because of my full-time job, the only option was to take the final exam. Even though my classmates shared the necessary material and literature, I had not accumulated points during the activities and the preparation for the exam was very difficult".
"I tried to give my best in the exam since I had not accumulated any points from the tasks and activities in the class. It was very disappointing when the teacher first saw me and had no knowledge of me".
"Even though I have not been regular in the lectures because I live in another city, I have all my assignments and I have compiled the portfolio that the teacher evaluated for me, along with the final exam scores".
"The teacher offered us the possibility of seminars and homework, but the classroom activities were a big loss for me. I had lost the most in activities that practiced speaking skills since I have no one to practice English outside of the classroom. Anyway, I passed the exam but with a low grade".
"Teachers are not at all flexible with those who do not participate in the lectures. It seems clear that they have neither respect nor empathy for us".
"In general, with grammar tasks and a written test, without experiencing the interesting activities of the class. The final exam was the only assessment tool that the teacher evaluated my knowledge in the English language for teachers".
"At the beginning, 10% of the grade is calculated from class participation. Also, the semi-semester tests are a great help to give students the opportunity to pass the exam. They punished me and I was evaluated by the final exam, which had about 40 questions".

4.2. The Findings from the Focus Group

Students who also answered the questionnaires in the focus group discussions were 12 students, pre-service teachers. The same questions were elaborated on for the only reason, to understand more deeply the views of the students who gave their answers in the questionnaire about the effect of formative assessment on EFL improvement.

"All teachers deliver the syllabus to us at the very beginning of the semester. In addition to providing us with physical copies of the syllabus in the classroom, teachers also upload the syllabus to the university's online system" DE4.

"Mostly, we pay attention to the literature that we will use and the evaluation methods" DE7.

"The reason the students denied they were informed about the learning outcomes, was that the students themselves did not show interest in knowing what the learning outcomes are in the syllabus" DE10.

"The teacher stated that the lectures are mandatory and that absences lower the points of the final evaluation. However, we were never told the same for participation in exercises, so we don't pay much attention to it" DE11.

"Each activity has its own importance and is evaluated by the teacher. Notes on a daily basis are calculated and are part of our evaluation" DE9.

"Group activities are done after each group member receives a task. The teacher monitors continuously" DE5.

"Homework is also an obligation for us. Through homework, we explore a lot about teaching methodology and also about different education systems in different countries" DE12.

"Presentation is one of the most stressful activities for students. Each is obliged to prepare a PowerPoint presentation. Presenting in front of the class and the teacher is something that at first makes us feel stressed, but it is an extraordinary help for us who pretend to be teachers and will always be lecturing in front of others" DE1.

"The lesson plan is one of the tasks that connect theory and practice. We reinforced this even more during the practical work" DE8.

"There are many activities that motivate us to learn, but the teacher does not take them into account for evaluation. Sometimes it seems to me that during these interesting games, the teacher gets a general opinion of our language skills" DE2.

"Speaking is also a daily activity in the classroom. Commenting on videos, stories, or topics the debate raises makes us fluent in speaking while discussing among ourselves but also enriches our vocabulary. During this activity, we are allowed to help and improve each other" DE6.

"During the semester we play the role of teacher. This is the teacher's request that the students on a voluntary basis play the role of the teacher after making the lesson plan. This activity ends with students' comments and teacher evaluation" DE9.

"The thing we least like are the written tests because they contain many grammar tasks. And precisely for this we are more evaluated" DE1.

"We are often asked to write a statement, using the 10 keywords that the teacher gives us. It is interesting to listen to the creative stories that the students build" DE3.

5. Conclusions

Based on the extent that the needs of students to learn EFL are different, due to many factors, such as economic, social, cultural, or learning abilities, learning styles, motivation, and other factors, the views of respondents positively evaluate the implementation of formative

assessment activities in the EFL class. The present study aimed to understand the effect of formative assessment in EFL learning and investigate assessment tools from the implementation of which activities students achieve success. The respondents emphasized that during the lectures they are assessed based on the individual portfolio of each student, where the teacher collects evidence that shows the student's achievements in the activities that were implemented during the semester. In the designed rubric, the teacher marks certain points based on their performance according to the criteria provided with the learning outcomes. Also, a written report is another tool that the teacher usually uses for comments in presentations and in other speaking skills activities during the semester.

Respondents described their views on the different activities they use in English class. According to them, receiving continuous feedback helps students to understand the strengths but also weaknesses they show during the activities that are implemented in the English language class. According to respondents, this method of assessment helps a lot in learning the English language and improving it, since all the time the students are constantly active in doing different activities and tasks. Likewise, the findings of the study approximate those of Janah et al. (2022) that the utility of assessment showed the functions of assessment drive instruction, learning, and informing students of their progress (p.23). There are many features the teacher has to take into account in order for the students to succeed in EFL learning. Methodology, materials, time exposure, setting conditions, evaluation, assessment, and testing procedures, among others, are some important aspects that may influence student learning, for better or worse (Mosquera & Castillo, 2019, p.195).

The continuous evaluation they get from the teacher through formative assessment, students understand as a necessary approach for learning better since it enables them to figure out their strengths or weaknesses that need improvement. The perceptions of the students in the present study agree with the study of Chandio and Jafferi (2015) that when the learners realize that assessment is not all about scores, but also about learning the process, they will start taking interest in it, which ultimately paves the way for better understanding (p.164). Formative assessment helps in understanding, as noted by Lisyowati et al. (2021), who needs deeper language learning, what is the next language learning target, how the teacher classifies students for language teaching in small groups, and which to be observed more for learning interventions (p.183). Formative assessment consists of a broad approach of activities through which the product achieved by the students is brought out. Classroom observations, quizzes, written and oral assignments, group work and discussions, peer evaluations, and performing tasks such as presentations or projects are some of the activities that are used in formative assessment.

Furthermore, the students of this study affirmed that they are evaluated through the skills of reading, writing, crosswords, compiling the lesson plan, videos, presentations, and many other activities. Apart from the fact that the students are enthusiastic and motivated, through the assessment they receive from the implementation of these activities, the students understand what they need to learn more about. Eventually, formative assessment helps teachers track students' progress and is the best guide for students to achieve their goals.

Recommendations

Since the results of the study show that students prefer formative assessment and their views are positive towards this assessment method, the study can contribute to the recommendation for EFL teachers in many ways. By using formative assessment, EFL teachers and trainers can reflect on their practice and engage in professional development opportunities to enhance their teaching skills as being committed to providing high-quality teaching instruction. Further, the study recommends EFL teachers provide an evidence-based approach according to what can demonstrate the effectiveness of assessment for students. It recommends teachers share among others the contribution the formative assessment gives to EFL learning and teaching as well.

Formative assessments can be designed to match the level of difficulty to the ability of individual students. Therefore, teachers can provide extra support for English language learners during formative assessments. According to the results, the study recommends teachers implement formative assessment, so they should identify clear learning goals and objectives, monitor students through regular check-ins, provide immediate feedback to students, adjust instruction, and encourage student self-assessment.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

I declare no conflicts of interest.

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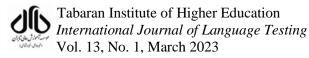
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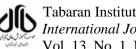
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Appendix
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Dear students,

I kindly ask you to share some of your time and give your thoughts about the assessment method you have experienced in the course: English language for teachers. Your answers will contribute to the present study to investigate the effectiveness of formative assessment in EFL learning. In compliance with the ethical code and the preservation of your identity, we assure you that the questionnaires are anonymous and your privacy will be preserved.

Thank you for your contribution!

Tick **(√)** Gender: Tick **(√)** if you have _____ English language for teachers:

Female_____   Passed _____

Male   _____   Failed   _____

Tick **(√)** the assessment method you have been assessed in the course:

Formative assessment (assessment during the learning/teaching process) -------------
Summative assessment (assessment after the learning/teaching process) -------------

Note: if you have ticked summative assessment, pass all the questions and if possible give your opinion in the last question (14).

Q1: I was in time informed about the evaluation methodology tools.
Totally agree   agree   neither agree nor disagree   disagree   totally disagree

Q2: I was notified in time about the learning outcomes of the course.
Totally agree   agree   neither agree nor disagree   disagree   totally disagree

Q3: Participation in lectures is considered by the teacher.
Always   usually   often   sometimes   rarely   never

Q4: Participation in the course exercises is considered by the teacher.
Always   usually   often   sometimes   rarely   never

Q5: How often the activity in the class is evaluated?
Always   usually   often   sometimes   rarely   never

Q6: The teacher assesses the classroom assignments/tasks.
Always   usually   often   sometimes   rarely   never

Q7: How often are you engaged with homework?
Always   usually   often   sometimes   rarely   never

Q8: The teacher considers the homework for the final evaluation.

Always   usually   often   sometimes   rarely   never

Q9: The teacher evaluates us for presentations related to the course.

Always   usually   often   sometimes   rarely   never

Q10: Does the continuous assessment of speaking skills throughout the semester affect the final evaluation?

Always   usually   often   sometimes   rarely   never

Q11: Are you assessed in writing skills? If No, skip the question. If yes, is it considered on your final grade?

Always   usually   often   sometimes   rarely   never

Q12: Midterms help me pass the exam more easily and get the final grade.

Totally agree   agree   neither agree nor disagree   disagree   totally disagree

Q13: What other activities not mentioned in the questions above in the questionnaire are included in the classroom or outside of it during the semester that affects your final evaluation?

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Q14: You have confirmed you were evaluated for the final exam through summative assessment. Briefly explain how the teacher assesses you for the final grade!

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