

# Secondary School Teachers' Perception of Classroom Assessment Practices in ESL Classrooms

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## Abstract

Globally, effective practices for assessing students' learning to enhance their achievements have been debated by scholars. The significance of English as a Second Language (ESL) learning is stressed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), prompting teachers to employ assessments that track progress and goal attainment. Despite numerous studies on formative assessment, a significant gap exists in understanding broader formative and summative assessment practices. Therefore, this study aims to examine teachers' perceptions regarding classroom assessment practices that hold the potential for enhancing student learning in ESL classrooms, specifically within rural schools in Sabah. Consequently, a study was conducted among 55 English teachers in Semporna, Sabah. A questionnaire utilising a 4-point Likert scale via Google Forms was used as the data collection tool. The findings highlighted that setting learning goals were perceived as the most common form of formative assessment, while adjusting teaching based on final assessment results was predominant in summative assessment. Notably, self- and peer assessments received the lowest mean value, suggesting assessment practices in Semporna lean more toward teacher-centred assessment. Ultimately, the insights from this study are positioned as a guiding compass for teachers, offering a panoramic view of prevailing practices and empowering them to refine their assessment approaches continuously.

**Keywords:** Teachers' Perception, Classroom Assessment, Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment, Practices

## Introduction

English is taught in numerous countries as English as a Second Language (ESL) or as a Foreign Language (EFL). It holds global recognition and is deemed essential due to its

widespread use in international communication. Critical skills associated with English encompass listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Alisha et al., 2019; Pustika & Wiedarti, 2019), and all these skills are required for complete communication (Alisha et al., 2019). Additionally, it was observed that most subjects are instructed in English, underscoring the necessity of English proficiency. This proficiency becomes exceptionally functional when students travel abroad, especially considering English's status as one of the prominent lingua franca languages (Rafiq et al., 2022). Hence, it is evident that English forms the foundation of various subjects, necessitating students to excel in English for success in other languages. Unsurprisingly, English language instruction is required in all Malaysian national schools (Yunus et al., 2013). Acquiring English skills becomes crucial for students navigating the competitive landscape of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0). Malaysian employers prioritise English proficiency, particularly in communication, highlighting the significance of efficient writing and fluent speaking abilities in the language (Kenayathulla et al., 2019; Syakur et al., 2020), which can secure jobs, alleviate poverty, and support ongoing development (Madani, 2019). The focus on English proficiency links directly to students' employability post-schooling, which is closely associated with the quality of education schools provide. It enhances students' livelihoods and elevates their socioeconomic status.

Significant strides have been undertaken in prioritising English language education, leading to various enhancements. The government has dedicated additional efforts to ensure students attain mastery of English, elevating the overall standard of English education. The redesign of the English curriculum undoubtedly considered students from various learning environments, allowing teachers to modify and adjust their teachings accordingly (Jerry & Yunus, 2021). The Malaysian government's efforts in overhauling English education demonstrate a strong emphasis on the language. Programs like *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris* (PPSMI), the Dual Language Programme (DLP), and the *Memartabatkan Bahasa Melayu, Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris* (MBMMBI) initiative aim to enhance students' English proficiency Ramli et al (2020) and align with international standards (Kaur & Jian, 2022). The primary goal of the programme was to maintain a balance between English as a second language and Bahasa Malaysia, the country's national language (Santhanasamy & Yunus, 2022). Initially introduced in European nations in 2002, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) has been adopted by multiple countries worldwide, including Malaysia, marking a global recognition of English's significance (Alih et al., 2020). In Malaysia, the government implemented the CEFR in the English language curriculum, aiming to cultivate learners capable of effective communication in English (Krishnan & Yunus, 2019). This initiative aligns with Malaysia's English Language Education Reform roadmap (2015-2025), aiming to boost English proficiency among students and prepare them for the digital era of the IR 4.0. To ensure English proficiency, teachers must adeptly assess students, which is integral to achieving CEFR levels effectively.

Effective assessment practices foster students' determination to assume control over their learning. Reflecting on and analysing their learning strategies is a hallmark of active learners (Yunus & Arshad, 2015). Encouraging self-autonomy, these methods drive motivation by enabling students to monitor their language learning progress Jamrus & Razali (2019) and actively engage in the learning process (Shepard, 2019). Therefore, the significance of classroom assessment in students' achievement is paramount. Classroom assessment within *Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran* (DSKP) entails continuous teacher-led planning, implementation, and reporting. It determines students' CEFR levels by evaluating their progress across all four skills, reflecting their learning journey (Ministry of

Education, 2020). Hence, assessment is crucial for gauging English skill mastery, as outlined in DSKP, which includes formative and summative assessments for teachers. As per the Malaysia Education Blueprint, the goal is to equip Malaysian school leavers with proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia and English at an operational level for bilingual work environments (Ministry of Education, 2013). Despite the government's efforts, reforms in the curriculum have not yielded clear improvements in English proficiency among Malaysian learners (Salleh et al., 2020). Particularly in rural areas, students' English proficiency remains below the desired level (Zakaria & Yunus, 2020). Hence, examining classroom assessment practices that align with MOE's aspirations for enhancing students' English achievement is crucial.

Researchers have focused on classroom assessment practices to improve English learning. Over the past five years (2019-2023), only 12 articles addressed classroom assessment practices in Malaysia found in ERIC and Google Scholar databases, with just two studies incorporating examination components (Franchis & Mohamad, 2023). Moreover, literature regarding teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices in Malaysia, notably in rural schools, remains scarce. Given the interconnectedness of assessment and teaching, it is undoubtedly beneficial for teachers to explore their perspectives on optimal classroom assessment practices, potentially fostering increased student self-autonomy in learning. Hence, this research aims to examine teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices that are beneficial for enhancing English learning among Malaysian students, especially in rural schools in Sabah. With this aim, the study focused on addressing one research question:

RQ1: What are the teachers' perceptions of the classroom assessment practices in ESL classrooms?

### **Teachers' Perception of Classroom Assessment**

Khan et al (2023) studied Malaysian teachers' perspectives on formative assessment. They observed a positive inclination towards providing feedback, adapting teaching methods based on student performance, and a particular interest among novice teachers in exploring diverse teaching approaches. Additionally, the study noted that female teachers tended to emphasise peer and self-evaluation, while male teachers leaned more towards peer assessment.

Veugen et al (2021) conducted a study exploring teacher and student perceptions of formative assessment practices. The study revealed teachers had a positive perception of the formative assessment practices. The teachers often use formative assessment practices to establish clear expectations and elicit student responses. Additionally, it was noted that teacher-centred activities were more prevalent than self- and peer-assessment activities within this context.

As outlined in the study by Zulaiha et al (2020) involving 22 EFL teachers in six public secondary schools, it was found that these teachers generally held positive perceptions about assessment principles. Specifically, the teachers engaged in various formative assessment practices, including supporting students through difficulties, encouraging self-assessment, giving prompt feedback, providing clear task instructions, ensuring timely completion, and clarifying student task expectations.

Hilden et al (2022) focused on teachers' perceptions of summative assessment. Teachers emphasised the significance of setting targets and establishing grading criteria as essential practices in the classroom. Conversely, self or peer assessment emerged as the least utilised or perceived necessary when grading. This discrepancy might be due to the prevalent

practice of teacher assessment, where teachers are responsible for making final decisions regarding students' achievements in summative assessments.

Nguyen and Truong (2021) found that teachers view both formative and summative assessments positively, yet they lean more favourably toward formative assessments. The research highlights teachers' acknowledgement of the role of formative assessment in guiding student progress through timely feedback, fostering motivation, adjusting teaching methods, and aiding students in meeting learning goals. Additionally, teachers prioritise assessment for student accountability over assessment solely for improvement, with a higher regard for assessment for learning than summative assessment.

### **Classroom Assessment Practices**

Classroom assessment is crucial in English Language Teaching (ELT), guiding teaching and learning. In modern education, teachers must grasp key terms in classroom assessment to integrate practical assessments into teaching. Mertler (2016) identified five terms: assessment system, evaluation, measurement, assessment, and test. An assessment system gathers information for educational decisions, while evaluation judges student skills. Measurement quantifies numerical values, akin to assessment, and a test comprises formal subject-specific questions (Mertler, 2016). These terms aid in aligning instruction with learning outcomes (Shepard, 2019). Teachers aligning instructional practices with classroom assessment creates a cohesive approach to promoting academic success.

Malaysian students, particularly in Sabah, are predominantly multilingual (Tati et al., 2020). Teachers, parents, and peers must provide a supportive environment to lead the student through the learning process (Yunus & Abdullah, 2011). Teaching approaches prioritising English motivation and learning are crucial due to students' inclination towards their mother tongue, resulting in limited English proficiency. Students often use bilingual dictionaries for unfamiliar words (Nor et al., 2019). Therefore, it is essential to note that efficient assessment practices boost student engagement and classroom motivation, fostering personalised instruction, self-regulated learning, and cultivating lifelong skills. Classroom assessment correlates with increased engagement, motivation, heightened interest in learning English, and improved learning outcomes (Ivanytska et al., 2021; Mohamed, 2022). Implementing effective classroom assessment is crucial to empower students to take ownership of their learning, ensuring the successful transfer of skills and knowledge to various contexts. Specifically, teachers are pivotal in guiding students toward areas that need improvement and fostering a more effective learning environment. Hence, this study is grounded in Sociocultural Theory (SCT), emphasizing that students' learning abilities in the classroom evolve through interaction with the people around them (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

The study by Zulaiha et al (2020) delineated several formative assessment practices, encompassing support for students encountering task-related issues, opportunities for self-assessment, immediate feedback provision, explicit task instructions, ensuring task completion within designated timeframes, and ensuring students grasp the task's desired outcomes. This aligns with the findings of Van der Kleij (2019); Widiastuti et al (2020), which emphasise feedback provision, both verbal and written, along with formative tests to gauge understanding and remedial teaching. Feedback exchanges foster teacher-student relationships Agricola et al (2020) and provides motivation for students Yunus et al (2014), enabling mutual understanding for enhanced learning clarity (Eriksson, 2023). Students should also be provided with assessment literacy especially in giving feedback to ensure they are

emotionally ready for assessment process (Wu et al., 2021). The research underscores the proficiency of English teachers in articulating expectations Van der Kleij (2019), a notion consistent with Veugen et al (2021), where establishing clear expectations stood out as a common formative assessment practice in classrooms.

Teachers primarily employ such practices to set clear expectations and gather student responses in the classroom. As emphasised by Cheng (2023) as well as Isakovna and Kosimov (2023), clarity in ESL classroom goals is crucial to enhance learner motivation and engagement (Rungwarapong, 2019). While teachers generally held positive views toward formative assessment, the study highlighted a lack of implementation regarding adapting teaching strategies based on assessment outcomes. Additionally, the study noted a prevalence of teacher-led activities over self- and peer-assessment activities.

Self and peer assessment were underscored as crucial aspects of formative assessment by (Khan et al., 2023). Ismail et al (2022) demonstrated that these assessments evaluate learning, boost academic motivation, reduce anxiety, and improve self-regulation. Self-assessment encourages critical reflection, aiding reflective learning (Fletcher, 2023), while Malkawi et al (2023) emphasised its correlation with improved learning outcomes. Peer assessment supports education Casinto (2023), alleviates anxiety Bolourchi & Soleimani (2021), and enables students to co-create assessments, fostering shared class objectives, although participation should be voluntary (Bovill, 2020). It was also revealed that peer assessment practices aid in enhancing classroom assessment practices (Hussain et al., 2019).

On the other hand, Hilden et al (2022) highlighted various supplementary practices associated with summative assessments in ESL classrooms. These practices involve communicating learning objectives and grading criteria, employing the national curriculum for assessment tasks, fostering effective communication with students and parents regarding assessments, collaborating with fellow teachers in task design, addressing individual differences, adapting instruction based on assessments, profiling language proficiency, incorporating national test outcomes, utilising online testing, employing pre-made assessments, and integrating peer and self-assessment in grading. Self-assessment is an effective learning strategy Alzabidi (2021), and peer assessment is beneficial when students approach each other's work seriously (Zhou et al., 2020).

Various summative assessment practices can be applied within the classroom, typically linked to mid-semester or final examinations. In prior research by Hilden et al (2022), teachers highlighted the importance of defining target objectives and grading criteria as crucial practices for summative assessment. However, self or peer assessment were deemed less significant, possibly due to the prevalence of teacher-led summative decision-making. Notably, student perceptions indicated that self-assessment could be adversely affected in a summative context (Yan et al., 2023).

Teachers must integrate authentic assessment into ESL classrooms to establish an English learning environment. The Malaysian government has stressed the importance of authentic assessment in teaching and learning practices (Aziz et al., 2020; Ministry of Education, 2013). Authentic assessment, recognised as student-centred and engaging, fosters active learning within ESL classrooms (Aziz et al., 2020). Authentic assessment tasks in Malaysia are crucial in evaluating students' English proficiency within real-world contexts. Teachers are responsible for ensuring students have sufficient chances to meet learning standards Ministry of Education (2020), considering their diverse learning styles (Chetty et al., 2019; Ministry of Education, 2020). Teacher education, teaching experiences and life experiences led to their perception of fairness in delivering equitable assessments (Rasooli et



al., 2023). Therefore, teachers must craft assessment questions tailored to match students' varying ability levels, encompassing knowledge and skills (Pratiwi et al., 2019). Despite many classroom assessment practices, barriers to rural English learning persist, mainly due to low family income and English proficiency (Chai & Hamid, 2023). Rural students face additional challenges arising from low socioeconomic backgrounds and limited English exposure at home. Identifying and employing effective classroom assessment practices is crucial to aid their English proficiency. This ensures tailored learning activities that suit their language needs (Chew & Ng, 2021). Therefore, identifying classroom assessment practices is crucial in aligning student progress with government aspirations, ensuring motivation and progress toward targeted educational goals.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

The present study investigated teachers' perceptions regarding implementing classroom assessment in ESL environments. Employing a quantitative approach, the research collected measurable data from many participants and analysed this data using statistical methods (Kinyua, 2023). The research design utilised for this study was a survey design (Kinyua, 2023). Survey research incorporates quantitative strategies involving questionnaires with numerically rated items. This method, as highlighted by Kinyua (2023), is known for its thoroughness and rigour, ensuring inclusivity, timing accuracy, and minimising response errors, thus contributing to the overall quality of the research.

### **Research Setting**

The study took place in Semporna, Sabah, which was chosen due to the scarcity of research on teachers' perceptions of classroom assessments in rural settings within this area. Additionally, the researcher has a professional affiliation with this location, adding a deeper context to the study.

### **Research Participants**

Fifty-five English teachers based in secondary schools in Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia, were involved in this study. Given the limited number of English-major teachers in Semporna, all eligible teachers were included to bolster research accuracy by encompassing the entire population, thereby minimising errors due to a small sample size (Barlett et al., 2001 as cited in Osuagwu, 2020).

The sample for this study comprised ESL teachers from a rural school in Sabah who were responsible for teaching English at the secondary school level. Purposive sampling was adopted to select participants, ensuring that the chosen teachers had relevant experience and expertise in teaching English across rural education's lower- and upper-form levels. Purposive sampling emphasises the researcher's discretion in the selection process (Obilor, 2023). This method facilitated the selection of teachers who were English majors. Teachers not specialised in English might encounter difficulties grasping the language's content, potentially influencing their perceptions of ESL classroom assessment practices. Focusing on teachers aligned with current English standards, the study offered valuable insights into unique classroom assessment practices used in rural settings to address students' language learning needs.

### Research Instruments

This study employed a structured questionnaire to systematically gather data on teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices, drawing inspiration from items from two previous studies (Hilden et al., 2022; Veugen et al., 2021). Before commencing the research, a pilot test was conducted to assess reliability. Thirty English secondary school teachers were chosen as respondents due to their influential role in conducting classroom assessments within ESL settings. The obtained score of 0.861, calculated using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29, falls within the range considered good, according to Kachooei et al (2015), which deems values between 0.7 to 0.9 acceptable. Hence, the items demonstrated sufficient reliability and were considered suitable for this study. The questionnaire underwent extensive adaptation and rigorous validation to ensure reliability and appropriateness. Validation involved a meticulous evaluation by three experts, resulting in the inclusion of a total of 23 items in the study.

The questionnaire explored teachers' perceptions of implementing classroom assessment activities in ESL classrooms, comprising 23 items to gather insights into formative and summative assessment practices. Items 1 to 14 were related to formative assessment, adapted from Veugen et al. (2021), while items 15 to 23 addressed summative assessment practices, adapted from Hilden et al (2022) as shown in Appendix. This questionnaire employed a 4-point Likert scale: "Never," "Sometimes," "Often," and "Always." This study adopted this scale, omitting the "Rarely" option due to difficulties in distinguishing it from "Sometimes" (Pollack et al., 2021).

### Data Collection

The study began by adapting a questionnaire from the literature. Following expert feedback, essential revisions were made to improve questionnaire validity, and a pilot study was conducted to ensure the reliability of the study. Permissions were sought from MOE via Education Research Application System (eRAS), and further approvals were obtained from Sabah State Education Department and Semporna District Office. Approval letters were secured to conduct the study across nine public schools. Subsequently, questionnaires were sent via Google Forms to secondary English teachers in these schools for data collection.

### Data Analysis

This study employed Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 29 for rigorous statistical analysis of the data collected. Descriptive analysis comprehensively depicted and summarised the data, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation measures. Specifically, this analysis aimed to elucidate ESL teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices. Using descriptive analysis effectively addressed and examined the research question in depth.

### Results

This section presents the findings related to teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices, distinguishing between formative and summative assessments to address the following research question:

RQ1: What are the teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices in ESL classrooms?

### Teachers' Perceptions on Classroom Assessment Practices in ESL Classrooms

This research aims to elucidate teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices in ESL classrooms. The questionnaire employed 23 items, where items 1 to 14 explored perceptions regarding formative assessment practices, and items 15 to 23 centred on perceptions about summative assessment practices. Systematically conducted and reported by teachers, these practices are intended to assess students' proficiency levels, aligning with CEFR descriptors (Ministry of Education, 2013).

To address the research question, a questionnaire was utilised to evaluate perceptions regarding the application of classroom assessment in ESL settings. The descriptions associated with the 4-point Likert scale, spanning from 'very low' to 'very high' as detailed in Table 1, aided in interpreting the mean values within this study.

Table 1

*Four-Point Likert Scale*

Likert Scale	Mean Value	Description
1	1.00-1.49	Very Low
2	1.50-2.49	Low
3	2.50-3.49	High
4	3.50-4.00	Very High

The four-point Likert scale, adapted from Mergal et al. (2019), operates as an interval scale. Scores between 1.00 and 1.49 signify "Very low," 1.50 to 2.49 represent "Low," 2.50 to 3.49 indicate "High," and 3.50 to 4.00 denote "Very High." This scale was used to assess teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices in ESL classrooms.

### Formative Assessment

Teachers' perceptions of formative assessment practices were depicted in a Likert scale table showcasing percentages, mean and standard deviation values. The interpretation of these mean scores for each item was executed based on the guidelines provided in Table 2 for mean interpretation.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions of Formative Assessment in ESL Classroom*

No	Item	N n (%)	S n (%)	O n (%)	A n (%)	Mean	SD	Mean Interpretation
1	I formulate learning goals for the lesson.	0	6 (10.9)	23 (41.8)	26 (47.3)	3.36	0.68	High
2	I use modelling to show pupils examples of what the task should look like.	0	9 (16.4)	27 (49.1)	19 (34.5)	3.18	0.70	High
3	I use various assessment methods to determine what the pupils know and can do.	1 (1.8)	13 (23.6)	27 (49.1)	14 (25.5)	2.98	0.76	High
4	I ask pupils to explain their answers.	1 (1.8)	6 (10.9)	29 (52.7)	19 (34.5)	3.20	0.70	High



5	I identify the strengths of my pupils in the class.	0	5 (9.1)	29 (52.7)	21 (38.2)	3.29	0.63	High
6	I identify the points for improvement of my pupils in class.	1 (1.8)	4 (7.3)	30 (54.5)	20 (36.4)	3.25	0.67	High
7	I compare pupils' work to the criteria of the task.	1 (1.8)	11 (20.0)	24 (43.6)	19 (34.5)	3.11	0.79	High
8	I let pupils compare their own work to the criteria of the task.	3 (5.5)	22 (40.0)	23 (41.8)	7 (12.7)	2.62	0.78	High
9	I let pupils compare each other's work to the task's criteria.	7 (12.7)	20 (36.4)	19 (34.5)	9 (16.4)	2.55	0.92	High
10	I discuss the strengths of my pupils in class.	2 (3.6)	14 (25.5)	25 (45.5)	14 (25.5)	2.93	0.81	High
11	I discuss the points for improvement of my pupils in class.	1 (1.8)	13 (23.6)	23 (41.8)	18 (32.7)	3.05	0.80	High
12	I let pupils think of their own strengths and points for improvement.	2 (3.6)	18 (32.7)	25 (45.5)	10 (18.2)	2.78	0.79	High
13	I deviate from the next lesson plan (learning materials and learning goals) when I discover that the previous learning goals have yet to be reached.	1 (1.8)	5 (9.1)	35 (63.6)	14 (25.5)	3.13	0.64	High
14	Based on my previous analyses, I consciously differentiate teaching and learning in my class.	1 (1.8)	11 (20.0)	34 (61.8)	9 (16.4)	2.93	0.66	High
Overall						3.03	0.49	

N: Never; S: Sometimes; O: Often; A: Always; SD: Standard Deviation

The mean values in Table 2 depict consistent trends in teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices. The scores, ranging from 2.55 to 3.36, indicate a high but not the utmost frequency of engagement in these practices among teachers. The results showed that Semporna's English teachers positively perceive formative assessment practices in ESL classrooms.

Item 1 emerged with the highest mean score ( $M=3.36$ ), showing that 47.3% ( $n=26$ ) of respondents always set learning goals for their lessons. Similarly, 52.7% ( $n=29$ ) indicated they often identify student strengths in item 5 ( $M=3.29$ ), and 54.5% ( $n=30$ ) identified areas for improvement in item 6 ( $M=3.25$ ). Items 10 and 14 shared a mean score of  $M=2.93$ , revealing respondents often discuss students' strengths during instructional sessions and adjust teaching and learning in the classroom based on prior analyses.

Items with lower mean values (Items 12, 8, and 9) showed less frequent engagement. For instance, item 12 ( $M=2.78$ ) revealed only 45.5% ( $n=25$ ) of respondents often encouraged students to think of their own strengths and points of improvement. In contrast, item 8 ( $M=2.62$ ) indicated that 41.8% ( $n=23$ ) respondents often had students compare work against task criteria, and Item 9 ( $M=2.55$ ) reflected that 36.4% ( $n=20$ ) respondents sometimes encouraged students to evaluate each other's work against the task criteria which is a practice perceived sometimes by the respondents.

Items 1, 2 and 5 showed a remarkable trend, with no respondents indicating 'never.' This widespread perception solidifies educators' belief that these practices, such as

formulating learning goals, using modelling to show pupils of what the task should look like and identifying student strengths, are essential components regularly utilised in ESL classrooms for formative assessment.

The standard deviations ranging from 0.63 to 0.92 reveal moderate variability in teachers' perceptions. These values indicate some degree of dispersion or spread around the mean score for these statements. Lower values of 0.63 indicate closer agreement, particularly regarding identifying students' strengths in class. Higher values of 0.92 signify more diversity in perceptions, especially in facilitating peer assessment. These deviations suggest moderate variety in teachers' views on formative assessment practices.

### Summative Assessment

Teachers' perceptions of summative assessment practices were assessed through a Likert scale table outlining percentages, mean and standard deviation values. The interpretation of these mean scores for each item followed guidelines from Table 3 for mean interpretation.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions of Summative Assessments in ESL Classroom*

No	Item	N n (%)	S n (%)	O n (%)	A n (%)	Mean	SD	Mean Interpretation
15	I inform pupils about grading criteria.	1 (1.8)	10 (18.2)	28 (50.9)	16 (29.1)	3.07	0.74	High
16	I use the <i>Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran</i> (DSKP) for the final examination test.	1 (1.8)	7 (12.7)	28 (50.9)	19 (34.5)	3.18	0.72	High
17	I communicate performance in the final assessment grades to pupils.	1 (1.8)	5 (9.1)	30 (54.5)	19 (34.5)	3.22	0.69	High
18	I cooperate with other teachers in planning final assessments.	2 (3.6)	14 (25.5)	23 (41.8)	16 (29.1)	2.96	0.84	High
19	I adjust classroom teaching based on the results of the final assessments.	1 (1.8)	5 (9.1)	29 (52.7)	20 (36.4)	3.24	0.69	High
20	I consider individual differences (e.g. interests, special needs)	2 (3.6)	9 (16.4)	27 (49.1)	17 (30.9)	3.07	0.79	High
21	I use ready-made tests (trials, past year questions) when assessing pupils' performance.	1 (1.8)	10 (18.2)	28 (50.9)	16 (29.1)	3.07	0.74	High
22	I use self-assessment when grading the final assessment.	2 (3.6)	15 (27.3)	29 (52.7)	9 (16.4)	2.82	0.75	High
23	I use peer assessment when grading the final assessment.	4 (7.3)	25 (45.5)	21 (38.2)	5 (9.1)	2.49	0.77	Low
Overall						3.01	0.49	

N: Never; S: Sometimes; O: Often; A: Always SD: Standard Deviation

Table 3 meticulously details the frequency and mean scores across nine items, examining participants' viewpoints on summative assessment practices within ESL

classrooms. Elevated mean values, ranging from 2.82 to 3.22, characterise most items, indicating a prevalent presence. However, one outlier, item 23, presents a comparatively lower mean score of 2.49. Despite these generally high mean values, they do not uniformly signify the utmost frequency among the respondents. This suggests a substantial but not consistently prevalent nature of these assessment practices among the surveyed respondents. Additionally, the results indicated that Semporna teachers positively perceive summative assessment practices in ESL classrooms.

The analysis reveals that all items except item 23 were perceived to occur often in ESL classrooms. For instance, 52.7% (n=29) of respondents often adjusted classroom teaching based on final assessment results in item 19 (M=3.24). Similarly, 54.5% (n=30) respondents perceived frequently applied practice in item 17, communicating performance grades to students (M=3.22), showcasing widespread adoption of this practice.

Items 20 and 21 shared a similar mean value (M=3.07), indicating that around 50.9% (n=28) of respondents often used ready-made tests for assessments, and 49.1% (n=27) respondents considered individual differences in assessments.

Moreover, self-assessment in grading (Mean=2.82) was perceived to occur often by 52.7% (n=29) of respondents. However, item 23 presented a lower mean value (Mean=2.49), indicating that peer assessment practices were relatively less frequently employed according to respondents' perceptions at 45.5% (n=25).

Standard deviations from 0.69 to 0.84 suggest moderate variability in teachers' perceptions of summative assessment. This moderate deviation indicates some variability in these perceptions but not significantly. These values imply a moderate consistency in teachers' views on summative assessment, with a degree of diversity in their perceptions.

It is essential to recognise that some summative assessment practices may overlap with formative assessment methods, such as adjusting teaching approaches or considering individual differences (Hilden et al., 2022). Similar to the findings in Nguyen and Truong (2021), the specific objectives of formative assessments were observed to be intertwined with the fundamental principles inherent in summative assessments. This overlap can bridge or eliminate unnecessary discrepancies between the goals of these distinct assessment approaches.

## Discussion

### RQ1: What are the teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment in ESL classrooms?

#### Formative assessment

The findings underscore teachers' apparent preference for goal setting, highlighting their proactive approach to lesson planning. This is aligned with Veugen et al. (2021) assertion that establishing explicit expectations is a common practice in formative assessment. Goal setting is a cognitive process aligned with individuals' task performance objectives. These goals significantly shape behaviours and actions within educational settings. This proactive approach to lesson planning underscores the role of goals as driving forces behind students' actions and behaviours in the academic context (Cheng, 2023). This indicates that teachers consistently perceive classroom assessment practices as tools for guiding students toward lesson objectives, prompting them to act to achieve those learning goals. Familiarity with the learning objectives enhances students' motivation and aids learning within the classroom (Cheng, 2023; Isakovna & Kosimov, 2023).

Additionally, the analysis delved deeper into how teachers identify and communicate students' strengths and classroom improvement areas. This emphasises teachers' crucial role

in acknowledging students' strengths and weaknesses, thus nurturing their progress (Malkawi et al., 2023). It directly mirrors the importance of teachers in offering feedback to students, consistent with previous research (Widiastuti et al., 2020; Zulaiha et al., 2020) that highlights feedback provision as a prevalent and beneficial assessment practice for student learning. These insights align with the SCT, illustrating how students' capacities develop through teacher interactions. This correlation sheds light on why these specific aspects received high mean scores in this investigation.

However, this study's findings indicate a lack of emphasis from teachers on encouraging students to autonomously evaluate their strengths, recognise areas for improvement, and compare their work against set criteria or with peers. This sheds light on how teachers perceive and promote student-driven assessment practices within classrooms. These results align with prior research by Veugen et al. (2021), highlighting a prevalent focus on teacher-led assessment over self- and peer-assessment activities, signifying a dominant teacher-centric belief among educators. Teachers' perspectives suggest infrequent student engagement in self-assessment and peer-assessment activities, often attributed to differing proficiency levels among students. Jamrus and Razali (2019) emphasised the use of self-assessment to manage larger classrooms and support teacher evaluations. However, concerns persist regarding potential self-deception among students during self-assessment, notably when lacking the necessary metalanguage and metalinguistic knowledge, leading to inaccurate self-evaluations. Khan et al (2023) stressed the importance of Malaysian teachers involving students in self and peer assessment, yet challenges arise when students struggle to self-assess accurately due to low proficiency levels. As highlighted by Zakaria and Yunus (2020), low English proficiency poses a significant hurdle to English language acquisition, with many students perceiving self-assessment as more common than peer assessment.

Casinto (2023) highlights the challenge of higher proficiency students not benefiting from peer assessment when lower proficiency students struggle to offer constructive feedback. Teacher feedback takes precedence due to students' limited understanding of their roles in the process (Wu et al., 2021). Students' perceived inability to generate quality feedback independently or with peers, coupled with emotional concerns, leads teachers to rely more on teacher-centred assessment for its perceived reliability over self- and peer evaluations. Additionally, there is a recognised need for structured support to enable meaningful peer assessments (Bolourchi & Soleimani, 2021; Casinto, 2023).

Ismail et al (2022) emphasise the benefits of peer assessment in enhancing motivation, reducing anxiety, and improving self-regulation skills. Practical peer assessment involves guided interaction among students during feedback, benefiting lower proficiency students in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Hence, teachers are encouraged to integrate more self-assessment and peer-assessment practices into their instructional routines, supporting students at various proficiency levels.

In summary, the teachers' perception of formative assessment practices gave us insight into how the teachers in Semporna consider guiding students through learning goals and strengths, but a teacher-centric approach in ESL assessments shows heavy reliance on teachers. This suggests students might lack training in these techniques due to proficiency.

### **Summative Assessment**

The varying frequencies reported in different summative assessment practices reveal ESL teachers' diverse approaches to assessing student learning. The prevalence of adjusting teaching methods based on final assessment outcomes and conveying performance grades

correspond with the findings of (Hilden et al., 2022). Earlier research has highlighted the concept of employing summative assessments formatively, aiming to bridge the gap between distinct assessment purposes. For instance, based on this analysis, teachers can repurpose end-of-term evaluations to grasp students' challenges and adapt their teaching strategies for upcoming terms. This study mirrors the findings of previous research by Hilden et al (2022), emphasising teachers' belief in the importance of informing students about grading criteria in summative assessment. Additionally, Fletcher (2023) underscored that providing feedback alongside grades is among the most crucial summative practices, aiding students in understanding areas for improvement in their assessments.

The findings highlighted teachers' inclination toward considering individual differences and utilising existing tests for student evaluations. Specifically, half of the respondents in this study frequently regarded this practice as customary for summative assessments. The importance of acknowledging students' diverse needs and abilities were emphasised (Chew & Ng, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2020), a practice teachers often observe in their classrooms. Teachers must employ suitable materials and activities that cater to different learning styles among students, as this can significantly impact students' academic performance (Chetty et al., 2019; Ministry of Education, 2020). In Hilden et al. (2022), teachers emphasised the importance of considering individual differences in summative assessment for fairness and adaptability. Diagnostic tests have been proposed to gain insights into students' individual differences and ensure fairness in classroom assessment (Rasooli et al., 2023). Moreover, the frequent utilisation of ready-made tests, like past final exams and national assessments, for summative assessments (Pratiwi et al., 2019) is perceived by respondents. However, it remains crucial to ensure these tests effectively address the diverse needs of students.

However, the discrepancy between the frequent use of self-assessment and the less common application of peer assessment practices indicates a potential imbalance in collaborative evaluation methods. The infrequent use of self-assessment in grading final assessments might stem from the perception that self-assessment may not significantly contribute to learning, possibly due to students prioritising grades over the learning process (Yan et al., 2023). Yet, it is noteworthy that engaging in self-testing and creating question banks for summative tests can enhance autonomy and learning strategies while yielding better results (Alzabidi, 2021).

Regarding peer assessment, this research reflected a lower mean score. This could arise from peers' potential lack of proficiency in delivering comprehensive feedback, a lack of seriousness in executing the peer assessment process, and the absence of positive commentary, which might have left students dissatisfied with the overall experience (Zhou et al., 2020). Additionally, previous study Hussain et al (2019) have highlighted the utility of peer assessment in overcrowded classrooms to reduce assessment time and foster students' critical thinking. To enhance peer assessment practices, students might benefit from training to provide better feedback and positive comments, fostering an environment where they support each other's growth through constructive evaluations. Additionally, this discovery in the study aligns with Hilden et al (2022) assertion that teacher assessments are more reliable than self- and peer assessments. This reliability originates from the legal responsibility of teachers, as they bear sole accountability for making definitive judgments regarding students' accomplishments.

In summary, summative assessment practices revealed common strategies like adjusting teaching and sharing grades as well as considering students' interests and

proficiency when preparing final assessments. However, self and peer assessment disparities hint at prioritising grades over learning. This study revealed infrequent self-assessment could aid learning, but inadequate peer assessment practices require improved support and training in collaborative methods.

In future research endeavours, while questionnaires have been the primary methods employed, incorporating semi-structured interviews and classroom observations would present a notable avenue for deeper exploration. This addition could effectively bridge the gap between teachers' perceived assessment practices and the actual implementation within ESL classrooms. Focusing solely on teachers' perceptions leaves room for exploring students' perspectives on classroom assessment practices. This inclusion would yield valuable insights into how these practices engage learners and foster their educational advancement. By comprehending both teachers' and students' viewpoints, future studies can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the classroom environment and the interplay between perceived and experienced assessment practices.

### **Conclusions**

This study delved into ESL teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices, revealing vital practices crucial in education. These findings align with SCT, emphasising the role of social interaction in learning. Clear communication with students emerged as a prevalent practice, catering to formative and summative assessment goals. Rooted in SCT, these practices highlight teachers' role as experts in guiding learners within their ZPD through assessments. However, there is a leaning towards teacher-centred assessments in Semporna, possibly due to students' lower English proficiency hindering peer assessment. This highlights the need for student training in peer mediation, which is crucial within this theory's framework.

The implications derived from teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices in ESL classrooms underscore the practical significance for teachers. Teachers heavily rely on their perceptions to shape and implement effective assessments as the primary agent of classroom assessment practices. These perceptions act as a roadmap for educators, aiding in refining assessment strategies within their teaching spaces. This study emphasises classroom assessment's role in advancing students' learning journey. This research strengthens the understanding of assessment practices in developing regions' ESL classrooms. Examining the interplay between teacher perceptions and SCT principles offers a framework for tailoring assessment to specific contexts. This focus on teacher perceptions fills a knowledge gap, acknowledging their role in shaping effective strategies. Furthermore, the identified need for student training in peer assessment highlights the importance of adapting SCT to address contextual limitations. Ultimately, this research provides practical guidance for ESL educators in developing regions, promoting effective assessment that fosters successful student learning environments.

This study is a cornerstone for future investigations into classroom assessment practices. Its findings provide a crucial understanding of the current educational landscape, guiding educators, policymakers, and stakeholders toward a more precise direction. Addressing the gaps in teacher perspectives, especially within Malaysian secondary and rural school settings, this research paves the way for future endeavours focused on refining classroom assessment methods. These new insights act as a guiding light, illuminating the breadth of practices within classroom assessments for stakeholders to explore further.



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