The importance of formative assessment based on students' perception

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	EFL (English for Foreign Language) refers to the teaching and learning of English in educational settings where the society does not use English as their first language. Most EFL teachers in Indonesian formal schools developed their formative assessment according to their own perception, whereas several studies had proven that formative assessment should be designed based on students' perception. The aim of this study is to describe the students' perception of formative assessment practices in EFL class, which use the formative assessment cycle as the conceptual model. The research design in this study is survey design. The subject of this study is 11th grader students in State High School 8, Malang, Indonesia. The study is held throughout the English subject in the odd semester of 2022/2023 school year. The data analysis techniques used is descriptive quantitative. The quantitative data distribution of five dimensions of formative assessment shows that all of the subject percept every indicator positively. The results confirm that designing a formative assessment based on students' perception is highly needed, where along the process, teachers could reflect their quality of teaching, and in the same time, students are facilitated to improve their goals, reducing material-misconception, expanding understanding in strength and weakness, and also developing better students-teacher communication in learning.

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Introduction

Students' English competence and skills level in Indonesian formal schools are varied and heterogeneous because English is not the first language for most Indonesians. Franscy & Ramli (2022), Sintadewi et. al (2020), and Rintaningrum (2018) are among others that held studies about the difficulties of Indonesian students in learning English. The difficulties happen because student find no interest in mastering the non-mother tongue language (Rintaningrum, 2018), lack of practice (Franscy & Ramli, 2022), or feeling bored as the impact of teachers' non-diverse method and media of learning. Therefore, teaching English in EFL classes demands particular approach, to make sure that students are interested enough, actively participated, and motivated through various activities and media. To reveal these components, then teachers need to do specifics assessment.

Assessment is one of the important activities in helping students to optimize their English competency and skills. Widiastuti & Saukah (2017) mention that teaching is always followed by an assessment to gain an understanding of the students' ability and understanding of the learning material taught. Teachers need to carry out this specific step because it would help both teachers and students in the learning process, which enhances student learning achievement (Apa Citation: Fitriani et al., 2021; Unicef, 2021), self-regulation (Xiao & Yang,

2019), rationalize and evaluate the learning process (Ridwan, 2017), and provide teachers with information about their students' abilities (Akter et al., 2020).

Knowing that implementing assessment in the EFL teaching and learning process is an important step to do, then it should be done in a correct way. Commonly in all EFL class, teachers are faced with dozens of students with different levels of English competencies and skills. If teachers only focus on their teaching in fulfilling the English subject syllabus, without evaluating their teaching effects on students' learning, then it would be an incomplete-learning process. Teachers need to really assure whether their teaching, technique, and treatment do impact all students in the class.

Teachers need to be able to measure and analyze whether students gain mastering through the learning evaluation process, such as formative assessment. Formative assessment is parallel to the process of teaching and learning (Asamoah et al., 2022; Kristiyanti, 2021; Mahshanian et al., 2019). It is a type of evaluation used in educational settings that is provided to students on a continuous and consistent basis, theoretically or practically, to recognize the difficulty of the topic being tackled, the knowledge gained, and the student's success (Treve, 2021; Menéndez et al., 2019). The primary goal of formative assessment is to recognize students' abilities and attitudes, to check at what pace it develops and the autonomy that will allow it to solve the problems that arise in daily life (Cobeña et al., 2021).

Considering that students are the main subjects in the whole EFL learning process, it is best for teachers to take into account students' perception in designing a formative assessment. Students' responses and perceptions of the EFLs' formative assessment will help teachers in gaining a big picture of how precise their learning activities are. Nafisah et al. (2021) argued that through the feedback from students' perception, teachers could reflect whether the assessment is congruent enough with the planned learning.

Saleh Alharbi et al. (2021) found that the students' perception of formative assessment in EFL classes in return would help teachers to modify their materials and delivery methods to meet the students' needs. Wafubwa (2021) confirm Saleh Alharbi et al. (2021) findings which meet the students' need, developing the formative assessment based on students' perception would help teachers to adjust their learning instruction. Students will be able to reflect, evaluate, and adjudicate the quality of their work and learning throughout the formative assessment activity.

Understanding student perceptions of various forms of formative assessment used in learning is critical in assisting teachers in using tools that students perceive positively, thus also reducing biases that students could have toward a particular form of formative assessment. (Ogange et al., 2018; Hill & Edwards, 2019) assert that students' perception of the use of formative assessment is highly relevant because it is students who are at the center of the learning experience, and will offer insight into how students perceive their involvement in student-generated feedback practices.

Teachers can provide feedback in a variety of ways, including assessing students' work, peer review, self-reflection, in-class discussions, course evaluation surveys, and student focus interviews (Klimova, 2015). Klimova (2015) also argues that any type of feedback that encourages an individual's personal and professional development and assists him in identifying and realizing his own strengths and weaknesses, assets and limitations, can lead to a greater understanding and improvement of his skills in the future. Furthermore, giving constructive criticism can help students stay motivated to work on their language skills on a constant basis.

Based on the data of the Indonesian educational setting, teachers often develop the formative assessment according to their own perceptions (Widiastuti et al., 2020; Aji & Hartono, 2019) and neglect students' point of view. When teachers only focus on developing formative assessments based on their own perceptions, they tend to easily assume that the students' competency and skills are the source of the learning problem (Suchánek, 2020; Aji & Hartono, 2019; Önalan & Karagül, 2018). Musa & Islam (2020) noted that teachers' limited understanding and awareness of formative assessment will cause them to focus solely on students' learning content and memorization, resulting in inadequate achievement of expected learning.

Ignoring learners' perception of formative assessment could lead to learning deficiencies. Students could be concerned about the importance and fairness of the assessment, experiencing discord in class, and negatively relating it to their real life (Syaifuddin, 2019). Syaifuddin (2019) addresses five major aspects of students' perceptions of classroom assessment: 1) the assessment's appropriateness to the lesson plans; 2) the assessment's authenticity; the assessment task draws on actual experiences that are relevant to them; 3) counseling session between students and teachers; 4) the assessment's goals and forms are clearly stated; and 5) all students have the same opportunity to complete the assessment tasks.

Creating formative assessments based on students' perceptions could promote deeper learning through allowing students to construct their own learning and thus engage in lifelong learning (Wafubwa, 2021). There is a need for teachers to make use of formative assessment as a strategy like learning intentions.

Veugen et al. (2021) implemented the formative assessment cycle in various school subjects, including English. The cycle has five stages: 1) clarifying expectations (for example, learning goals and success criteria); 2) eliciting student learning responses; 3) analyzing student responses; 4) communicating about results (including feedback); and 5) taking concrete actions to adjust teaching and/or learning.

The perception of formative assessment through students may differ depending on their background characteristics (van der Kleij, 2019), where the higher-achieving students were more positive in their perceptions of their teachers' feedback than lower-achieving students. Veugen et al. (2021) found that students perceived the formative assessment phase at eliciting student responses as the highest rank, followed by clarifying expectations, communicating student responses, analyzing and interpreting student responses, and the lowest scores were at taking follow-up actions.

It is difficult to find scientifically relevant research on students' perceptions of formative assessment in Indonesian EFL practices. In journal published publicly in the range of year 2015 till 2021, author only found four articles related to the topic, name Syaifuddin (2019), Saleh Alharbi et al. (2021), . Nafisah et al. (2021), and also Wafubwa (2021). Most of the former studies highlighted the topic based on the teachers' perception, or in other countries aside from the formal educational context in Indonesia. Therefore, an empirical analysis of the topic mentioned above is needed. It is emerging to fill the gap by exploring students' perceptions of formative assessment in order to gradually design an intervention program that will hopefully impact English competency in EFL classes positively.

Method

The method of this research is a survey research design. This study cohort is 771 students, with a sample of 130 second-year students in 11th grade of State High School 8 Malang, Indonesia. In this study, researchers rely on their own judgement in choosing the sample. The samples were taken from four classes of 11th grade where the researcher was an in terms practitioners. The sample was taken through the purposive sampling, where all the students are at the same EFL educational level, and taught by the same teacher with the same material and learning standards.

In collecting the data, researchers use close-ended questionnaires based on the five phases of the formative assessment cycle (Veugen et al., 2021) which had been validated and reliability tested through the application of SPSS. The data was collected in the odd semester in the 2022/2023 school year. The responses then analyzed using the SPSS application to do a descriptive quantitative data analysis. The researchers collect quantitative, counted data through the use of questionnaires or interviews, as well as statistical analysis of data, to describe trends in survey responses (Menéndez et al., 2019; Creswell, 2012).

Therefore, the researchers in this study then design the formative assessment questionnaire using 4 criteria of likert scale. The questionnaire was designed based on dimensions of: clarifying expectations (— for example, learning goals and success criteria); 2) eliciting student learning responses; 3) analyzing student responses; 4) communicating about results (including feedback); and 5) taking concrete actions to adjust teaching and/or learning, and respondents give answers ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Strongly disagree answer are interpreted as a very negative responds in term of student perception, which means that student percept the sub dimension of the formative assessment negatively contributes to the learning process. Vice versa, strongly agree answer are interpreted as a very positive responds in term of student perception, which means that student percept the sub dimension of the formative assessment positively contributes to the learning process.

Table 1. Four Classification of Perception

Criteria Formula	Answer	Classification of Perception
$X < Mi - 1.5\ SDi$	Strongly disagree	Very Negative
$Mi > X \geq Mi - 1.5\ SDi$	Disagree	Negative
$Mi + 1.5\ SDi > X \geq Mi$	Agree	Positive
$X \geq Mi + 1.5\ SDi$	Strongly agree	Very Positive

(Modified from Kristiyanti, et. al., 2021)

The researchers developed 20 items of questions with 5 dimension according to Veugen et al. (2021) that are clarifying expectations, eliciting student learning responses, analyzing student responses, communicating about results and taking concrete actions to adjust teaching and/or learning. The author makes questions based on the dimensions and 10 sub-dimensions that have been adapted.

Table 2. Instrument of Student's Perception

Dimension	Sub Dimension	No	Question
Clarifying Expectations	Goals	16,19	16: The assessment encouraged me to build my learning goals 19: From the assessment, I know what the assignment expected from me
	Succes Criteria	15,20	20: The assessment encouraged me to determine the score that I want to achieve 15: The example in the assessment helps me to understand how to do the task
Eliciting Responses	Learning Process	6,14	6: Through the assessment activity, we are given the opportunity to discuss our opinions with other students 14: The assessment makes it easier for us to master the material step by step
	Learning Results	3, 13	3: Through the assessment, I can evaluate my learning 13: Through the assessment, I can easily understand the learning material
Students Response	Analysing	10	10: I can realize my misconception of a material by doing the assessment
	Interpreting	17	17: Through the assessment, I can realign the misconception of the material
Communication	Exploring	2, 11	11: I can improve my English ability through the assessment 2: Through the assessment, I know my strength in EFL class
	Scaffolding	1, 4, 18	1: The assessment can help us to master the material 4: The instruction of the assessment is understandable for me 18: The step-by-step instruction in the assessment helps me to understand the assessment objective
Follow Up Actions	Adapting Material	7, 9, 12	9: The assessment is revised based on the feedback from the students in EFL class 12: The assessment is designed with variation of learning activities 7: The assessment activity involves us to use variation of media
	Adapting Instruction	5,8	5: Through the assessment, I can find out where my shortcomings are in mastering the material 8: Each assessment that had been given are using various instructions.

(The Dimension and Sub Dimension Adopted from Veugen et al., 2021)

Based on the validity test results, it was determined that the 20 items in the questionnaire were valid. Value data has a validity greater than 0.312, indicating that it satisfies the valid requirements. To be clear, the researcher shows the validity of the completion test analysis below.

Table 3. Validity Analysis of Completion Test

Item	Correlation	Table	Status
1	.742**	0,312	Valid
2	.837**	0,312	Valid
3	.701**	0,312	Valid
4	.561**	0,312	Valid
5	.372*	0,312	Valid
6	.659**	0,312	Valid
7	.770**	0,312	Valid
8	.731**	0,312	Valid
9	.857**	0,312	Valid
10	.795**	0,312	Valid
11	.596**	0,312	Valid
12	.684**	0,312	Valid
13	.718**	0,312	Valid
14	.675**	0,312	Valid
15	.619**	0,312	Valid
16	.751**	0,312	Valid
17	.718**	0,312	Valid
18	.748**	0,312	Valid
19	.814**	0,312	Valid
20	.787**	0,312	Valid

The alpha formula is applied using the SPSS application version by looking for the value of Cronbach's alpha and comparing the default value of 0.6. If the alpha value is > 0.6, the developed instrument is declared reliable. The dimensions of the author's instrument have been declared reliable as follows.

Table 4. Instrument Reliability Test

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Result
Clarifying Expectations	0.672	Reliable
Eliciting Responses	0.743	Reliable
Students Response	0.850	Reliable
Communication	0.670	Reliable
Follow Up Actions	0.819	Reliable

Results and Discussion

Based on the data of 130 11th grade high school student in EFL class, collected through the questionnaire, the description for each dimension (Table 2). Table 2 shows that of 130 (100%) students, 78 (60%), 52 (40%), 0 (0%), and 0 (0%) are in the category of very positive, positive, negative, and very negative. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' perception for the criteria of clarifying expectation in formative assessment is in very positive category.

Table 2. Criteria for Clarifying Expectation

Criteria Formula	Classification of Perception	Frequency	Percent (%)
X < 8	Very Negative	0	0%
12 > X ≥ 8	Negative	0	0%
16 > X ≥ 12	Positive	52	40%
X ≥ 16	Very Positive	78	60%

Table 3. Criteria for Eliciting Responses

Criteria Formula	Classification of Perception	Frequency	Percent (%)
X < 8	Very Negative	0	0%
12 > X ≥ 8	Negative	0	0%
16 > X ≥ 12	Positive	57	44%
X ≥ 16	Very Positive	73	56%

Table 3 shows that of 130 (100%) students, 73 (56%), 57 (44%), 0 (0%), and 0 (0%) are in the category of very positive, positive, negative, and very negative. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' perception for the criteria of eliciting responses in formative assessment is in very positive category.

Table 4. Criteria for Student Response

Criteria Formula	Classification of Perception	Frequency	Percent (%)
X < 3.5	Very Negative	0	0%
5 > X ≥ 3.5	Negative	0	0%
6.5 > X ≥ 5	Positive	4	3.1%
X ≥ 6.5	Very Positive	126	96.9%

Table 4 shows that of 130 (100%) students, 126 (96.9%), 4 (3.1%), 0 (0%), and 0 (0%) are in the category of very positive, positive, negative, and very negative. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' perception for the criteria of student response in formative assessment is in very positive category.

Table 5. Communication

Criteria Formula	Classification of Perception	Frequency	Percent (%)
X < 8.75	Very Negative	0	0%
12.5 > X ≥ 8.75	Negative	0	0%
16.25 > X ≥ 12.5	Positive	2	1.5%
X ≥ 16.5	Very Positive	128	98.5%

Table 5 shows that of 130 (100%) students, 128 (98.5%), 2 (1.5%), 0 (0%), and 0 (0%) are in the category of very positive, positive, negative, and very negative. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' perception for the criteria of communication in formative assessment is in very positive category.

Table 6. Follow up Actions

Criteria Formula	Classification of Perception	Frequency	Percent (%)
X < 8.75	Very Negative	0	0%
12.5 > X ≥ 8.75	Negative	0	0%
16.25 > X ≥ 12.5	Positive	0	0%
X ≥ 16.5	Very Positive	130	100%

Table 6 shows that of 130 (100%) students, 130 (100%), 0 (0%), 0 (0%), and 0 (0%) are in the category of very positive, positive, negative, and very negative. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' perception for the criteria of follow up actions in formative assessment is in a very positive category.

All of the results showed that majority respondents of this study give as a very positive and positive responds in all 20 items that indicates 6 s of student perception of formative assessment, which means that majority 11th grader students percept that formative assessment positively contributes to the learning process in EFL class. Students percept that clarifying expectations of learning goals and success criteria, eliciting learning responses, analyzing responses, communicating about responses (including feedback), and taking follow-u-up actions in adjusting teaching and/or learning materials and methods do contribute positively to their English learning process.

The purpose of this research was to explain students' perceptions of formative assessment practices in EFL classes, which use the formative assessment cycle as the conceptual model. The results show that student percept formative assessment as a coherent activity that relates to the five phases of the cycle. Students' perceptions are all in the category of very positive toward the formative assessment indicators. Therefore, it can be described that the practice of the formative phases based on students' perception in the cycle as an analytical framework can thus potentially provide a variety of opportunities for more in-depth study of formative assessment practices in EFL class.

The quantitative data distribution of follow up actions is the highest gain of students score in the category of very positive, which indicates that all of the students felt that the implementation of follow up actions in the formative assessment practice is very important and useful for them in the process of learning. This finding is supported by a previous study conducted by Rosário et al. (2015), which found that follow-up activities do provide students with relevant information on how to improve their learning. Through the follow-up activities, teachers would have an opportunity to reflect upon their in-class instructional practices, and in turn they can foster their quality of teaching and students' learning (Rosário et al., 2015).

The lowest score in quantitative data distribution, that is the dimension of eliciting responses, still gain the category of very positive with 56% responses, and 44% responses in the category of positive, which reveal that all of the students do percept that responses or feedback from the teacher along and through the formative assessment cycle is crucial in the learning process. Putri et al. (2021) discovered that teachers' feedback could improve students' performance, goal-setting, monitoring, help-seeking, adopting, and self-evaluation in an EFL class. Teachers, as one of the key players in the activity of giving feedback, should be constantly involved in the feedback process in order to maintain its specific functions and plan on how the feedback provided can be useful (Adarkwah, 2021).

The questionnaire results showed that students have a very positive perception of formative assessment practices. It means that the students positively perceived the formative assessment implementation that was developed based on the dimensions of the formative assessment cycle. This finding is aligned with Pat-El et al. (2015) which suggests that it is critical to understand students' attitudes toward formative assessment in order to design an effective formative assessment process and improve student learning.

This study demonstrates that the formative assessment cycle based on students' perception can be beneficial for enhancing the understanding of the ideal construction of formative assessment practices through analyzing it and promoting its implementation in an ongoing process. The results of the survey showed that students admitted very positive perceptions of the practice of formative assessment cycle, and it proved that formative assessment process is an important part in the EFL classes.

This study confirms previous researches that considering student perception in developing a formative assessment in EFL practices is needed. The findings in this study supplement the rare data of the topic in Indonesian literature. The findings also affirm that to enhances student experiences in EFL learning, teachers need to develop and modified their formative assessment activities accordance to students point of view.

As a preliminary research, the researches of this study recommend to the future research to held a deeper and expanded research of the topic to gain a comprehensive understanding of the importance of formative assessment in EFL practices, especially in increasing students' motivation and participation in learning English. It would be meaningful if the future research to conduct a SEM analysis to see the relationships between items or conduct an experiment too see the effect of formative assessment to students learning.

Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, it is possible to conclude that the perception of 11th grader students in State High School 8 Malang, Indonesia, of formative assessment practices in EFL class is very important. It is summarized by almost all respondents' responses in the positive and very positive categories across all six formative assessment dimensions. Students percept that clarifying expectations of learning goals and success criteria, eliciting learning responses, analyzing responses, communicating about responses (including feedback), and taking follow-u-up actions in adjusting teaching and/or learning materials and methods do contribute positively to their English learning process in EFL class. Therefore, designing a formative assessment based on students' perception is highly needed, where along the process, teachers could reflect their quality of teaching, and in the same time, students are facilitated to improve their learning.

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