

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT LITERACY AMONG EFL TEACHERS AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

NĂNG LỰC ĐÁNH GIÁ QUÁ TRÌNH CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC TẠI VIỆT NAM

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ABSTRACT

Formative assessment plays a vital role in enhancing teaching and learning by providing continuous feedback that supports students' learning progress. The effectiveness of implementing formative assessment, however, depends largely on teachers' formative assessment literacy (FAL), which encompasses conceptual understanding, practical competence, and socio-emotional awareness. This mixed-method study investigated the FAL of EFL teachers at a Vietnamese university and explored their challenges as well as the strategies associated with formative assessment implementation. Data were collected from 39 EFL teachers through a self-reported questionnaire with quantitative and qualitative components. The findings indicated that the participants demonstrated a high level of FAL. Among the three dimensions, the conceptual dimension achieved the highest mean, followed by the socio-emotional and practical dimensions. The qualitative findings revealed key challenges, including limited instructional time, heavy workload, large class sizes, and ensuring fair and authentic assessment. To address these issues, teachers developed clear assessment rubrics, diversified assessment methods, integrated digital technologies, adapted classroom management strategies, and collaborated with colleagues. The study highlights the need for ongoing professional development and institutional support to strengthen teachers' formative assessment literacy and thereby promote formative assessment practices in Vietnamese higher education.

Keywords: *Assesment, language assessment, formative assessment (FA), formative assessment literacy (FAL), assessment literacy.*

TÓM TẮT

Đánh giá quá trình đóng vai trò quan trọng trong việc nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học thông qua việc cung cấp phản hồi liên tục nhằm giúp người học tiến bộ trong học tập. Tuy nhiên, hiệu quả của việc thực hiện đánh giá quá trình phụ thuộc phần lớn vào năng lực đánh giá quá trình của giáo viên, bao gồm hiểu biết về mặt lý thuyết, năng lực thực hành và nhận thức về các khía cạnh cảm xúc - xã hội. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp này khảo sát năng lực đánh giá quá trình của giảng viên tiếng Anh tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam, đồng thời tìm hiểu những khó khăn cũng như các giải pháp mà giảng viên áp dụng khi thực hiện đánh giá quá trình. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ 39 giảng viên tiếng Anh thông qua bảng hỏi tự báo cáo, bao gồm cả câu hỏi định lượng và định tính. Kết quả cho thấy các giảng viên có mức độ năng lực đánh giá quá trình cao. Trong ba thành phần của năng lực đánh giá quá trình, thành phần nhận thức khái niệm đạt điểm trung bình cao nhất, tiếp theo là thành phần cảm xúc - xã hội và thực hành. Kết quả định tính cho thấy các giảng viên gặp nhiều khó khăn liên quan đến thời gian giảng dạy hạn chế, khối lượng công việc lớn, sĩ số lớp học đông và việc đảm bảo tính công bằng, khách quan trong đánh giá. Để khắc phục những khó khăn này, giáo viên đã xây dựng bảng tiêu chí đánh giá rõ ràng, đa dạng hóa các hình thức đánh giá, tích hợp công nghệ số vào hoạt động đánh giá, điều chỉnh cách tổ chức lớp học và tăng cường hợp tác với đồng nghiệp. Nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh sự cần thiết của hoạt động bồi dưỡng chuyên môn thường xuyên và sự hỗ trợ từ phía nhà trường nhằm nâng cao năng lực đánh giá quá trình của giảng viên, từ đó thúc đẩy việc triển khai hiệu quả đánh giá quá trình trong giáo dục đại học ở Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: *Đánh giá, đánh giá ngôn ngữ, đánh giá quá trình, năng lực đánh giá quá trình, năng lực đánh giá.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, where students' language development requires

continuous monitoring and timely instructional support, assessment is considered an important factor, influencing teaching and learning approaches. While summative

assessment helps teachers evaluate learning outcome at the end of an instructional process, formative assessment provides teachers and students with evidence of learning that they can use to identify learning needs, provide feedback and adjust teaching and learning strategies to improve learning performance [1]. In language education, formative assessment is particularly valuable. Effective formative assessment enables teachers to monitor learners' progress, identify misconceptions, provide timely and actionable feedback, encourage self- and peer assessment, and adapt instruction to meet students' evolving language needs. Research has consistently shown that high-quality formative assessment can improve learners' motivation, self-regulation, engagement, and language achievement [2-4].

Despite its recognized benefits, implementing formative assessment effectively remains challenging because successful implementation requires both teachers' willingness to use formative assessment strategies and their formative assessment literacy (FAL) as well. While strong FAL allows teachers to elicit meaningful evidence of learning, provide effective feedback, engage students in self- and peer assessment, and use assessment information to make informed instructional decisions, limited assessment literacy may result in formative assessment being reduced to isolated classroom techniques or confused with continuous testing, thereby diminishing its potential to enhance learning.

Although there has been increasing attention to the concept of assessment literacy in recent years, much of the existing literature has focused on general assessment literacy, which includes both summative and formative assessment. Fewer studies have examined formative assessment as a distinct construct and there is limited consensus regarding what formative assessment encompasses, with different researchers emphasizing different aspects such as feedback, questioning, learning intentions, student involvement, or instructional adjustment [5-7]. This lack of conceptual clarity has made it difficult to compare findings across studies and to determine what competencies teachers require for effective formative assessment practice. The issue is particularly relevant in English language education, where formative assessment involves complex classroom interactions, continuous feedback, and active learner participation. EFL teachers are expected not only to assess students' language proficiency but also to facilitate learning through assessment by integrating

formative assessment strategies into everyday classroom practice. However, studies conducted in various educational contexts have reported that many language teachers possess only a partial understanding of formative assessment principles and encounter difficulties in implementing them consistently [8, 9].

In Vietnam, recent educational reforms have highlighted the importance of competency-based education and learner-centred instruction, both of which place greater emphasis on formative assessment. Besides, universities are increasingly encouraged to adopt assessment approaches that promote continuous learning. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of these reforms depends substantially on teachers' FAL. While a growing body of Vietnamese research has investigated teachers' assessment practices and perceptions [10, 11], relatively few studies have specifically examined FAL among university EFL teachers. Existing studies often focus on teachers' use of formative assessment techniques rather than investigating whether teachers possess the underlying knowledge, skills, and professional competencies necessary to implement formative assessment effectively. This study addresses these gaps by seeking to examine teachers' levels of FAL and explore its key dimensions within the context of English language teaching in higher education. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing literature on FAL while providing practical implications for strengthening teachers' assessment capacity and supporting the effective implementation of formative assessment in Vietnamese EFL classrooms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Language Assessment Literacy

Assessment plays an important role in education, which shapes teaching and learning process. It provides evidence of students' achievement, informing instructional decisions and supporting educational improvement. However, successful assessment implementation requires not only the assessment knowledge but also teachers' ability to interpret assessment information and apply it appropriately in the classrooms, which is referred to as assessment literacy.

The concept of assessment literacy has evolved considerably over time. Earlier assessment definitions were mostly focused on practical aspects such as skills, strategies, and actions a teacher cares about [12, 13]. As educational assessment gradually shifted from a measurement-oriented perspective to one that supports

learning, the definition of assessment literacy also expanded. Popham [14] defined assessment literacy as an individual's understanding of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures that are likely to influence educational decisions. Brookhart [15] extended it by including the ability to integrate assessment into everyday classroom practice. In this sense, assessment literacy is closely associated with effective teaching because it enables teachers to make evidence-based pedagogical decisions that promote student learning. Xu and Brown [16] proposed a comprehensive and dynamic conceptualization of teacher assessment literacy. They argued that assessment literacy is a multidimensional construct comprising teachers' knowledge, skills, beliefs, and professional identity, all of which interact within particular educational and sociocultural contexts. The literature suggests that assessment literacy consists of several interrelated components, including knowledge, skills and beliefs, and practice. These dimensions collectively enable teachers to design, implement, interpret, and use assessment effectively to support student learning.

Since English language learning is a continuous developmental process, effective assessment requires ongoing monitoring and feedback. Hence, assessment literacy is particularly crucial for EFL teachers, who must possess knowledge of language assessment principles, communicative competence, performance-based assessment, and feedback strategies. Accordingly, researchers have increasingly emphasized the importance of developing assessment literacy among EFL teachers to support effective language instruction and promote student learning.

The evolution of assessment literacy has also reflected a shift from assessment of learning towards assessment for learning. This transition has expanded the expectations placed on teachers, who are now required not only to assess learning outcomes but also to use assessment evidence to improve teaching and facilitate students' ongoing learning. Consequently, assessment literacy is increasingly viewed as encompassing teachers' capacity to implement formative assessment effectively, making FAL a key dimension of teacher assessment competence.

2.2. Formative assessment literacy

Formative assessment is considered the core element of language education as it supports teaching and learning through continuously identifying learning gaps,

tracking students' progress, and informing instructional decisions [17, 18]. Rather than being a single test or instrument, it is a collaborative practice involving teachers, students, peers as active agents. However, the effective implementation of formative assessment depends largely on teachers' ability to understand its principles and integrate them into classroom practice. This ability is commonly referred to as FAL.

Though FAL has been increasingly gaining attention in educational research, there is a limited consensus about its definition. Smith [19] defined it as teachers' understanding of the principles and practices of formative assessment and their ability to use assessment evidence to improve learning. In this definition, he focuses on teachers' capability to make informed instructional decisions based on evidence collected during learning and highlights the importance of both technical competence and pedagogical judgment. Similarly, Bennett [20] characterized it as teachers' repertoire of knowledge, skills, and principles to make adaptations to their assessment-based instructional practices in accordance with learners' needs to provide attuned feedback. More recently, researchers have conceptualized FAL as a multidimensional construct. According to Yan and Pastore [21], FAL is an interrelated set of knowledge, skills and dispositions that educators use to design and implement appropriate context-based assessments with the specific aim of promoting student learning and improving instruction. This definition has evolved from a traditional focus on psychometric testing and accountability toward a dynamic component of teacher professionalism that emphasizes sound instructional decision-making.

Several studies have attempted to find out core components of FAL [22, 23], however they only considered one aspect of FAL. In earlier conceptualization [15], assessment literacy focused on practical aspects such as knowledge and skills to interpret, and use assessments effectively to support instruction, with formative assessment recognized as a central component while other aspects such as social and emotional impacts are overlooked. However, recent scholarship has reconceptualized FAL as a dynamic, multidimensional construct shaped by personal, social, and contextual factors. Xu and Brown [16] suggested a process-oriented conceptual framework, based on six components including teacher knowledge base; conceptions of assessment; institutional and socio-cultural contexts; assessment literacy in practice; teacher learning; and

teacher identity as an assessor. Similarly, Looney et al. [24] emphasized the importance of ethical considerations and teacher identity while Herppich et al. [25] advocated for an integrative framework that not only explains but also supports the development of assessment literacy. Recently, Yan and Pastore [21] developed and validated a three-dimensional instrument for measuring FAL, consisting of conceptual, practical, and socio-emotional dimensions. Conceptual dimension involves a teacher's content knowledge and understanding of the guiding principles, purposes, and methods of formative assessment. Practical dimension refers to the teacher's content knowledge and understanding of the guiding principles, purposes, and methods of formative assessment. Socio-emotional dimension reflects an awareness of the social and emotional impacts of assessment on students, such as their motivation, well-being, and values. This model recognizes assessment literacy as an evolving aspect of teacher professionalism and provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and measuring formative assessment literacy.

Previous research has identified numerous factors affecting teachers' formative assessment literacy. At the individual level, previous studies [26, 27] found that teachers' educational background, teaching experience, assessment training, pedagogical knowledge, and professional beliefs significantly influence their understanding and implementation of formative assessment. Gu and Lam [28] revealed that teachers who receive systematic professional development generally demonstrate higher levels of formative assessment literacy than those with limited assessment training. At the institutional level, factors such as school leadership, curriculum requirements, assessment policies, workload, class size, and opportunities for professional collaboration play important roles. Supportive institutional environments encourage teachers to experiment with formative assessment practices, whereas examination-oriented systems often constrain implementation [7]. At the broader contextual context, sociocultural factors such as national education policies, accountability systems, and examination culture shape teachers' assessment practices [16, 21].

Despite its importance in students' learning process, previous studies [29, 30] revealed that practices of formative assessment at the classroom level are limited and are not frequently used by teachers. Stiggins [30] even found the misalignment of formative assessment

practices with educational policies and principles. These challenges revealed that teachers do not have a sufficient level of FAL in both conceptual and practical aspects to implement formative assessment that meets students' needs and improve learning outcomes. Empirical studies have also consistently reported that many teachers experience difficulties implementing formative assessment effectively. Common challenges include limited assessment knowledge, insufficient professional training, large class sizes, heavy teaching workloads, time constraints, and strong examination pressures [27, 31, 32]. These challenges are particularly evident in Asian educational systems where summative assessment continues to dominate classroom practice.

In Vietnam, educational reforms have increasingly emphasized competency-based education and assessment for learning. Nevertheless, Bui [11] suggested that many EFL teachers continue to encounter difficulties in fully understanding and implementing formative assessment principles. Existing research has mainly examined teachers' formative assessment practices rather than their underlying formative assessment literacy. Moreover, relatively few studies have investigated formative assessment literacy among university EFL teachers, highlighting the need for further research in higher education contexts. Examining Vietnamese EFL teachers' formative assessment literacy can therefore contribute to a deeper understanding of teachers' professional competence and provide evidence for designing effective professional development programs that support the successful implementation of formative assessment. To address these gaps, the study aimed to answer following two research questions:

1. To what extent are EFL teachers in the university literate in formative assessment?
2. What factors do EFL teachers perceive to have affected their implementation of formative assessment practice in the classrooms?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research context and participants

The research was carried out in a public higher education institution in Hanoi, Vietnam, where English is taught as a compulsory subject for undergraduate students from various disciplines. As for the participants, the study recruited 39 EFL teachers, who were teaching English courses during the period of data collection. A convenience sampling technique was employed because the participants were readily accessible to the researcher

and willing to participate in the study. The participating teachers represented a range of professional backgrounds in terms of gender, age, educational qualifications, and teaching experience. They were responsible for teaching various English courses, including General English, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), to undergraduate students.

3.2. Research instrument

The research employed quantitative and qualitative data through a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was adapted from Teacher Formative Assessment Literacy Scale (TFALS) developed by Yan and Pastore [21]. The questionnaire survey consisted of three sections. Section 1 contained three questions to collect data about teachers' gender, teaching experience and qualifications. Section 2 contained 22 questions regarding three dimensions of formative assessment including conceptual, practical, and socio-emotional dimensions. The participants were required to rank the items through a Likert scale of one to five where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha for the conceptual, practical, and socio-emotional subscales of the TFALS were 0.88, 0.88, and 0.89 respectively, indicating good internal consistency. The third section consisted of four open-ended questions regarding the participants' self-perceived assessment training needs.

3.3. Data analysis

To analyze quantitative data gained from the second section of the TFALS, this study used IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 12 to find out the extent to which EFL teachers are literate in formative assessment by finding mean score (M) and standard deviation (SD) calculations. The mean scores were interpreted by adapting the interpretation framework suggested by Banditvilai [33], illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The interpretation of mean scores in the questionnaire responses

Mean scores (M)	1.00-1.50	1.51-2.50	2.51-3.50	3.51-4.50	4.51-5.00
Interpretation	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

Banditvilai's (2016) framework was adopted because it provides a clear, widely accepted way to interpret Likert-scale mean scores and classify agreement levels for easier analysis and comparison. The qualitative data from open-ended questions of section 3 were analyzed using Braun

and Clarke's thematic analysis [34] to gain teachers' perception of challenges when implementing formative assessment and their strategies to overcome them.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Demographic information of participants

A total of 39 EFL teachers participated in the study, including 2 males and 37 females. Regarding academic qualification, 36 participants held a Master's degree, representing the vast majority of sample, while two possessed a doctoral degree and one had a bachelor's degree. This distribution suggests that most participants were highly qualified academically. In terms of the teaching experience, the largest group consisted of teachers with 5 to under 10 years of teaching experience ($n = 17$), followed by 9 teachers with under 5 years of teaching experience. There were 7 teachers with 10 to under 15 years of experience and 6 teachers with 15 years or more of teaching experience. Overall, the sample included teachers with varying levels of professional experience, providing perspectives from both early-career and more experienced educators.

Table 2. Demographic information of participants

Information background	Category	Number of participants (n=39)
Gender	Male	2
	Female	37
Qualifications	Bachelor's degree	1
	Master's degree	36
	Doctoral degree	2
Years of teaching	Under 5 years	9
	From 5 years to under 10 years	17
	From 10 years to under 15 years	7
	From 15 years and over	6

4.2. Teacher's formative assessment literacy

The survey results indicated that teachers demonstrated a high level of formative assessment literacy, with a total mean score of 4.40 and standard deviation 0.61, indicating that they generally agreed with the statements describing formative assessment knowledge, practices, and socio-emotional understanding.

Regarding the conceptual dimension, teachers reported a high level of conceptual understanding ($M = 4.46$ and $SD = 0.57$). Among the seven indicators, belief in alignment between formative assessment and

learning objectives received the highest rating, indicating that teachers strongly recognized the importance of aligning formative assessment with instructional goals. The lowest-rated indicator was knowledge of formative assessment techniques ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.66$), although its mean still reflected a high level of agreement.

Table 3. Teacher's formative assessment literacy

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>Part 1: Conceptual Dimensions (CD)</i>		
Knowledge of the basic concept of formative assessment	4.33	0.66
Understanding of formative assessment for identifying students' learning needs	4.36	0.54
Belief in the alignment between formative assessment and learning objectives	4.72	0.51
Knowledge of the alignment between formative assessment activities and learning outcomes	4.56	0.50
Belief in the instructional benefits of formative assessment outcomes	4.59	0.50
Understanding of student engagement in formative assessment	4.46	0.64
Knowledge of formative assessment techniques	4.21	0.66
<i>Average CD</i>	4.46	0.57
<i>Part 2: Practical Dimensions (PD)</i>		
Use of diverse formative assessment tools	4.31	0.66
Promotion of peer assessment	4.38	0.59
Instruction in self-assessment	4.18	0.68
Encouragement of feedback use for future learning	4.28	0.65
Guidance for learning improvement	4.33	0.62
Instruction in the use of feedback	4.28	0.60
Communication of assessment purposes	4.31	0.69
Communication of assessment criteria	4.54	0.68
<i>Average PD</i>	4.33	0.65
<i>Part 3: Socio-Emotional Dimensions (SED)</i>		
Understanding of shared assessment literacy among teachers and students	4.46	0.55
Awareness of students' emotional responses to assessment	4.26	0.79
Understanding of the influence of students' beliefs and attitudes on assessment experiences	4.31	0.61
Understanding of the impact of feedback on students' learning motivation	4.36	0.54

Understanding of ethical considerations in assessment	4.46	0.60
Understanding of students' well-being during assessment	4.36	0.57
Understanding of students' rights in the assessment process	4.59	0.50
<i>Average SED</i>	4.40	0.61
<i>Total Average CD + PD + SED</i>	4.40	0.61

The practical dimension recorded an average mean of 4.33 ($SD = 0.65$), indicating that teachers frequently implemented formative assessment practices in their classrooms. Most aspects received high rating except for instruction in self-assessment, which received the lowest mean score ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.68$), suggesting that although teachers generally engaged students in formative assessment practices, self-assessment was implemented less frequently than other practices.

For the socio-emotional dimension, the participants also reported a high level of awareness, with an average mean of 4.40 ($SD = 0.61$). The highest-rated indicator was understanding of students' rights in the assessment process ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.50$). The lowest-rated indicator was awareness of students' emotional responses to assessment ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.79$), which also showed the greatest variability in responses, indicating relatively greater differences among teachers in this aspect.

4.3. Teachers' self-perception of challenges in implementing formative assessment practices and their strategies to overcome them

4.3.1. Challenges in implementing formative assessment practices

The first challenge is time constraints and heavy workload. The most frequently reported challenge was the limited classroom time for formative assessment. Many teachers explained that insufficient time hindered observing students' performance, providing individual feedback, and assessing every student, particularly during speaking activities. In addition, the large amount of marking and feedback required substantially increased their workload. One teacher reported "*one of the biggest challenges is that I do not have enough time to provide feedback to all students' performance.*" Similarly, another teacher mentioned "*the heavy workload*" during teaching period.

Another challenge is large class size and student diversity. Large class size was also a common challenge, limiting teachers' ability to observe individual students,

monitor participation, and provide personalized feedback. Several participants reported *"There are too many students in one class"* is one of their major challenging at work. Additionally, differences in students' language proficiency and learning needs made fair and appropriate assessment implementation more challenging. As one participant noted, *"I find it difficult to observe and provide appropriate feedback to individual student."*

Teachers also encounter difficulties in ensuring fair, valid, and authentic assessment. Many participants expressed concerns about the fairness, objectivity, and validity of formative assessment. For example, one participant explained that the current assessment methods did not always ensure that assessment was *"accurate, objective, and fair to students"*. Another participant similarly noted that *"the assessment methods were sometimes not appropriate for the overall objectives of the course"*. Teachers reported difficulties in selecting assessment methods appropriate to learning objectives, evaluating higher-order thinking skills, assigning scores consistently, and preventing academic dishonesty, particularly in online assessments. The increasing use of AI tools by students was also perceived as an obstacle to the teacher in determining students' actual abilities. One participant explained that online assessment was difficult because it *"did not effectively prevent cheating"*.

Several teachers identified students themselves as a source of difficulty. Common issues included students' limited preparation before class, reluctance to participate, insufficient understanding of assessment criteria, and limited assessment literacy, particularly regarding self- and peer assessment. One participant stated that *"students' inadequate preparation made it difficult for assessment to accurately reflect their actual abilities"*.

4.3.2. Strategies adopted by teachers

The first strategy was to establish clear assessment criteria and enhance assessment transparency. The most frequently reported strategy was the development and communication of clear assessment criteria. Teachers emphasized providing students with rubrics before assessment activities and repeatedly explaining assessment expectations to improve transparency and ensure that students understood how their work would be evaluated. For example, one participant reported that they provided students with assessment criteria in advance and *"sent the criteria again to the class group for*

students to refer to." Another teacher stated that they *"explained the assessment criteria clearly to students."*

Another strategy was to diversify assessment methods to improve effectiveness and fairness. Many teachers reported adopting multiple assessment approaches rather than relying on a single method. For instance, one participant reported that they *"combined multiple forms of assessment, including self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment."* They combined teacher assessment with self-assessment, peer assessment, group works, presentations, quizzes, and short tests to reduce teachers' workload, increase students' participation, and improve the validity and fairness of assessment. One participant explained that they *"asked students to conduct peer assessment by providing them with criteria to assess each other,"* while another reported that they asked students to *"self-assess in groups."*

Integrating educational technology into formative assessment was another way teachers used in their classes. Teachers frequently described using digital technologies to facilitate assessment administration, provide feedback, and manage large classes. Learning management systems (LMS), Google Forms, Quizizz, Quizlet, Kahoot, Padlet, and Mentimeter were commonly mentioned as tools for collecting evidence of learning, automating marking, and providing timely feedback. For example, one participant reported using *"Kahoot, Quizizz, Padlet, Mentimeter and Google Forms"* to support classroom assessment and collect students' feedback. Another participant noted that some formative assessment tasks had been transferred from paper-based tests to online tests on the EOP platform, which *"reduced the workload for teachers."*

Another prominent strategy involved modifying classroom organization to cope with limited time and large class sizes. Teachers divided students into smaller groups, rotated assessment opportunities across lessons, assessed only selected students during each class, and completed feedback after class. These approaches enabled teachers to monitor student learning more systematically despite practical constraints. For example, one participant reported that they *"divided the students into small groups to make it easier to observe and monitor them."* Another teacher explained that they selected *"8 - 10 students per class each week to provide feedback"* and discussed common errors with the whole class.

Teachers also highlighted strategies aimed at strengthening both student and teacher engagement in

the assessment process. For students, this involved training them to conduct self-assessment and peer assessment, encouraging active participation, providing preparation time before assessment tasks, and giving continuous feedback. For teachers, collaboration with colleagues was considered important for sharing experiences, discussing assessment challenges, and developing common assessment standards. One participant reported that they *"discussed with colleagues in the subject group to agree on assessment methods, share experiences, and jointly develop assessment tools."* Another teacher simply stated that they *"asked colleagues for advice"* when facing difficulties with assessment.

4.4. Prior training and institutional supports

The majority of teachers reported having participated in some form of assessment-related professional development. However, the quality and depth of training varied considerably. Many participants mentioned attending university workshops, in-service training, seminars or courses in formative assessment or self-learning through online courses or observing experienced teachers. For example, one participant reported having attended *"several training sessions provided by the university on assessment based on learning outcomes and innovative teaching methods."* One participant, for instance, mentioned *"watching video clips of lessons taught by other teachers in the department to learn from each other."* However, the minority reported having no formal training, suggesting unequal professional opportunities.

Teachers also acknowledged the institutional support for their professional development. The overwhelming majority of participants reported that the university often provided workshops, seminars, training courses, and professional meetings for teachers to improve their assessment knowledge and skills. For example, one participant reported that the institution *"regularly organizes training courses, professional workshops, and seminars on assessment,"* while another noted that the university organized *"workshops to help teachers understand different types of assessment."*

Beyond formal workshops, many teachers highlighted opportunities for peer learning and collaborative professional development. Several participants mentioned regular departmental meetings or subject-group discussions where teachers exchange experiences. Some participants reported that institutional support extends beyond training by providing concrete tools and

resources that facilitate formative assessment implementation. One participant noted that the university provided *"regulations, guidelines, and assessment forms"* and supported the use of *"the LMS and technological tools for managing, monitoring, and assessing students' learning progress."*

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined the FAL of EFL teachers at a Vietnamese university using a mixed-method approach. The overall finding indicated that the participants perceived themselves as having a high level of FAL. This result is consistent with previous findings by Yan and Pastore [21]. The high overall mean suggests that they not only understood the principles of formative assessment but also were capable of applying these principles in their teaching.

Although teachers reported a high level of practical formative assessment literacy, the qualitative findings revealed that classroom implementation was constrained by several contextual challenges. Time limitations, heavy workload, and large class sizes emerged as the most frequently mentioned barriers. These findings are consistent with earlier studies identifying insufficient instructional time and excessive assessment demands as major obstacles to implementing formative assessment effectively [21, 37]. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is the nature of self-reported questionnaire. Self-report measures capture teachers' perceptions of their knowledge, confidence, and practices rather than directly observing what teachers actually do in classrooms. Consequently, high self-reported scores may partly reflect teachers' professional beliefs, awareness of recommended assessment practices, or perceived competence rather than their demonstrated ability to enact those practices under authentic classroom conditions. This issue is particularly relevant to the present study because several participants who reported high levels of practical competence nevertheless described considerable difficulties in implementing formative assessment. However, this gap should not necessarily be regarded as evidence that the questionnaire findings are inaccurate. Rather, it highlights the distinction between perceived competence and enacted assessment practice. A teacher may possess considerable knowledge of formative assessment strategies and report confidence in using them while still experiencing contextual constraints that prevent the consistent enactment of those practices. The present

qualitative findings provide empirical support for this contextualized understanding of assessment literacy.

Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated considerable adaptability by using multiple strategies, particularly developing clear rubrics and explicitly communicating assessment criteria to students. This practice supports students' understanding of learning expectations and promotes self-regulated learning. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that transparent assessment criteria can help students understand learning expectations and support self-regulated learning [36]. However, the present study extends these findings by showing that, in the Vietnamese university EFL context, rubrics were not only used to clarify expectations but also served as a practical response to challenges of fairness, consistency, and large class sizes. Teachers also diversified assessment methods by combining teacher assessment, peer assessment, self-assessment, presentations, quizzes, and group activities. These practices align with contemporary conceptualizations of formative assessment, which emphasize multiple sources of evidence and active student participation in the assessment process [37]. The use of peer and self-assessment additionally reduced teachers' workload while promoting students' responsibility for their own learning. Another notable finding concerns the increasing integration of digital technologies into formative assessment. Participants reported using learning management systems, Google Forms, Quizizz, Kahoot, Padlet, and Mentimeter to administer assessments, collect learning evidence, and provide feedback more efficiently. These findings indicate that digital technologies have become important mediating tools that enable teachers to manage formative assessment in large classes and under time constraints. This observation supports recent research highlighting technology-enhanced formative assessment as an effective means of facilitating continuous feedback and student engagement.

The findings have several implications for teacher professional development and institutional policy. First, professional development programmes should emphasize the practical classroom implementation of formative assessment, particularly in large classes, by focusing on efficient formative assessment tasks, the design of high-quality rubric, peer and self-assessment, and timely feedback. Second, universities should provide greater support through shared assessment rubrics, improved learning management systems, reduced

administrative workload, and communities of practice. Finally, as concerns about students' use of artificial intelligence during assessment increase, future professional development should also address AI-informed assessment design by encouraging authentic tasks that require critical thinking, interaction, reflection, and in class performance, thereby minimizing inappropriate AI-assisted work and promoting meaningful learning.

6. CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the participating teachers reported high levels of formative assessment literacy across conceptual, practical, and socio-emotional dimensions. However, effective implementation remained constrained by contextual factors such as limited instructional time, large class sizes, heavy workload, and concerns regarding assessment validity in technology-rich learning environments. Importantly, teachers reported adapting their assessment practices by adapting their assessment practices through clear rubrics, diversified assessment methods, educational technologies, collaborative professional learning, and greater student involvement. These findings reinforce the view that formative assessment literacy should be understood not merely as an individual competency but as a situated capability that develops through the interaction between teachers' knowledge, classroom contexts, institutional support, and evolving educational technologies.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, the study involved a relatively small sample and was conducted at a single public university, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Future studies should include participants from multiple universities across different regions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of formative assessment literacy among Vietnamese EFL teachers. In addition, the study relied primarily on a self-reported questionnaire to measure teachers' formative assessment literacy. Self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias, as participants may overestimate their knowledge or classroom practices. In addition, teachers' perceptions do not necessarily reflect their actual assessment practices. Future research could incorporate classroom observations, document analysis, interviews, or assessment artifacts to triangulate the data and provide a more comprehensive evaluation of teachers' formative

assessment literacy. Another limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size compared with the complexity of the measurement scale. This small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings and the stability of the descriptive statistical estimates. Therefore, future studies should recruit a larger and more diverse sample to provide more robust and generalizable results.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes to the growing body of research on formative assessment literacy by providing empirical evidence of EFL teachers' conceptual, practical, and socio-emotional competencies and by identifying the contextual challenges and strategies associated with implementing formative assessment in a Vietnamese higher education context.

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