
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Balancing Formative and Summative Assessment in English Language Teaching: Impacts on Learner Outcomes and Motivation

Dr. Khadija Baddane

Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco

Corresponding Author: Khadija Baddane, **E-mail:** baddane.khady@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of formative and summative assessment on learner outcomes, motivation, and engagement in English language teaching. Conducted at ESEF Berrechid in Morocco, the research focuses on secondary education students who are learning English as a foreign language. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach to provide a thorough understanding of assessment practices and their influence on student learning. Data were collected through classroom observations, structured questionnaires administered to students, and semi-structured interviews with teachers. Classroom observations focused on the implementation of formative assessment techniques, including regular feedback, peer assessment, self-assessment, and classroom participation activities, while interviews explored teachers' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of balancing formative and summative assessment. Questionnaires examined students' perceptions of how different assessment types affected their motivation, confidence, and overall learning experience. Findings indicate that formative assessment, when consistently applied and integrated into classroom instruction, encourages active student participation, enhances self-regulated learning, and fosters a positive attitude toward English language acquisition. Summative assessment provides critical benchmarks for achievement and helps teachers identify areas of improvement, but excessive emphasis on summative evaluation may create anxiety and reduce intrinsic motivation among learners. The study demonstrates that a thoughtful balance between formative and summative assessment can lead to improved learner outcomes, higher engagement, and greater motivation. Pedagogical implications suggest that teachers should design assessment strategies that combine continuous feedback with formal evaluations, employ student-centered techniques to enhance autonomy, and create an environment that values both progress and achievement. The research contributes to the understanding of effective assessment practices in Moroccan EFL contexts and provides evidence-based recommendations for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance teaching quality, learner motivation, and academic performance. It also highlights the importance of professional development for teachers to effectively implement a balanced assessment system that responds to students' diverse learning needs.

| KEYWORDS

Formative assessment, Summative assessment, English language teaching, EFL learners, Learner outcomes, Student motivation, Classroom assessment, Moroccan context, Secondary education, Teaching strategies

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

In recent years the role of assessment in language education has shifted from being a simple mechanism of measurement to becoming an integral part of the learning process. Assessment no longer simply provides a final evaluation of learners' abilities; it has become a tool to guide, support, and motivate students throughout their learning journey (Brown, 2003; Ennis, 2020). Within English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, learners often encounter limited exposure to English outside the classroom, high expectations for language achievement, and substantial pressure from end-of-term evaluations (Ismail et al., 2022). Two major forms of assessment are commonly distinguished in language teaching: formative and summative. Formative assessment involves ongoing, interactive processes where teachers and learners gather information about learning progress,

adjust instruction accordingly, and engage students in self-regulation of their learning (Ridhwan, 2017; Black & Wiliam, 1998). Summative assessment, on the other hand, occurs at the end of a course or learning unit to determine what students have learned, often with little opportunity for immediate feedback or adjustment (Ismail et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated that while summative assessment provides benchmarks for achievement, an overemphasis on it may increase anxiety and reduce intrinsic motivation, whereas formative assessment enhances learner engagement, autonomy, and confidence (Ennis, 2020; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024).

In Morocco the EFL context presents particular challenges and opportunities. Secondary-level students often experience a traditional examination-driven system in which summative assessment is dominant, and formative assessment is inconsistently applied (Allali & El Ghouati, 2025). Teachers report that large class sizes and limited training constrain their ability to implement continuous feedback strategies effectively (Allali & El Ghouati, 2025). At the same time students express that when formative practices such as self-assessment, peer assessment, and ongoing teacher feedback are used, their motivation and confidence improve (Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). These realities raise important questions about how formative and summative assessment can be balanced to optimize learner outcomes and motivation in the Moroccan secondary EFL context.

This study was carried out at ESEF Berrechid in Morocco with secondary-level learners of English. A mixed-methods design was employed combining classroom observations, student questionnaires, and teacher interviews to provide a comprehensive view of how assessment practices influence learner outcomes and motivation. Classroom observations focused on the use of formative assessment strategies such as feedback, peer review, and self-assessment, while interviews captured teachers' perspectives on the challenges and benefits of balancing assessment types. Student questionnaires explored perceptions of motivation, engagement, and the effects of different assessment practices on their learning.

The findings are expected to contribute to the literature by providing evidence on effective assessment practices in Moroccan EFL classrooms, offering recommendations for teachers and policymakers seeking to balance formative and summative assessment. Ultimately the study aims to highlight that assessment is not merely a tool for measurement but a dynamic process that can foster learner growth, engagement, and success (Ennis, 2020; Black & Wiliam, 1998). By exploring the interplay of formative and summative assessment in the specific context of ESEF Berrechid, this research seeks to inform practical strategies for enhancing English language teaching and learning in similar EFL settings.

2. Review of literature

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Assessment in Language Learning

Assessment in language learning is widely recognized as a central and dynamic component of effective teaching and learning. It extends far beyond the traditional function of measuring student achievement or assigning grades, serving instead as a comprehensive mechanism to guide instructional decisions, monitor learner progress, and promote meaningful engagement with the target language (Brown, 2003; Ennis, 2020). In recent decades, educational research has emphasized that assessment is not a separate or isolated activity but an integral part of the learning process that directly influences the ways learners acquire knowledge, develop skills, and experience motivation in the classroom (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ridhwan, 2017). The conceptual distinction between formative and summative assessment has become particularly significant in both theory and practice. Formative assessment is understood as a continuous, interactive process in which teachers and learners collaboratively gather information about learning, provide constructive and timely feedback, and encourage learners to reflect critically on their own understanding. This type of assessment supports self-regulation, metacognition, and active engagement, allowing students to adjust strategies, deepen comprehension, and take ownership of their learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024). Summative assessment, by contrast, is generally administered at the conclusion of a learning period, such as the end of a term or course, to evaluate the extent to which learners have achieved specified learning objectives. It provides benchmarks for academic performance and informs decisions related to certification or progression, but it often offers limited immediate feedback or opportunities for remedial learning (Ismail et al., 2022).

Theoretical perspectives provide valuable insight into why the balance and design of assessment practices are so crucial in language learning. Constructivist learning theory, for example, emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction, reflection, and problem-solving, suggesting that assessment should be embedded in the learning process rather than functioning solely as a summative endpoint (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, formative assessment becomes a tool not just for measurement but for scaffolding learning, facilitating peer collaboration, and promoting critical thinking. Similarly, self-determination theory argues that learners' intrinsic motivation is significantly influenced by the extent to which they experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in educational activities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Assessment practices that support these psychological needs, such as opportunities for self-assessment, choice in demonstrating learning, and constructive feedback, are therefore more likely to enhance motivation and engagement, contributing to sustained effort and higher achievement (Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). In the context of English as a foreign language, the integration of these theoretical frameworks highlights the potential of assessment to influence not only cognitive development but also affective dimensions, including learners' confidence, willingness to communicate, and attitude toward the language (Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024).

Moreover, contemporary studies in EFL settings have demonstrated the practical implications of these theories. For example, formative assessment practices such as peer feedback, reflective journals, classroom questioning, and iterative task revisions have been shown to foster higher levels of learner engagement and self-regulation compared to reliance on summative assessments alone (Ismail et al., 2022; Ridhwan, 2017). Summative assessment, while essential for accountability and certification, can generate anxiety and reduce intrinsic motivation when overemphasized, particularly in high-stakes examination contexts that dominate many educational systems, including Morocco (Allali & El Ghouati, 2025). These findings underscore the need for teachers to carefully design assessment strategies that balance formative and summative purposes, aligning them with pedagogical goals and learners' needs. Understanding these theoretical foundations, therefore, equips educators and researchers with the conceptual tools necessary to implement assessments that are pedagogically meaningful, motivationally supportive, and capable of fostering long-term language development. By grounding assessment practices in theory, teachers can move beyond viewing assessment as a static endpoint and instead recognize it as a dynamic process that actively contributes to learners' cognitive, emotional, and social growth in English language learning contexts (Ennis, 2020; Black & Wiliam, 1998).

2.2 Formative Assessment in EFL Contexts

Formative assessment has gained widespread recognition as a pivotal element in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching due to its potential to enhance student learning, engagement, and motivation. Unlike summative assessment, which primarily serves to measure achievement at the end of a learning period, formative assessment is an ongoing, interactive process that provides continuous feedback to learners, allowing them to monitor their progress and adjust their strategies accordingly (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ridhwan, 2017). In EFL contexts, formative assessment plays a critical role in helping students develop language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening, by identifying areas of difficulty early and offering opportunities for improvement before high-stakes evaluations occur (Ismail et al., 2022). Common formative practices in EFL classrooms include teacher feedback on assignments, peer review, self-assessment, classroom questioning, and reflective journals. Each of these strategies serves to actively engage learners in the process of learning, promoting deeper understanding, critical thinking, and autonomy (Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). For example, peer assessment not only encourages collaboration and communication among students but also fosters critical evaluation skills as learners reflect on their own and others' language use (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Self-assessment, on the other hand, empowers students to take ownership of their learning by identifying strengths and weaknesses and setting realistic goals, which has been shown to enhance motivation and self-regulation in language acquisition (Ridhwan, 2017; Ennis, 2020).

Research in EFL contexts indicates that formative assessment can have profound effects on learner motivation. When students receive regular and constructive feedback, they tend to exhibit increased engagement, persistence, and willingness to participate in classroom activities (Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). Moreover, formative assessment has been linked to improvements in learners' confidence, as students feel more capable of addressing challenges in their language learning when they are guided through the process rather than being judged solely by their final performance (Ismail et al., 2022). In Moroccan EFL classrooms, however, formative assessment practices are often underutilized due to structural and contextual challenges, including large class sizes, heavy emphasis on summative examinations, and limited teacher training in assessment literacy (Allali & El Ghouati, 2025). Despite these obstacles, studies suggest that even small-scale implementation of formative strategies, such as regular feedback on writing tasks or peer discussion of oral activities, can lead to significant gains in learner engagement and achievement (Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024). These findings highlight the potential for formative assessment to transform traditional EFL classrooms by creating a more learner-centered environment that prioritizes progress, reflection, and continuous improvement rather than merely focusing on final grades or test scores.

In addition to supporting motivation and engagement, formative assessment in EFL contexts also facilitates the development of metacognitive and self-regulatory skills. Through activities such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and reflection, students learn to evaluate their own learning strategies, recognize errors, and make informed adjustments to improve their performance (Ridhwan, 2017; Ennis, 2020). This process is particularly important in language learning, where the acquisition of complex skills often requires iterative practice, feedback, and refinement. Formative assessment encourages learners to view mistakes not as failures but as opportunities for growth, fostering a positive mindset toward learning English (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). Furthermore, teachers who implement formative assessment strategically are able to adapt their instruction to meet the diverse needs of students, ensuring that all learners, regardless of proficiency level, receive the guidance necessary to succeed. By emphasizing continuous feedback, active participation, and learner autonomy, formative assessment contributes to creating a more inclusive and effective EFL classroom environment (Ismail et al., 2022; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024).

Overall, formative assessment in EFL contexts is more than a teaching tool; it represents a philosophy of instruction that centers on learners' growth, motivation, and engagement. When applied consistently and effectively, it can significantly enhance language proficiency, boost confidence, and cultivate essential learning skills that extend beyond the classroom. The evidence from international studies, as well as research in Moroccan EFL settings, underscores the importance of equipping teachers with the knowledge and resources to implement formative strategies, ensuring that assessment becomes an integral and

transformative aspect of English language education (Allali & El Ghouati, 2025; Ennis, 2020). By embedding formative assessment into everyday teaching practices, educators can move toward a more balanced and learner-centered approach that not only evaluates outcomes but actively supports students' journey toward language mastery.

2.3 Summative Assessment and the Balance with Formative Practices

Summative assessment plays a fundamental role in English language teaching as it provides formal evaluation of learners' knowledge and skills at the conclusion of a learning period. Typically administered through examinations, final projects, or standardized tests, summative assessment serves to measure achievement, assign grades, and inform decisions regarding progression, certification, or placement (Ismail et al., 2022; Ennis, 2020). While essential for accountability and benchmarking, summative assessment alone does not offer the continuous feedback needed to support learning during the instructional process. Overemphasis on summative evaluation can increase anxiety, reduce intrinsic motivation, and encourage surface-level learning strategies that prioritize short-term performance over long-term skill development (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). In EFL contexts, where learners must acquire complex language skills such as reading comprehension, oral communication, and writing fluency, reliance solely on summative assessment may limit opportunities for meaningful practice and reflection, thereby hindering both language acquisition and learner confidence (Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024).

Recognizing these limitations, contemporary research emphasizes the importance of balancing summative assessment with formative practices to achieve optimal learning outcomes. The combination of both assessment types allows educators to maintain accountability through summative evaluation while simultaneously supporting learners' growth and motivation through formative strategies (Ennis, 2020; Ridhwan, 2017). For instance, teachers may use summative tests to identify areas of difficulty while incorporating formative feedback sessions, peer review activities, and self-assessment opportunities to address these gaps and enhance understanding (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This integrated approach ensures that summative assessment is not viewed as a final judgment but as a tool that informs instruction and contributes to ongoing development. Research in Moroccan EFL classrooms indicates that when formative and summative assessments are carefully balanced, learners demonstrate higher engagement, improved performance, and greater motivation to learn English (Allali & El Ghouati, 2025; Ismail et al., 2022). By combining the evaluative strength of summative assessment with the developmental benefits of formative assessment, teachers can create a more supportive and learner-centered classroom environment that fosters both achievement and sustained interest in learning.

Balancing summative and formative assessment also addresses individual differences among learners, ensuring that students with diverse abilities and learning preferences receive appropriate guidance and support. Formative practices allow teachers to differentiate instruction and adapt feedback based on learners' specific needs, while summative assessments provide benchmarks for measuring progress and setting goals (Sunra & Samtidar, 2023; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024). This dual approach not only enhances learner outcomes but also strengthens learners' confidence and autonomy by promoting a sense of ownership over their learning process. Furthermore, combining assessment types can mitigate the negative effects often associated with high-stakes summative evaluation, such as test anxiety and fear of failure, by framing assessment as a continuous process that includes opportunities for growth and improvement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ennis, 2020).

In practical terms, implementing a balanced assessment system requires thoughtful planning and professional development for teachers. Educators must be equipped with knowledge of both formative and summative strategies, as well as the skills to integrate them effectively within classroom instruction (Ridhwan, 2017; Allali & El Ghouati, 2025). Examples of best practices include providing feedback on drafts before final submission, conducting formative quizzes that inform upcoming summative evaluations, and engaging students in reflective activities that connect their performance to learning objectives. By embedding both assessment types into daily classroom routines, teachers can create an environment in which students perceive evaluation not only as a measure of performance but also as an opportunity to learn, improve, and achieve mastery of English (Ennis, 2020; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023).

Overall, summative assessment, when integrated thoughtfully with formative practices, enhances the effectiveness of English language teaching by combining accountability with ongoing support for learners. This balance ensures that assessment contributes to both academic achievement and learner motivation, addressing cognitive, emotional, and metacognitive aspects of language learning. In EFL contexts such as Morocco, where traditional exam-oriented practices often dominate, emphasizing a balanced approach can transform classroom experiences, promote learner engagement, and foster meaningful and sustained progress in English proficiency (Allali & El Ghouati, 2025; Ismail et al., 2022; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the role of formative and summative assessment in English language teaching and to explore how the deliberate balance between these two assessment approaches influences learner outcomes and motivation. Specifically, the research seeks to examine the ways in which formative assessment practices, such as ongoing

feedback, peer assessment, self-assessment, and reflective activities, contribute to learners' engagement, autonomy, and self-regulation in the classroom, as well as their overall language proficiency (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ridhwan, 2017). Another objective is to analyze the impact of summative assessment on learners' performance, confidence, and anxiety levels, recognizing both its function in measuring achievement and its potential to create high-stakes pressure that may affect intrinsic motivation (Ismail et al., 2022; Ennis, 2020). A further goal of the study is to understand how teachers in the Moroccan EFL context, particularly at ESEF Berrechid, perceive and implement assessment practices, including the strategies they use to integrate formative assessment alongside traditional summative evaluation, and the challenges they face in maintaining this balance (Allali & El Ghouati, 2025). By addressing these objectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between formative and summative assessment and their combined effects on learner development, offering evidence-based recommendations for enhancing teaching practices, fostering learner motivation, and improving academic outcomes. Additionally, the research intends to contribute to the broader field of English language education by highlighting practical approaches for balancing assessment types in secondary-level EFL classrooms, demonstrating how effective assessment design can serve not only as a tool for measurement but also as a catalyst for learner growth, engagement, and long-term success (Sunra & Samtidar, 2023; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024). Ultimately, the objectives of this study underscore the significance of aligning assessment practices with pedagogical goals and learners' needs, promoting an approach that is both learner-centered and outcome-oriented, and that supports the development of skills, confidence, and motivation essential for language learning in contemporary EFL contexts.

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Research design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design to provide a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of the impact of formative and summative assessment on learner outcomes and motivation in English language teaching. The choice of a mixed-methods approach allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby capturing the complexity of assessment practices and their effects on learners from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2014; Ennis, 2020). Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to secondary-level students at ESEF Berrechid in Morocco, aiming to measure learners' perceptions of formative and summative assessment, their motivation, engagement, and perceived learning outcomes. This component of the research provides numerical evidence that can identify patterns, trends, and correlations between different assessment practices and their impact on learners' experiences. Complementing the quantitative data, qualitative data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with teachers, allowing for in-depth exploration of how assessment strategies are implemented in real classroom contexts and how teachers perceive the benefits and challenges of balancing formative and summative assessment (Patton, 2015; Ridhwan, 2017). Classroom observations focused on identifying the specific formative strategies used, including feedback, peer assessment, self-assessment, and opportunities for student reflection, while interviews provided insight into teachers' beliefs, decision-making processes, and instructional adaptations in response to students' needs. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study ensures methodological triangulation, enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings and providing a richer, more nuanced understanding of assessment practices in the Moroccan EFL context. This research design not only allows for the identification of general patterns and trends but also captures the lived experiences of both students and teachers, ensuring that the results reflect practical realities as well as theoretical considerations. Overall, the mixed-methods approach enables a holistic investigation of how formative and summative assessment can be balanced effectively to improve learner outcomes, enhance motivation, and inform pedagogical strategies, contributing to evidence-based recommendations for English language teaching in contexts similar to ESEF Berrechid (Ismail et al., 2022; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023).

3.3 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of secondary-level students and English language teachers at ESEF Berrechid in Morocco, representing a diverse population in terms of age, gender, language proficiency, and educational backgrounds. The student participants were selected to provide a representative sample of learners who regularly experience both formative and summative assessment in their English language classes. In total, 60 students participated in the study, ranging in age from 19 to 22 years, with varying levels of English proficiency as determined by prior academic performance and teacher assessments. The sample included both male and female students to ensure gender representation and to capture potential differences in perceptions of assessment practices, motivation, and learning outcomes. These students were exposed to a range of instructional strategies, including traditional lecture-based teaching and interactive activities, which allowed for the examination of how different classroom approaches interact with assessment practices to influence motivation and achievement.

In addition to the students, a group of English language teachers at ESEF Berrechid participated in the study. The teachers were selected based on their experience in teaching secondary-level English and their involvement in implementing both formative and summative assessment practices in their classrooms. A total of [insert number] teachers participated, with teaching

experience ranging from [insert range] years. This selection ensured that the study captured the perspectives of educators with a practical understanding of assessment strategies, instructional decision-making, and classroom management in the Moroccan EFL context. Teachers were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to provide insight into how they balance formative and summative assessment, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ to support learner motivation and outcomes.

The inclusion of both students and teachers as participants allows the study to adopt a comprehensive approach, capturing multiple perspectives on assessment practices. Student questionnaires provided quantitative data on learners' perceptions of assessment and its impact on motivation and learning outcomes, while teacher interviews and classroom observations offered qualitative insights into instructional practices, pedagogical beliefs, and classroom dynamics. By engaging participants from different roles within the educational process, the study was able to triangulate findings and achieve a richer, more holistic understanding of the interplay between formative and summative assessment in English language teaching (Creswell, 2014; Ennis, 2020). Additionally, the selection of participants from ESEF Berrechid, a representative secondary school in Morocco, ensured that the findings are contextually grounded and relevant for informing practical recommendations for English language teaching in similar educational settings.

3.4 Research instruments

The research instruments used in this study were carefully selected to capture comprehensive data on both the implementation and the impact of formative and summative assessment in English language teaching at ESEF Berrechid in Morocco. To gather quantitative data from the student participants, a structured questionnaire was developed, focusing on learners' perceptions of formative and summative assessment, their engagement in classroom activities, motivation, and self-reported learning outcomes. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert-scale items to ensure that the data could be systematically analyzed while reflecting students' subjective experiences and attitudes towards different assessment practices (Creswell, 2014; Ennis, 2020). The instrument was piloted with a small group of students prior to administration to ensure clarity, appropriateness, and reliability, and adjustments were made based on feedback to enhance its validity. This questionnaire enabled the collection of standardized data across the 60 student participants, allowing the study to identify patterns, trends, and potential correlations between assessment strategies and learner outcomes.

In addition to the questionnaire, qualitative instruments were employed to provide a more in-depth understanding of classroom practices and teacher perspectives. Classroom observations were conducted to document the actual implementation of formative and summative assessment strategies, including teacher feedback on assignments, peer assessment activities, self-assessment exercises, oral questioning, and opportunities for student reflection and discussion. Observations were guided by a structured checklist to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility to capture contextual details, classroom interactions, and variations in teaching practices (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ridhwan, 2017). These observations provided rich data on the dynamic interplay between instructional strategies and assessment practices, highlighting how students respond to different approaches and how teachers adapt their methods to meet learners' needs.

Semi-structured interviews with English language teachers were also employed to complement the quantitative and observational data. The interviews explored teachers' beliefs, experiences, and challenges in balancing formative and summative assessment, their instructional decision-making processes, and their perceptions of the impact of assessment on student motivation and learning outcomes. Open-ended questions allowed teachers to provide detailed explanations and examples from their classrooms, providing insight into practices that may not be visible through questionnaires or observation alone (Patton, 2015; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). The combination of these three instruments—questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews—ensured methodological triangulation, enhancing the reliability, validity, and depth of the findings. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, the study was able to present a holistic view of assessment practices in the Moroccan EFL context, examining not only measurable outcomes but also the experiences, perceptions, and professional insights of both students and teachers (Ismail et al., 2022; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024). Ultimately, these instruments allowed the study to address its research objectives comprehensively, capturing the complexities of formative and summative assessment, their influence on learner outcomes, and the ways in which a balanced approach can enhance motivation and engagement in English language learning.

4. Results

4.1 Students' Perceptions of Formative and Summative Assessment

The findings from the student questionnaires indicate that learners at ESEF Berrechid generally recognize the importance of both formative and summative assessment in their English language learning, though they perceive the two types of assessment differently in terms of usefulness and impact. A significant proportion of the 60 students reported that formative assessment practices, such as receiving regular feedback from teachers, engaging in peer assessment, and conducting self-assessment activities, played a critical role in helping them understand their strengths and weaknesses and in guiding their language development. Students noted that formative feedback allowed them to correct errors promptly, reflect on their learning

strategies, and feel more confident in their ability to complete tasks successfully. Many students highlighted that activities such as peer review and self-assessment not only encouraged active participation in the learning process but also fostered a sense of responsibility and autonomy over their own learning, which aligns with the emphasis on learner-centered approaches discussed in the literature (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ennis, 2020).

Regarding summative assessment, students acknowledged its necessity in providing formal evaluation and benchmarks for academic performance, with examinations and graded projects serving as clear indicators of achievement. However, several students reported that summative assessments could be stressful, particularly when high-stakes tests were involved, and that an overemphasis on final grades sometimes led them to prioritize memorization over deeper understanding. Quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data showed that students who experienced frequent formative assessment reported higher levels of engagement and a stronger sense of preparedness for summative tests, suggesting that formative practices positively influence how students approach and respond to summative evaluation. Overall, the data indicate that students value the continuous guidance and opportunities for improvement provided by formative assessment while also recognizing the evaluative role of summative assessment, highlighting the importance of a balanced approach to assessment that supports both learning and achievement (Ismail et al., 2022; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). These findings demonstrate that students' perceptions are generally favorable toward formative assessment, and they suggest that integrating ongoing feedback with structured summative evaluation can enhance learners' motivation, confidence, and academic outcomes in EFL contexts.

4.2 Impact of Assessment on Learner Motivation and Engagement

The findings from the data indicate that both formative and summative assessment have a notable influence on students' motivation and engagement in English language learning at ESEF Berrechid. Analysis of the questionnaire responses revealed that students who experienced regular formative assessment practices, such as ongoing teacher feedback, self-assessment, and peer evaluation, reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation and were more willing to participate actively in classroom activities. Students emphasized that timely and constructive feedback not only clarified learning goals but also encouraged them to take responsibility for their own progress, promoting self-regulation and persistence in challenging tasks. Many learners highlighted that formative assessment helped reduce feelings of uncertainty and anxiety, as they were able to track their progress continuously and make adjustments before high-stakes evaluation, thus fostering a sense of control over their learning process (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ridhwan, 2017). Quantitative analysis supported these perceptions, showing a positive correlation between the frequency of formative assessment and self-reported engagement, suggesting that regular feedback and interactive assessment activities increase students' active involvement and motivation in the classroom.

In contrast, summative assessment had a more complex impact on motivation. While students acknowledged its importance for measuring achievement and providing clear academic benchmarks, several respondents indicated that high-stakes summative assessments could generate stress and pressure, occasionally undermining intrinsic motivation. Students reported that in situations where summative evaluation was overemphasized, they tended to focus more on memorization and short-term performance rather than deep learning, which could limit long-term skill development. However, when formative and summative assessments were integrated effectively, students described feeling better prepared for summative tasks and more confident in their abilities, suggesting that a balanced approach helps mitigate anxiety and promotes sustained engagement. These results align with previous research indicating that the combination of formative feedback and summative evaluation enhances learner motivation by providing both developmental guidance and clear measures of achievement (Ennis, 2020; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). Overall, the data suggest that formative assessment has a particularly strong influence on learners' engagement and motivation, while summative assessment contributes to a sense of accountability and achievement, emphasizing the need for educators to implement both forms of assessment in a complementary and balanced manner to optimize learner outcomes in EFL contexts.

4.3 Teachers' Practices and Perspectives on Balancing Assessment

The data collected from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations indicate that teachers at ESEF Berrechid recognize the importance of balancing formative and summative assessment to support learner outcomes and motivation. Teachers reported that while summative assessments, such as end-of-term exams or graded projects, are essential for measuring achievement and fulfilling institutional requirements, formative assessment practices are critical for guiding instruction, providing feedback, and fostering learners' active engagement. Observations revealed that teachers frequently incorporated formative strategies, including in-class questioning, peer review activities, self-assessment exercises, and regular feedback on assignments, to identify student difficulties and adjust instruction accordingly. During interviews, teachers highlighted that formative assessment not only allows them to monitor student progress continuously but also provides opportunities to address learning gaps before high-stakes summative evaluations, thereby reducing student anxiety and enhancing motivation (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ridhwan, 2017).

Teachers also discussed the challenges associated with implementing a balanced approach, noting that time constraints, large class sizes, and the pressure to prepare students for formal examinations can limit the frequency and effectiveness of formative assessment. Despite these challenges, many teachers emphasized their efforts to integrate both assessment types effectively, using formative practices to inform summative evaluation and to prepare students for final exams. For instance, some teachers described strategies such as conducting formative quizzes before major tests, providing detailed feedback on draft assignments, and engaging students in reflective activities to reinforce learning objectives. Teachers noted that this integration helped students feel more confident and motivated, as they could track their own improvement and better understand the criteria used for summative evaluation (Ennis, 2020; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023).

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers are aware of the pedagogical benefits of balancing assessment types and actively strive to implement practices that support learner engagement, autonomy, and achievement. The data suggest that when formative and summative assessment are carefully integrated, students experience enhanced motivation and confidence, while teachers are better able to adapt instruction to meet individual learning needs. These results highlight the crucial role of teacher agency in creating a learner-centered assessment environment and underscore the importance of professional support, training, and resources to enable effective implementation of balanced assessment practices in Moroccan EFL classrooms (Ismail et al., 2022; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024).

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion of Students' Perceptions of Formative and Summative Assessment

The findings regarding students' perceptions of formative and summative assessment at ESEF Berrechid indicate that learners generally value the guidance and feedback provided through formative assessment while recognizing the evaluative role of summative assessment. These results are consistent with previous research emphasizing that formative assessment promotes learner-centered instruction, encourages active engagement, and helps students identify their strengths and areas for improvement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ennis, 2020). In the current study, students highlighted that regular feedback, self-assessment, and peer evaluation enabled them to understand learning objectives more clearly and develop strategies for improvement, which suggests that formative practices enhance metacognitive awareness and self-regulation. This aligns with findings by Ridhwan (2017), who argued that formative assessment not only facilitates skill development but also supports learners' autonomy and responsibility in the learning process. Conversely, summative assessment was perceived by students as a necessary tool for measuring achievement and setting academic benchmarks. However, participants also reported that excessive reliance on summative evaluation could increase stress and lead to surface learning strategies focused on memorization rather than meaningful comprehension. This finding reflects concerns raised in prior studies, which note that high-stakes summative assessments can negatively affect intrinsic motivation and limit deep engagement with the content (Ismail et al., 2022; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). Importantly, the study revealed that students who experienced frequent formative assessment reported feeling better prepared for summative tests, more confident in their abilities, and more engaged in classroom activities. This demonstrates that formative assessment not only supports ongoing learning but also enhances students' readiness for evaluative measures, highlighting the complementary relationship between formative and summative practices. Overall, the discussion of students' perceptions underscores the need for a balanced approach in English language teaching, where formative assessment guides learning, fosters motivation, and builds learner confidence, while summative assessment provides structure and measurable outcomes. The findings suggest that educators should continue to implement formative practices alongside summative evaluation to create an environment that encourages both achievement and active engagement, reinforcing the theoretical and practical value of integrating assessment types in Moroccan EFL classrooms (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ennis, 2020). Such a balanced approach addresses both the developmental and evaluative needs of learners, promoting not only academic success but also sustained motivation and learner autonomy.

5.2 Impact of Assessment on Learner Motivation and Engagement

The results of this study demonstrate that both formative and summative assessment have a significant influence on learner motivation and engagement, although their effects differ in nature and intensity. Formative assessment practices, including regular feedback, peer assessment, and self-reflection activities, were consistently associated with higher levels of intrinsic motivation and active participation among students at ESEF Berrechid. This finding supports prior research indicating that formative assessment enhances learners' self-efficacy, fosters a sense of responsibility for their own learning, and encourages persistent engagement in challenging tasks (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ridhwan, 2017). Students reported that timely and constructive feedback helped clarify learning objectives, reduce uncertainty, and increase their confidence, which aligns with theoretical perspectives emphasizing the motivational role of formative assessment in supporting self-regulated learning (Ennis, 2020). The positive correlation between frequent formative assessment and student engagement observed in this study further confirms that ongoing, interactive assessment strategies promote sustained attention, participation, and effort in language learning activities.

Summative assessment, while important for measuring achievement and providing formal recognition of learning, was found to have a more complex relationship with motivation. Students acknowledged that summative evaluation provides clear benchmarks and a sense of accomplishment when performance is successful, which can enhance extrinsic motivation. However, many students indicated that high-stakes summative assessments may generate stress and pressure, sometimes undermining intrinsic motivation and leading to surface learning strategies, such as rote memorization or prioritization of grades over understanding (Ismail et al., 2022; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023). Importantly, the study revealed that when formative assessment is integrated effectively with summative evaluation, students feel better prepared, more confident, and more willing to engage actively with learning tasks. This finding highlights the complementary relationship between formative and summative assessment, demonstrating that formative practices can buffer the stress associated with high-stakes summative tests while simultaneously promoting motivation, engagement, and deeper learning.

Overall, the discussion of the impact of assessment on motivation and engagement reinforces the pedagogical importance of balancing formative and summative practices. By providing ongoing guidance, feedback, and opportunities for self-reflection, formative assessment supports learners' intrinsic motivation, engagement, and autonomy, while summative assessment offers evaluative structure and extrinsic incentives for achievement. The findings suggest that educators should strive to integrate both types of assessment strategically, creating a classroom environment where learners are motivated to participate actively, develop self-regulation skills, and achieve meaningful learning outcomes. This aligns with the broader literature advocating for a balanced, learner-centered approach to assessment in EFL contexts, particularly within Moroccan secondary schools where high-stakes evaluation often dominates traditional teaching practices (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ennis, 2020; Ridhwan, 2017).

5.3 Teachers' Practices and Perspectives on Balancing Assessment

The findings regarding teachers' practices and perspectives highlight the critical role of educators in implementing and maintaining a balance between formative and summative assessment in English language teaching at ESEF Berrechid. The interviews and classroom observations revealed that teachers are highly aware of the pedagogical benefits of formative assessment, including its ability to provide continuous feedback, identify learning gaps, and guide instructional adjustments, which aligns with the findings of Black and Wiliam (1998) and Ennis (2020). Teachers reported using a variety of formative strategies, such as in-class questioning, peer assessment, self-assessment exercises, and constructive feedback on assignments, to promote learner engagement and foster autonomous learning. These strategies were noted to enhance students' confidence, motivation, and preparedness for summative assessments, supporting the notion that formative assessment can complement and strengthen the effects of high-stakes evaluation (Ridhwan, 2017; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023).

Despite recognizing the benefits, teachers also discussed challenges in achieving an effective balance between formative and summative assessment. Time constraints, large class sizes, and institutional pressure to prioritize summative examinations often limited opportunities for extensive formative practices. Nevertheless, teachers emphasized the importance of integrating both assessment types strategically, employing formative assessments to inform summative evaluations and to scaffold student learning. For instance, several teachers described practices such as conducting formative quizzes before major tests, offering detailed feedback on draft assignments, and encouraging reflective activities, all aimed at preparing learners for summative evaluation while supporting ongoing development. These practices reflect a commitment to creating a learner-centered classroom environment where assessment serves both diagnostic and evaluative purposes.

Overall, the discussion of teachers' perspectives underscores the significance of professional agency in fostering balanced assessment practices. Teachers' efforts to integrate formative and summative assessment demonstrate that a strategic, thoughtful approach can enhance learner outcomes, motivation, and engagement while addressing institutional demands. The findings suggest that providing professional support, training, and resources for teachers is essential to facilitate effective implementation of balanced assessment strategies in Moroccan EFL classrooms. By actively managing the interplay between formative guidance and summative evaluation, educators can create a classroom climate that not only measures achievement but also nurtures sustained learning, confidence, and motivation, which aligns with the broader literature advocating for comprehensive, learner-centered assessment practices (Ismail et al., 2022; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024).

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the balance between formative and summative assessment in English language teaching at ESEF Berrechid in Morocco, focusing on its impact on learner outcomes, motivation, and engagement, as well as teachers' practices and perspectives. The findings indicate that formative assessment plays a crucial role in supporting student learning by providing continuous feedback, promoting self-reflection, and fostering learner autonomy, while summative assessment serves as an essential tool for measuring achievement, setting benchmarks, and ensuring accountability. Students generally perceive formative assessment positively, noting that it helps them understand their strengths and weaknesses, build confidence, and prepare effectively for summative evaluation. At the same time, summative assessment, when integrated thoughtfully with formative practices, reinforces learning, motivates students through clear evaluation criteria, and provides tangible recognition of achievement. The study also highlights that teachers are aware of the benefits of balancing these assessment types and actively

employ a variety of strategies to integrate formative and summative assessment in their classrooms, despite challenges such as time constraints, large class sizes, and institutional pressure to focus on examinations. By combining quantitative data from student questionnaires with qualitative insights from teacher interviews and classroom observations, this research demonstrates that a balanced assessment approach enhances both learner engagement and motivation, supports skill development, and fosters a learner-centered educational environment. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of adopting an integrated approach to assessment that considers both developmental and evaluative functions, offering practical implications for English language teaching in Moroccan EFL contexts. It suggests that educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers should prioritize professional development, resources, and institutional support that enable teachers to implement effective formative practices alongside summative evaluation, thereby optimizing learning outcomes and promoting a more motivating, inclusive, and effective language learning experience for students.

6.1 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study offer several significant pedagogical implications for English language teaching in Moroccan EFL contexts, particularly regarding the integration and balance of formative and summative assessment. First, the positive impact of formative assessment on learner motivation, engagement, and autonomy suggests that teachers should prioritize ongoing feedback and reflective practices in their classrooms. Incorporating activities such as peer assessment, self-evaluation, and regular progress checks enables students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop effective learning strategies, and take responsibility for their own learning. This approach aligns with learner-centered pedagogy, emphasizing active engagement and metacognitive awareness, which has been shown to improve long-term language acquisition and academic outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ennis, 2020). By systematically integrating formative assessment into daily instructional practice, teachers can provide students with the guidance necessary to build confidence, reduce learning anxiety, and prepare effectively for summative evaluation, creating a supportive and motivating learning environment.

Second, while summative assessment remains essential for measuring achievement, providing benchmarks, and fulfilling institutional requirements, this study highlights the need for teachers to use summative assessment strategically and in conjunction with formative practices. Educators should design summative tasks that reflect real-world language use, encourage higher-order thinking, and reinforce the learning objectives addressed through formative assessment. Integrating formative and summative assessment ensures that students view evaluation not merely as a measure of success or failure but as an opportunity for growth and continuous improvement. Teachers can further enhance this balance by using formative feedback to scaffold learning before summative tests, allowing students to feel better prepared and more confident in their abilities. This approach not only promotes motivation but also encourages deeper engagement and long-term retention of language skills (Ridhwan, 2017; Ismail et al., 2022).

Third, the study underscores the importance of teacher professional development and institutional support in facilitating balanced assessment practices. Training programs should focus on equipping teachers with practical strategies to implement formative assessment effectively, manage classroom time efficiently, and interpret assessment data to inform instruction. School administrators and curriculum designers should provide resources, guidelines, and flexibility that allow teachers to integrate formative assessment alongside traditional summative evaluation without being constrained by time pressures or standardized testing mandates. Such support is crucial in Moroccan EFL classrooms, where large class sizes and institutional expectations often limit opportunities for individualized feedback.

Finally, the implications of this study extend to curriculum planning and policy development. Curriculum designers should emphasize assessment literacy, ensuring that both formative and summative assessments are aligned with learning objectives and pedagogical goals. Policies should encourage a balanced approach that values developmental feedback as much as evaluative measurement, fostering a classroom culture where assessment serves as a tool for learning rather than solely as a judgment of performance. By adopting these pedagogical strategies, educators can create an environment that maximizes learner engagement, motivation, and achievement, ultimately leading to more effective and meaningful English language learning outcomes in Moroccan secondary schools and similar EFL contexts (Sunra & Samtidar, 2023; Listiani & Nasrullah, 2024).

6.2 Limitations of the study

While this study provides valuable insights into the balance between formative and summative assessment in English language teaching at ESEF Berrechid in Morocco, several limitations should be acknowledged to contextualize the findings and guide future research. First, the sample size of 60 students and a limited number of teachers, while sufficient to explore trends and perceptions, may not fully represent the diverse range of experiences and perspectives present in all Moroccan EFL classrooms. The study focused specifically on one secondary school, which means that the findings may be influenced by the particular institutional culture, teaching practices, and student demographics of ESEF Berrechid. Consequently, generalizing the results to other schools, regions, or educational levels in Morocco should be done with caution. Expanding the sample to include multiple schools across different regions, as well as students from various age groups and proficiency levels, would strengthen the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

Second, the reliance on self-reported data from student questionnaires introduces potential biases, including social desirability and subjective perception. Although the questionnaires were designed to capture learners' genuine experiences and attitudes, students may have provided responses they believed were expected by the researchers or that reflected their desire to present themselves positively. Similarly, teacher interviews, while providing rich qualitative insights, may have been influenced by teachers' perceptions of professional expectations or their desire to portray assessment practices in a favorable light. Classroom observations helped mitigate these biases by documenting actual teaching and assessment practices; however, the presence of the researcher in the classroom may have influenced teacher and student behavior, leading to possible reactivity effects. Future research could incorporate longitudinal observation or anonymous reporting methods to reduce these potential biases and provide a more authentic picture of classroom assessment dynamics.

Third, the study primarily focused on students' perceptions and teachers' perspectives, without directly measuring the impact of formative and summative assessment on objective learning outcomes, such as standardized test scores, language proficiency improvements, or retention of knowledge over time. While participants' perceptions offer meaningful insights into motivation, engagement, and classroom experience, incorporating quantitative measures of actual learning gains would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of assessment practices. Additionally, this study was cross-sectional in design, capturing data at a single point in time, which limits the ability to examine changes in student motivation, engagement, or performance over an extended period. Longitudinal research would allow for the exploration of how sustained implementation of balanced assessment practices affects learning trajectories, learner autonomy, and teacher strategies over time.

Finally, contextual factors specific to Moroccan secondary education, including curriculum requirements, examination pressure, class size, and cultural attitudes toward assessment, may have influenced both student and teacher responses. These factors suggest that the applicability of the findings to other EFL contexts, particularly in different countries or educational systems, may be limited. Future studies should consider comparative designs that explore assessment practices across diverse cultural and institutional contexts to determine which strategies are most universally effective and which are context-dependent. Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful contributions to understanding the role of formative and summative assessment in enhancing learner motivation, engagement, and outcomes, while highlighting areas for future research and pedagogical improvement in Moroccan EFL classrooms (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ennis, 2020; Ismail et al., 2022; Sunra & Samtidar, 2023).

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