



## **TEACHERS' AND LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICE IN ENHANCING LEARNING IN EFL COURSES**

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**Abstract:** Assessment is inevitable in education. Formative assessment plays a crucial role in enhancing students' learning and performance. With the growing understanding of the role of formative assessment, many countries in the world have considered formative assessment as the primary mechanism of assessment reform in education. In Cambodia, a shift in focus to formative assessment as its assessment reform aimed at enhancing students has been noticed. The present study employed a quantitative method to examine teachers' and learners' perceptions of formative assessment practices in enhancing learning in Cambodian EFL courses. The participants of this study were 30 teachers (3 females) and 50 students (22 males). They are teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language. The results revealed that the respondents have a more positive perception of formative assessment. It highlighted a better understanding of formative assessment concepts, purposes, and development strategies. The results also indicated that participants' perceptions about formative assessment enhance learning in EFL courses through various roles of feedback. The results showed that respondents perceived that it is demanded of assessors or teachers to have higher knowledge about formative assessment to assess students in formative ways. Time-consuming was also perceived as a challenge in formative assessment practice. The findings also revealed that participants were more likely to use formative assessment in their EFL courses in the future. Future studies with many participants, mixed method approaches, and cross-disciplinary research in Cambodia should be conducted in either private or public HEIs.

**Keywords:** Formative Assessment Practice, Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions, Enhancing Learning

**Abstrak:** Penilaian merupakan keniscayaan dalam pendidikan. Penilaian formatif memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran dan kinerja siswa. Dengan berkembangnya pemahaman tentang peran penilaian formatif, banyak negara di dunia telah menganggap penilaian formatif sebagai mekanisme utama reformasi penilaian dalam pendidikan. Di Kamboja, pergeseran fokus ke penilaian formatif sebagai reformasi penilaian yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan siswa telah diperhatikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif, bertujuan untuk menguji persepsi guru dan peserta didik tentang praktik penilaian formatif dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran dalam EFL Kamboja. Peserta penelitian ini adalah 30 guru (3 perempuan) dan 50 siswa (22 laki-laki), yang sedang mengajar dan belajar bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa responden memiliki persepsi yang lebih positif terhadap penilaian formatif. Ini menyoroti pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang konsep penilaian formatif, tujuan, dan strategi pengembangan. Hasilnya juga menunjukkan persepsi peserta tentang penilaian formatif meningkatkan pembelajaran dalam EFL melalui berbagai peran umpan balik. Selain itu, menunjukkan bahwa responden merasa bahwa guru dituntut untuk memiliki pengetahuan yang lebih tinggi tentang penilaian formatif untuk menilai siswa secara formatif. Memakan waktu juga dianggap sebagai salah satu tantangan dalam praktik penilaian formatif. Temuan juga mengungkapkan peserta lebih cenderung menggunakan penilaian formatif dalam EFL mereka di masa depan. Studi kedepan dengan peserta yang lebih banyak, pendekatan metode campuran, dan penelitian lintas disiplin harus dilakukan di Kamboja.

**Kata Kunci:** Praktik Penilaian Formatif, Persepsi Guru dan Peserta Didik, Meningkatkan Pembelajaran

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## INTRODUCTION

Assessment, a powerful process for enhancing learning, plays a vital role in education. Language assessment refers to the procedure conducted to gather information about students' knowledge or abilities described and analyzed to make good decisions in the classroom setting. It is a key factor that improves students' learning and determines students' approaches to learning (Nguon, 2013). Generally, assessment in education has two leading roles, which include summative and formative aims. Summative assessment, the most common assessment type used in schools, focuses on students' achievement or learning outputs (Kincal & Ozan, 2018; Mussawy, 2009).

Moreover, the assessment also plays an active role in a formative assessment. It has often been employed in the classroom, which enables teachers to identify learners' learning needs and to assess their learning and development interactively for organizing according to their learning needs. Formative assessment is an assessment for learning and is one of the most powerful ways to improve students' achievement (Wiliam, 2013) and promote learners' success, not merely judging or grading (Stiggins, 2005). Kincal and Ozan (2018: 78) cited "formative assessment as the assessment designed to provide direction for improvement and/or adjustment to a program for individual students or a whole class, that is, quizzes, initial drafts/attempts, homework, and questions during instruction". Therefore, formative assessment is the ongoing assessment that involves obtaining information about learners and serving the goal of assessment, aiming at better meeting students' needs and ensuring their success.

According to Asghar (2012), higher education institutional assessment policy has little emphasis on formative assessment's role in improving student learning. The study of assessment in the HE context has shown that it is a traditional assessment or examination-based assessment that has been largely employed in Cambodian ELT classrooms (Kea et al., 2015; Nguon, 2013; Tao, 2014). Due to the development of assessment in education, there is growing recognition of the limitations of accountability testing of learning and wide acknowledgment and accumulating evidence of the vital role that formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning, can play in helping all students achieve rigorous standards (Herman, 2013).

Many countries in the world, including the United States of America (USA), Austria, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK), Barbados, Canada, Israel, Portugal, Belgium, Hong Kong, Chile, Iran, the Netherlands, and some African countries, have been increasingly interested in the formative perspective of the assessment (Kincal & Ozan, 2018; Tan, 2011). In Southeast Asia, countries such as Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore focus on assessment for learning as the purpose of assessment is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their students. These countries are increasingly giving a higher quality to formative assessment that aims to further improve students' learning by performing assessment activities while instructional processes are being conducted.

### **Research Problem**

Regarding the quality of learning in the EFL program, it would be appropriate to question the assessment practices used. Nguon (2013) noted that assessment supports student learning as it determines the learners' learning approach. Nguon (2013) and Tao (2014) view assessment as one of the major issues in Cambodian higher education due to its examination-based system in which assessment tasks are commonly included in the course content. In addition, students normally prepare for their tests or exams by memorizing and reciting information. These types of assessments are deemed traditional assessments. It is obvious that the employment of such traditional assessment methods, including final exams and tests, shows the predominance of summative over formative purposes of assessment in the Cambodian EFL context, leading to the ignorance of the process of students' learning. Cambodia, one of the countries in Southeast Asia, is considering assessment reform that focuses on formative assessment or assessment for learning that aims to improve student learning further. However, the challenge for academics is integrating more formative assessment practice into the overloaded curricula. Regarding the best approach that promotes students' learning, some are concerned about whether the considerations of formative assessment have helped the situation or have instead worsened it (Asghar, 2012).

A few researchers have conducted studies regarding assessment practices in the Cambodian ELT context. Kapukaya (2013) investigated students' preferences or tendencies towards either summative or formative assessment. Nguon (2013) undertook an investigation of the use of in-class assessment, and Tao (2014) conducted a study on the impact of assessment knowledge and assessment beliefs on in-class assessment practices and correlating the constructs that form assessment literacy. It is undoubtedly challenging for teachers to understand and apply formative assessment in teaching practice in an environment where theory and conceptual understanding of formative assessment are contested. Kreng (2013) also pointed out that the attempt to understand the quality of student learning and the factors impacting students' academic achievement is almost nonexistent. In a higher education setting that actively involves educators reconsidering assessment practice (Asghar, 2012), this study examines the teachers' and learners' perceptions of formative assessment practice in enhancing learning.

### **The Significance of the Study**

This research study is of significance to the relevant stakeholders in the field of English education in general. First, the results of this research study will reveal the teachers' and learners' perceptions of the impact of formative assessment on learning that can be useful for EFL teachers in terms of assessment. Secondly, the research findings will be able to help the top management of the EFL program concerning curriculum development. Finally, the results of this research will also be good learning for academics for further study in formative assessment practice.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptions of Formative Assessment**

The concept of formative assessment, first introduced in 1971 by Bloom, Hastings, and Maddaus, suggests that assessment need not be used solely to make summative evaluations of student performance. Teachers should provide students with feedback and corrections to remediate student work (CERI, 2008). The concept that assessment enhances learning is not new. However, a growing body of evidence suggests something new that should be paid attention to. It is called formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning. It is one of the most powerful ways of improving student achievement (Wiliam, 2013: 15). The term "formative assessment" is defined by Sadler (1989) as the provision of feedback to improve learning. Wiliam (2013) stresses that formative ought not to apply to the assessment, which mainly gives students' scores, but should refer to the formative function that the information obtained by the assessment actually serves.

According to Black and Wiliam (2009), practice in a classroom is formative, meaning that the evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers to make decisions about the next steps in instruction. With the information collected, teachers can make better decisions than those who do not have the evidence. Black and Wiliam (2009) also notice several features in the definition of formative assessment. The first feature is the use of the term "instruction," meaning any activities that enable learning. The second feature is the stress on "decision," which refers to the focus on the resulting action required by the evidence that is used to make teaching adjustments to improve learning. The third feature emphasizes the agents of the assessment that involve making learning decisions, including teachers, learners, and peers. The last feature is the requirement that decisions be either better or better grounded in evidence. McDowell et al. (2007) consider all conceptual definitions of formative assessment as a means to improve student learning.

### **Purposes of Formative Assessment**

Teachers use formative assessment to know where the students are right now, where they need to be, and how to get there (Wiliam, 2013). Formative assessment is employed to adapt teaching and learning to meet student needs (Boston, 2002). The practitioners use formative assessment to promote lifelong learning goals, including higher levels of student achievement, more significant equity of student outcomes and improved learning skills. "Formative assessment includes course-work where the student receives feedback which helps him/her to improve their learning" (Brown & Knight, 2005: 15).

According to Dirksen (2011), formative assessment ensures that learners understand and master the key basic skills and competencies they need to succeed in the course and move on to the next level. It has been used to describe assessments that are used during learning to promote learner success rather than simply to judge or grade (Stiggins, 2005). An assessment is formative to the extent that information from the assessment is used during the instructional segment in which the assessment occurred to

adjust instruction with the intent of better meeting the needs of the students assessed (Popham, 2006, as cited in Gallagher & Worth, 2008). Greenstein (2010) also provides three principles of formative assessment, which are: to evaluate students' knowledge, comprehension, and application; to evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher's instructional design; and to focus on whether the set goals of a course are achieved (as cited in Kea et al., 2015). In short, the only ultimate purpose of formative assessment, summed up from all of the other purposes, is to promote learning. As stated by McDowell et al. (2007), a key purpose of assessment for learning is to foster student development.

### **Development Strategies of Formative Assessment**

The early central idea of formative assessment included five major types of activities, including sharing success criteria with learners, classroom questioning, comment-only marking, peer- and self-assessment, and formative use of summative tests (Black & Wiliam, 2009). For a better theoretical basis for formative assessment, three key processes in learning and teaching are suggested, which include "where the learner is right now; where the learner needs to be; and how to get there" (Black & Wiliam, 2009: 7; Wiliam, 2013: 16). The roles of teachers, learners, and peers, in which each role should be independent, are considered crucial in the key process of learning (Wiliam, 2013). In this regard, Wiliam (2013) introduces five key strategies for formative assessment. These strategies include clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions; engineering effective discussions, activities, and tasks that elicit evidence of learning; feedback that moves to learn forward; activating students as learning resources for one another, and activating students as owners of their learning.

In addition to the five strategies introduced by Wiliam (2013), there are six key principles for supporting assessment for learning. These principles include emphasizing authenticity and complexity in the content and methods of assessment rather than the reproduction of knowledge and reductive measurement; employing high-stakes summative assessment rigorously but not as the main driver for learning; providing learners more opportunities to engage in the kinds of tasks that develop and demonstrate their learning that can build their confidence and capabilities before they are summatively assessed; being rich in feedback derived from formal mechanisms, for example, tutor comments on assignments, student self-review logs; being rich in informal feedback such as peer review of draft writing; collaborative project work, which provides students with a continuous flow of feedback on how they are doing; and developing students' abilities to direct their own learning, evaluate their own progress and achievements, and support the learning of others (McDowell et al., 2007).

### **Roles of Feedback in Formative Assessment**

Feedback is the most powerful influence on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperly, 2007). In this regard, Brown (2005) also noted that feedback is crucial and should be at the heart of the learning process. Based on Sadler's fundamental formative assessment model, feedback is crucial in assisting learning. It is the essential nature of formative assessment that feedback happens, both formal and informal, to students during

the course so that they have opportunities to improve (Sadler, 1989; Brown et al., 1997; McDowell et al., 2007; Wiliam, 2013). Sadler (1989) conceived of formative assessment as a feedback loop to close the gap between the learner's current status and desired goals. The information itself is not feedback but only becomes feedback when it is actively used to alter the gap. By the same token, Hattie and Timperly (2007) claim that the primary purpose of feedback is to reduce discrepancies between current understandings and performance and a goal. Sadler (1989) indicates that feedback provides for two primary audiences: the teacher and the student.

Teachers use feedback to make programmatic decisions with respect to readiness, diagnosis, and remediation. Students use it to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performances so that aspects associated with success or high quality can be recognized and reinforced, and unsatisfactory aspects modified or improved. Sadler (1989) provides three frameworks that the learner has to use, such as (a) to possess a concept of the standard (or goal, or reference level), (b) to compare the actual (or current) level of performance with the standard, and (c) to engage in an appropriate action which leads to some closure of the gap. Hattie and Timperly (2007) considered the effective framework feedback because it answers three major questions asked by a teacher or student: What I am doing (What are the goals?), How am I going? (What progress is the learner making toward the goal?) and Where to next? (What activities need to be done to make better progress?). Asghar (2012: 14) claims that "formative assessment was felt to have the power to enlighten students to new ways of learning". Asghar (2012), however, was concerned about inequality in the amount and quality of feedback provided to students. Despite this, respondents recognized that students in formative assessment tended to have more productive results. Asghar (2012) suggested that teachers should engage students in dialogic feedback focusing on how to move forward. This study also highlighted the need for effective feedback used to support student learning.

### **Perceptions of Assessment Practice**

Gossmann (2008) conducted a study to examine the perceptions of academic staff and students about the purpose of assessment and their actual practices using a survey and interview with 114 students and 30 academic staff in South Africa. The findings indicated that academic staff and students perceived the primary purpose of assessment as developmental or formative (as cited in Nguon, 2013). A research study was conducted in Malaysian higher education to explore assessment preferences and practices. This study also used a survey and interviews as data collection tools. 69 students and 47 teachers participated in this research. The results showed a greater preference for alternative formative assessments in comparison to traditional summative assessments (Fook and Sidhu, 2011, as cited in Nguon, 2013). As cited in Nguon (2013), the results of a study comparing the perceptions of first-year students, course coordinators, and academic leaders about assessment understudied by Goos et al. (2011) indicated that first-year students are identified as a disadvantaged group due to perceptions of the role of feedback and formative assessment that their secondary school assessment experiences may influence. Kapukaya (2013) conducted a study investigating students' preferences or

tendencies towards either summative or formative assessment using an eleven-point Likert scale questionnaire. One hundred-six freshmen students studying in eight different disciplines at a university in Cambodia participated in this study. The findings of the study show that students prefer formative assessment to summative assessment and find it more beneficial to improve themselves academically.

Asghar (2012) undertook a study investigating perceptions and opinions on formative assessment practice undertaken at a British post-92 university by employing a qualitative approach with nine academics for interviews. In this study, the researcher used a hermeneutic phenomenology approach to gather qualitative data from a group of nine academics teaching in different disciplines who volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews. The researcher identified "three main themes of this study: (1) conceptions of formative assessment; (2) making learning happen through assessment; and (3) the challenge of engaging students" (Asghar, 2012, p. 205). The findings of this study highlighted time constraints and different perspectives on formative assessment practice. In this study, Asghar (2012) found that academics acknowledged the value of formative assessment but suggested that the size of classes and time were challenges. There are some concerns over the assessment culture and understanding of formative assessment. Asghar (2012) suggests that "it is important to review how assessment culture influences how students think and act, and that, by being better informed, academics would understand how using formative assessment strategically can influence student learning positively and holistically" (p. 221).

With these studies in mind, the review identifies that the teachers and learners view the primary purpose of assessment practice as developmental or formative that enhances academic development. Both teachers and learners prefer formative assessment practice to summative practice. Despite this benefit, the review also reveals teachers' perceptions of the challenges of formative assessment practice (Asghar, 2012).

### **Challenges of Formative Assessment Practice**

Despite the advantages of formative assessment in learning enhancement, the practice of this kind of assessment encounters some remarkable challenges. Formative assessment practice requires the teacher or assessor to have higher knowledge and understanding of how students should be assessed in informative ways. Black and Wiliam (2009) reveal that although theorizing formative assessment has the potential to improve practice through a better understanding of the learners' possible responses to feedback, it has shown great surprise at how effective many school classroom teachers have been in the absence of such knowledge. Hunt and Pellegrino (2002) further claim that all teachers must be experts at formative assessment. For example, they must be aware of either the materials that students are expected to understand or the various alternative and problematic ways in which students may fail to understand them. However, it may not be feasible. To obtain this information, a teacher either has to have a great deal of experience evaluating students' reasoning or be aware of research literature. However, research on learning progressions is promising for the lack of development related to responding to information about student learning (Andrade, 2010).

Moreover, the depth of this literature varies greatly across disciplines (Hunt & Pellegrino, 2002). Such a challenge is also addressed by Asghar (2012), that is, for tutors, the recent focus on constructing underpinning theories of formative assessment, which many will be unaware of. According to Hunt and Pellegrino (2002), another challenge in employing formative assessment is that it is time-consuming. There is no point in formative assessment by a teacher if the teacher cannot identify, analyze, and respond to the problems of individual students. To the extent that the logistics of a situation require an instructor to give preset instruction, formative assessment is likely to be of little use unless it can provide an exercise for the individual student, with minimum supervision by the instructor. The results from an investigated study by Asghar (2012) highlighted the constraint of time in making learning happen through assessment and the challenge of engaging students.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

A descriptive design is suitable for the study to examine teachers' and students' perceptions of formative assessment practice in enhancing learning in EFL courses in a Cambodian private HEI. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), descriptive research focuses on providing an accurate description or picture of the status or characteristics of a situation or phenomenon (cited in Nguon, 2013). Similarly, Ogange et al. (2018) also claim that it captures participants' attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions regarding current issues and trends. This design is adopted to identify the current situation of formative assessment practices and to provide a basis for understanding the perceptions of Cambodian EFL teachers and learners about formative assessment practices in enhancing learning.

The researchers used a cross-sectional study because the purpose of the study was descriptive in the form of a survey that aimed to understand teachers' and students' perceptions of formative assessment practice in enhancing learning (Levin, 2006). Finally, in this research study, a survey design was employed. According to Creswell (2014), a survey design provides a plan for a quantitative or numeric description of a population's trends, attitudes, or opinions by studying a population sample. Thus, the quantitative approach in this research study is occupied by a survey questionnaire. According to Nguon (2013), questionnaires can be used in quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research to discover information that includes background and biographical information, knowledge, and behavioral information.

### **Population and Sampling**

The participants of this study were 30 teachers (3 females) and 50 students (22 males) from the School of Foreign Languages, The University of Cambodia. All the participants agreed to take part in the survey. Participants' information is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.



Table 1. Demographic information of teacher participants

Demographics	Values	N	Percentage
Genders	Male	27	90.00
	Female	3	10.00
Ages	18-25	1	3.30
	26-30	6	20.00
	31-40	15	50.00
	41-50	7	23.30
	51 or above	1	3.30
Academic qualification levels	Bachelor's Degree	5	16.70
	Master's Degree	20	66.70
	Doctor/PhD	1	3.30
	Others	4	13.30
Years of teaching	2 to 5 years	4	13.30
	6 to 10 years	13	43.30
	11 years or above	13	43.30
Attending assessment course	Yes	24	80.00
	No	6	20.00

Table 2. Demographic information of student participants

Demographics	Values	N	Percentage
Genders	Male	22	44.00
	Female	28	56.00
Ages	18-25	43	86.00
	26-30	6	12.00
	31-40	1	2.00
Education Levels	Year 1	2	4.00
	Year 2	14	28.00
	Year 3	17	34.00
	Year 4	17	34.00
Attending assessment course	Yes	32	64.00
	No	18	36.00

### Research Instrument

This study used questionnaires as the main data-gathering tool to investigate the two main research questions. Questionnaires were conducted aiming to gain and compare the teachers' and students' perspectives on formative assessment practice in enhancing learning in EFL courses. The questionnaire was adapted from Nguon (2013) and Yan and Cheng (2015) to gather information from teachers and students. The questionnaire items were adapted and constructed based on concepts related to the five main themes

identified from existing pieces of literature. The adaptation was made to meet the purpose of the study and the research question.

In this study, two versions of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire were designed (from 1, "Strongly disagree" to 5, "Strongly agree"). The teacher's version was developed under the five main themes of formative assessment, including an understanding of formative assessment; development strategies of formative assessment; roles of formative assessment in students' learning through the effectiveness of feedback in improving students' learning; challenges in implementing formative assessment in the EFL classroom; and future intention in integrating formative assessment into EFL courses. Another version was for the student respondents. In this version, one of the five main themes of the teacher's version was omitted: challenges in implementing formative assessment in EFL classrooms.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

There were two means in the administration of the survey questionnaire. First, the researchers met the participants directly and delivered the questionnaire. Second, the researchers delivered the questionnaire through an online source. The same questionnaire was created in a Google Form and sent to the participants to fill out the form. The administration stage was conducted for two weeks until the target sample of the respondents was reached.

### **Data Analysis**

As a cross-sectional design was adopted in this study, descriptive analysis was the main method. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze quantitative data obtained from the survey questionnaires. Frequency distributions in SPSS offer a summary of the demographic information and participants' responses that help the researcher understand the data. Quantitative data results from the report were then presented in the following.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Teachers' Perception**

Formative assessment concepts, purposes of formative assessment, formative assessment development strategies, roles of feedback in formative assessment, challenges of integrating formative assessment in the classroom, and future intentions about formative assessment practice are used to understand teachers' perceptions of formative assessment practice. The overall perception of the teachers about formative assessment practice in enhancing learning in EFL courses was an average mean score obtained from the perception questions part of the survey questionnaire completed by the teachers.

### Formative Assessment Concepts

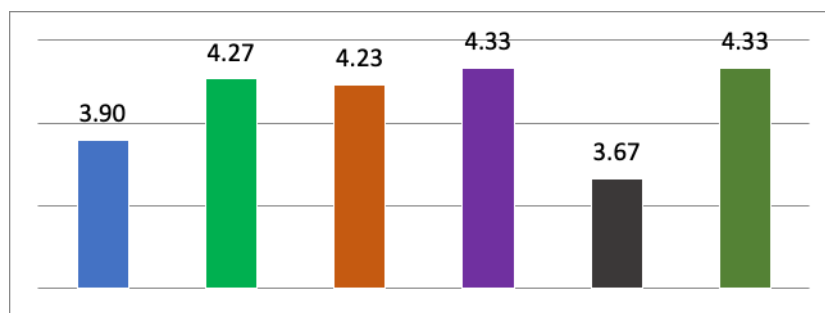


Figure 1. Teachers' responses on concepts of FA

*Note:* Mean score of 1.00-1.80 = Lowest, 1.81-2.60 = Low, 2.61-3.40 = Moderate, 3.41-4.20 = High, and 4.21-5.00 = Highest

As shown in Figure 1, the average mean score of the overall teachers' perceptions ranged from  $M = 3.67$  to  $M = 4.33$ . Of the six items, the teachers rated item 4, FA helps students to understand their strengths and weaknesses through teacher's feedback, and item 6, FA can improve the quality of teaching and learning, with a mean score of 4.33, which is a higher than that of the other four items. The respondents marked item 2 and item 3 higher than  $M = 4.0$ , FA can integrate learning and teaching with assessment ( $M = 4.27$ ), and FA encourages students to work harder ( $M = 4.23$ ). FA is a tool used by teachers and students (item 1). FA, which can encourage students' autonomous learning (item 5), was marked with an average mean of 3.90 and 3.67. These results mean that the teachers have a good understanding of the concepts of formative assessment.

### Purposes of Formative Assessment

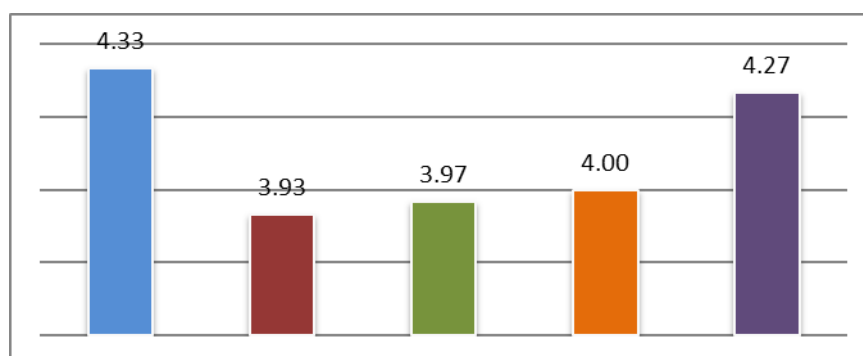


Figure 2. Teachers' responses on purposes of FA

As revealed in Figure 2, the mean score of the teacher's perception of the purposes of formative assessment is between 4.33 and 3.93. The averaged mean score shows a higher level of agreement, responded by participants, with the five items comprising formative assessment purposes. In item 1, FA is used to identify what students have learned from the course, what else they need to learn, and how to achieve the learning goal of the course was marked with the highest average mean score of 4.33, followed by item 5, FA is used to improve learning and promote a high level of student achievement ( $M = 4.27$ ). Items 2, 3, and 4 had an average mean score between  $M = 3.93$  and  $M = 4.0$ . Item 3, FA is used during the instructional segment better to meet students' needs ( $M =$

3.97), and FA is used to motivate student learning ( $M = 4.0$ ). The final mean is  $M = 3.93$ ; item 2, FA, is used to ensure that learners understand and master the key basic skills and competencies they need to be successful in the course. Overall, the respondent teachers indicated that they have better knowledge of formative assessment purposes.

### Formative Assessment Development Strategies

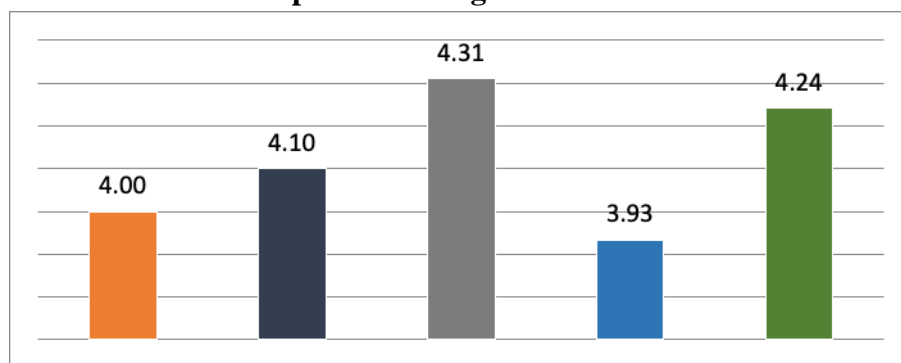


Figure 3. Teachers' responses on development strategies of FA

As revealed in Figure 3, the level of agreement of respondents understood to agree with those items with an average mean score of 3.93, which they perceived that they had activated students as instructional resources for one another. Item 3 shows that providing feedback that moves students forward is one of the important strategies in developing formative assessments marked by the teachers with the highest mean score ( $M = 4.31$ ), followed by item 5, and teachers activate students as the owners of their learning ( $M = 4.24$ ). In item 1, teachers clarify and share learning intentions and criteria for success with my students, and in item 2, teachers establish effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of student understanding were marked ( $M = 4.0$  and  $M = 4.10$  respectively). These results mean that the teachers have their strategies and are also able to design formative assessment practices for their classrooms.

### Roles of Feedback In Formative Assessment

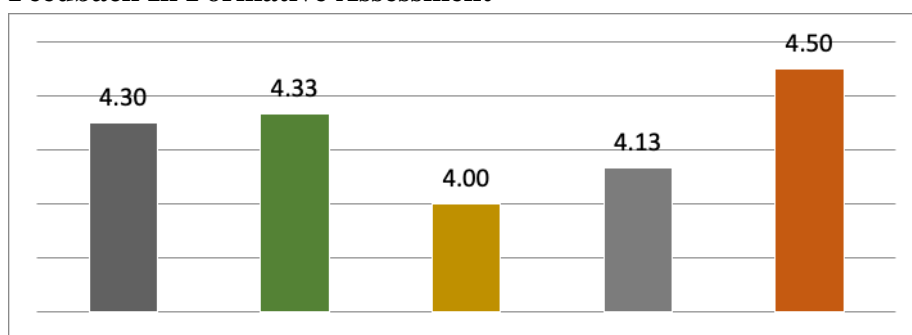


Figure 4. Teachers' responses on roles feedback in FA

As indicated in Figure 4, in item 5, feedback helped students to improve their learning and had the highest mean score ( $M = 4.50$ ). Item 1 and item 2, feedback fosters students' understanding of assessment and allows students to prepare for future assessments, were rated with a similar mean scores of 4.30 and 4.33. In item 4, students used feedback to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performance and responded with a mean score of 4.13. In item 3, feedback can close the gap between the

learner's current status and desired goals, which was perceived with the lowest mean score ( $M = 4.0$ ) among the five important feedback elements. The results show that the participant teachers believe feedback is important in formative assessment practice.

### Challenges in Integrating Formative Assessment in The Classroom

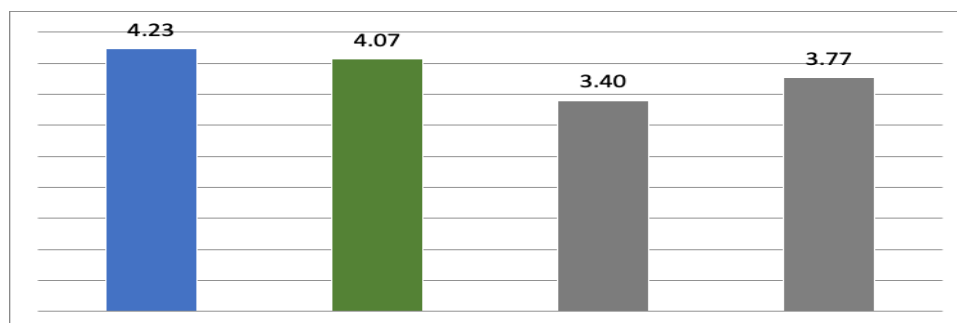


Figure 5. Challenges in integrating FA in the classroom

The graph shows that the teacher's responses to the four main challenges of using formative assessment in the classroom had an average mean score between  $M = 3.40$  and  $M = 4.23$ . It clearly shows that item 1, the knowledge of the assessor or teachers about formative assessment, was the biggest challenge, with the highest mean ( $M = 4.23$ ). A similar agreement of the challenge is item 2, which requires teachers or assessors to understand how to assess learners in formative ways. This item has a mean score of 4.07. Using formative assessment is time-consuming. Item 4 was perceived to have some challenges for the teachers ( $M = 3.77$ ). Noticeably, overall perceptions of the teachers on item 3 that many teachers are unaware of formative assessment theories are more likely neutral, with a mean score of 3.40. Overall, these results mean that the teachers are aware of the challenges in applying formative assessment in their classrooms.

### Future Intentions About Formative Assessment Practice

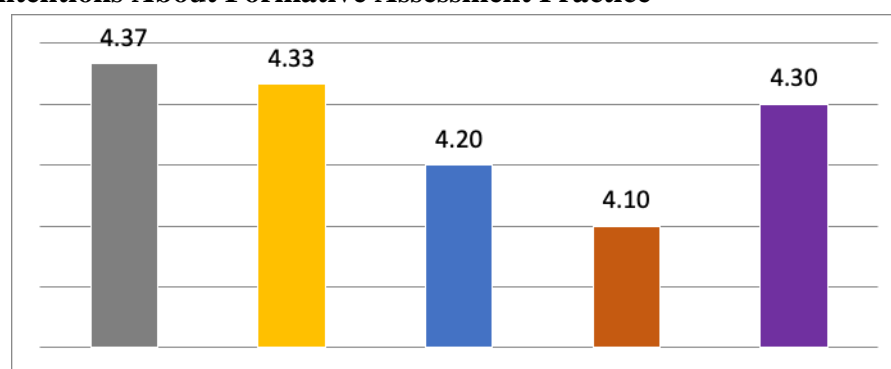


Figure 6. Teachers' responses on future intention about FA practice

Figure 6 indicates the averaged mean score of an overall teacher's perception of their future intention about formative assessment practice in their classroom. The graph indicates that the participants had a higher intention of employing formative assessment in the future, with mean scores between 4.37 and 4.10. It means that teachers are willing to employ formative assessment in their classrooms to help their students learn.

### Formative Assessment Concepts

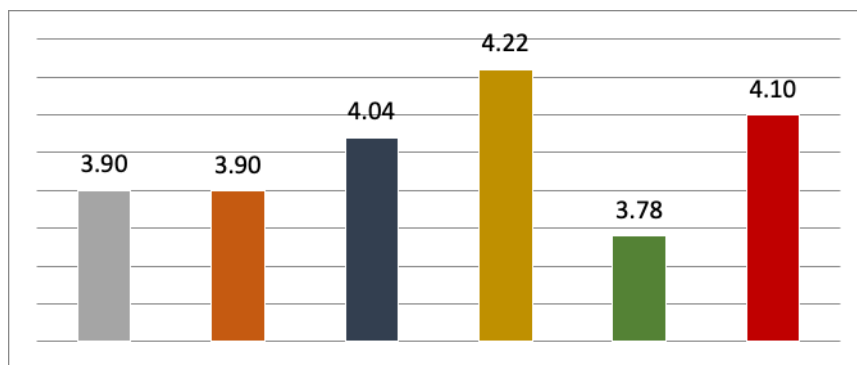


Figure 7. Learners' responses on concepts of FA

As can be seen in Figure 7, clearly displays the average mean score of students' overall perception of the concepts of formative assessment. From the six items of the questionnaire, the respondents were more likely to agree with those concepts as a result shows that average students had marked the concepts with the mean of 3.78 in item 5, which they perceived that FA could encourage the student to take control of their learning. While they revealed their agreement ( $M = 4.22$ ) in item 4 that FA helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses through teachers' feedback. They also showed a similar degree of agreement in item 3 that FA can encourage the student to work harder, and in item 6, FA can improve the quality of learning with a mean score of 4.04 and 4.10. The respondents rated the other two items with the same degree of agreement ( $M = 3.90$ ). In short, these results can mean that the student participants have a good understanding of the formative assessment concepts.

### Purposes of Formative Assessment

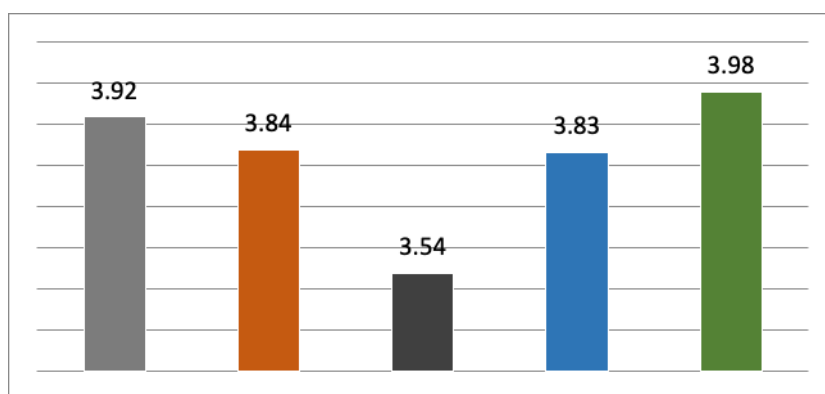


Figure 8. Learners' responses on purposes of FA

As revealed in Figure 8, the average mean score rated by the respondents was between 3.54 and 3.98. This result reveals that students, on average, slightly agreed with the five statements of the questionnaire, which were the purposes of formative assessment. This result means that students highly understand the purposes of formative assessment.

### Development Strategies of Formative Assessment

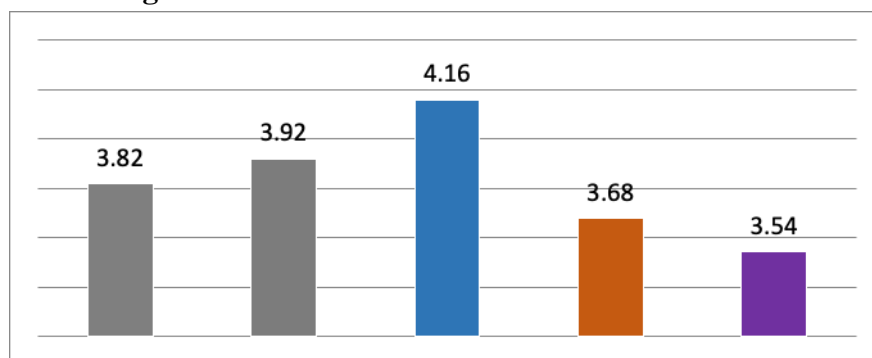


Figure 9. Learners' responses on development strategies of FA

As can be seen in Figure 9, the average participants reported agreeing with item 3, one of the five items, that their teacher provides feedback that makes them keep improving, with the highest mean of 4.10. They were less likely to agree with the other four items and were marked: item 1, teacher clarifies and shares what students need to learn from the course and criteria for success in a course ( $M = 3.82$ ); item 2, the teacher creates effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks to get evidence of my understanding, with  $M = 3.92$ ; item 4, the teacher makes students as learning resources for one another ( $M = 3.68$ ), and with  $M = 3.54$  is the mean score among the five items, teacher helps students to control his/her learning. Overall, the results show that learners are aware of being assessed formative by their teachers.

### Roles of Feedback In Formative Assessment

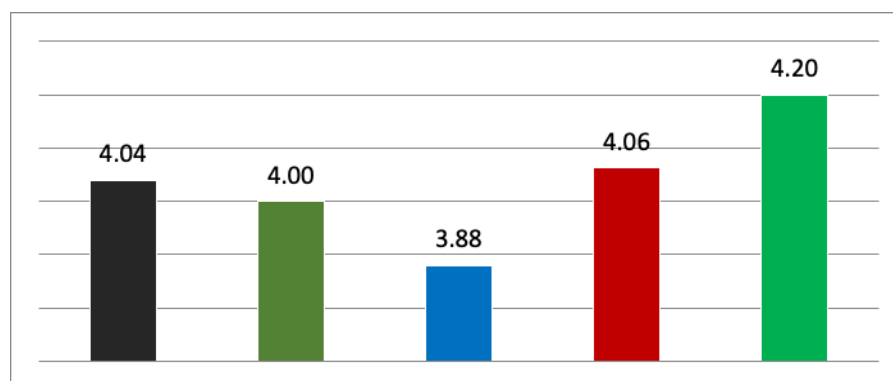


Figure 10. Learners' Responses on Roles of Feedback in FA

As seen in Figure 10, the mean score is between 4.20 and 3.88. The five items show that the average student perceived that feedback plays a very important role in formative assessment and has a higher agreement with four of the five statements. The result shows that the students rated item 5 with a mean of 4.20 that feedback helps improve their learning, followed by a mean of 4.06 in item 4, revealing that the students use the feedback to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performance. Item 1 shows that feedback given by the teacher helps them better understand learning assessment had a mean of 4.04, and they also perceived that feedback given by their teacher helps them prepare for the future assessment ( $M = 4.0$ ). Finally, they seemed to have a slight agreement with item 3 that feedback they get can close the gap between their current

status (where I am now) and desired goals of the course, in which they rated  $M = 3.88$ . These results clearly mean that the respondent learners believe that feedback plays a central role in the formative assessment that helps them learn better.

### Future Intention About Formative Assessment Practice

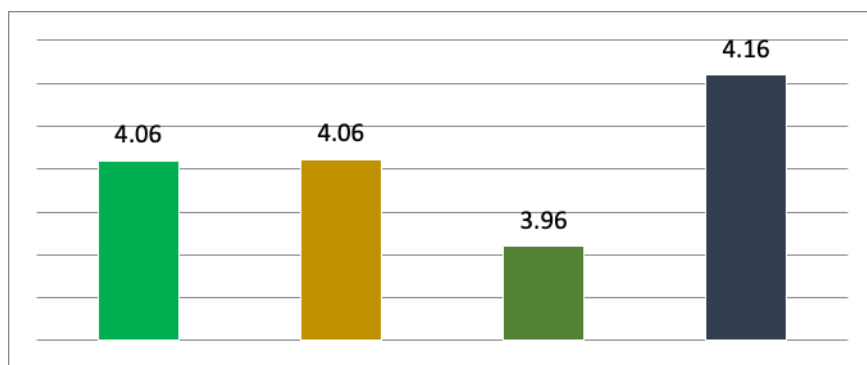


Figure 11. Learners' responses on future intention about FA practice

Figure 11 shows that with the mean score of 4.16 for item 4, the students, on average, showed a higher intention to participate in formative assessment. It is followed by the same level of agreement with the mean of 4.06 in items 1 and 2, and the students want their teachers to implement formative assessment and design appropriate assessment tasks for formative assessment. The respondents marked the mean score of  $M = 3.96$  in item 3. I want my teachers to make an effort to implement the formative assessment. Overall, the data means that the respondents positively react to the future practice of formative assessment in their classroom.

## DISCUSSION

The findings showed that the respondents' opinions on formative evaluation were more favorable. It demonstrated a greater understanding of formative assessment principles, goals, and growth techniques. The findings also showed participants' opinions on how various forms of feedback help formative assessment improve learning in EFL courses. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that respondents believed that to evaluate pupils in formative methods, assessors or teachers must possess a greater level of expertise regarding formative assessment. Another issue with the formative assessment method was that it took much time. According to the findings, the participants were more likely to employ formative evaluation in their EFL classes.

### The Perceptions of Teachers and Learners of Formative Assessment

The findings showed that the primary concept of formative assessment is that it can help learners understand their strengths and weaknesses through teacher feedback. It was perceived by both teachers and students with a higher level of agreement. Sadler (1989) defines formative assessment as providing feedback to improve learning. Formative assessment can improve the quality of teaching and learning and be marked higher as the second concept of formative assessment. According to Wiliam (2013), the concept that formative assessment improves learning is one of the most powerful ways of improving



student achievement. McDowell et al. (2007) provide a conceptual definition of formative assessment as a means to improve student learning.

The results also indicated that the most important purpose of formative assessment was that it was used to identify what students had learned from the course, what else they needed to learn, and how to achieve the learning goal of the course. Wiliam (2013) claims that teachers use FA to know where the students are right now, where they need to be, and how to get there. Another important purpose is that it is used to improve learning and promote a high level of student achievement. A key purpose of assessment for learning, known as FA, is to foster student development (McDowell et al., 2007). FA is used to promote lifelong learning goals, including higher levels of student achievement, greater equity of student outcomes, and improved learning to learn skills. Asghar (2012) found that participants in the study perceived the purpose of formative assessment as developmental.

### **Formative Assessment Practice Enhances Learning in Cambodian EFL Courses**

The results of the study found that participants perceived with the greater agreement that feedback plays a very crucial role in formative assessment, which enhances learning. It is the essential nature of formative assessment that feedback happens, both formal and informal, to students during the course so that they have opportunities to improve (Brown et al., 1997; McDowell et al., 2007; Wiliam, 2013). The results of the present study about the roles of feedback in formative assessment are indicated to be relevant to a previous study that investigated the lived experience of formative assessment practice in a British university (Asghar, 2012). This study finding suggested that teachers should engage students in dialogic feedback with a focus on how to move forward, and also highlighted the need for effective feedback to support student learning (Asghar, 2012). Furthermore, the present study's findings also support Sadler's fundamental model of formative assessment that feedback is the key element to assisting learning (Sadler, 1989). According to Sadler (1989), students use feedback to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performances so that aspects associated with success or high quality can be recognized and reinforced, and unsatisfactory aspects modified or improved.

### **Challenges in Integrating Formative Assessment in EFL Courses**

The study's findings associated with the challenges of integrating formative assessment practice into EFL courses pointed out that formative assessment practice requires the assessors to have a higher knowledge of formative assessment and how to assess in formative ways. The previous literature also showed that it requires all teachers to be experts at formative assessment, such as knowing in advance both the materials that students are supposed to grasp and the different alternative and problematical ways in which students may fail to grasp them (Hunt & Pellegrino, 2002). Black and Wiliam (2009) revealed that although theorizing formative assessment has the potential to improve practice through a better understanding of the learners' possible responses to feedback, it shows surprise at how effective many school classroom teachers have been in the absence of such knowledge. The result further revealed that being time-consuming

was one of the major challenges reported by the respondents. It is found to be paralleled with the study conducted by Asghar (2012), which examined the lived experience of formative assessment practice in a British university. The study's findings highlighted time constraints in making learning happen through formative assessment. Hunt and Pellegrino (2002) also claimed that the challenge of employing formative assessment is time-consuming. However, respondents were reported to be less likely to agree that many teachers are unaware of formative assessment theories. It is found to be contrary to a challenge addressed by Asghar (2012) for tutors, the recent focus on constructing underpinning theories of formative assessment of which many would be unaware.

## CONCLUSION

The current study found that both teachers and students had more positive perceptions of formative assessment practice. The results also showed that they better understood formative assessment, such as its concepts, purposes, and key development strategies. Moreover, the current finding indicated a few challenges the teachers face in integrating FA into their classroom, including greater demand for assessors' knowledge of FA, how to assess students using FA, and time constraints. Finally, despite some existing constraints, the study found that teachers and students had a higher intention for future development and practice of FA in their EFL courses.

Finally, we would also like to recommend that the related individuals, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, educational institutions, teachers, and lecturers consider the results from the current study seriously. For example, the Education Ministry should cooperate with other educational institutions to assess students' learning regularly. Em (2022) and Sok (2019) suggested that the Education Ministry prepares different workshops for teachers so that they can meet and exchange experiences. Then they would be more careful with students' learning achievements. Em et al. (2021) noted that teachers should conduct classroom action research in order to improve students' academic performance. Houn and Em (2022) also noted that teachers should encourage and assess students' learning regularly to predict future outcomes.

Limitations are typical for all studies in all contexts. In light of the current study's limitations, future research in the area of formative assessment should address some potential issues, such as methodology and sample population, to gain a complete understanding of FA practice. Future studies with a large number of participants, mixed method approaches, and cross-disciplinary research in either private or public HEIs in Cambodia should also be conducted. Future studies should be conducted with a large number of participants, a mixed methods approach, and cross-disciplinary research in either private or public HEIs in Cambodia.

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