

Formative Assessment in Nepalese Secondary Level English Classrooms: Tactics, Engagement and Responses

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Abstract

Formative assessment supports learning, and in Nepalese school education, it is emphasized in the curriculum but inconsistently practiced in classrooms. In this context, this study explores the formative assessment strategies that secondary-level English language teachers apply in the classroom in Nepal. It also examines how teachers engage students with these strategies and how students experience these formative assessment practices in community schools. To achieve the research objectives, four English language teachers and twelve students from community schools in the Kathmandu Valley were selected using purposive sampling. The study employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis design. Data were collected through class observations and interviews with both teachers and students. The data were analyzed and interpreted descriptively by identifying themes. The findings revealed that most teachers use classwork and homework as formative assessment strategies. Peer correction, group correction, teacher correction, and self-correction were commonly used to engage students in formative assessment activities. The majority of students responded positively to the formative assessment strategies their teachers used and the way they were engaged in the processes. It implies that incorporating diverse formative assessment strategies can effectively engage students and foster positive attitudes toward learning.

Introduction

Language assessment is the process of evaluating learners' ability to use a language effectively. Teachers need to assess their proficiency and provide targeted

feedback to support learners in achieving communicative competence. Assessment encompasses a variety of methods and tools that inform instructional decisions and track learning progress. Among these, *formative assessment* is crucial in promoting student development by offering continuous, constructive feedback. Brown (2004) highlights the significance of formative assessment in the development of language skills, while Pradhan (2021) situates it within a broader spectrum of assessment practices—namely, *assessment of learning*, *assessment for learning*, and *assessment as learning*.

Unlike summative assessments, which are primarily used for certification and grading purposes, formative assessment is integrated with learning processes, aiming to improve students' performance and autonomy. Clark (2011) argues that formative assessment is not merely a testing tool but a dynamic pedagogical process that fosters lifelong learning and skill development. Similarly, Viegas, Alves, and Lima (2015) highlight its role in enhancing educational experiences and outcomes by encouraging diverse and reflective teaching strategies.

Despite the growing recognition of its value, formative assessment remains underused in many educational settings, where summative practices dominate. Such an emphasis often prioritizes academic certification over meaningful learning. In response, the *Secondary Level Curriculum 2078* of Nepal underscores the importance of formative assessment in enhancing instructional quality. It specifies several formative assessment techniques, including observation, anecdotal records, interviews, home assignments, portfolios, creative works, and interactive activities such as debates, role-plays, storytelling, and journal writing. The curriculum has been structured to promote reflective practices and continuous feedback. However, its success depends upon effective implementation by teachers and active engagement of students.

Although the curriculum framework highlights the role of formative assessment, there is limited research in the Nepali context. Even Education Review Office have missed to assess the practices of formative assessment activities conducted in the classroom (see ERJ, 2024). This lack of evidence points to a critical gap in understanding how the curriculum policy of formative assessments is practiced and how it contributes to quality education at the secondary level.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the formative assessment strategies employed by English language teachers in the secondary schools. Specifically, it seeks to explore which strategies are implemented, how students interact with them, and how students perceive the effectiveness of these strategies in supporting their learning.

Literature Review

Regular assessment using diverse methods to measure understanding among all students enhances learning progress. The assessments should be tailored to each student, ensuring personalized learning experiences so that teachers can pinpoint areas needing support and devise strategies for improvement through the

analysis of student performance. Teachers should be aware of the students' levels to foster success in their learning and the role of active engagement during learning to maximize everyone's potential (Wiliam, 2010). Assessments help teachers understand students' proficiency and provide support when necessary. Formative assessment integrates formal and informal activities conducted during the teaching and learning process. It is collaboratively used by teachers and students to elicit and utilize evidence of student learning as a continuous process, thereby supporting utilize in becoming self-directed learners (Beard, 2023). It offers ongoing feedback to both teachers and students to assess understanding and progress, aids students in taking ownership of their learning, and enables teachers to effectively tailor instruction to meet individual needs. According to Afitska (2014) classroom formative assessment can be conceptualized as formative teacher assessment, formative feedback, as well as self and peer assessments. Formative teacher assessment focuses on discussions with learners and adapting strategies according to their levels. Formative feedback serves as a supportive bridge that guides learners towards their expected progress. Self and peer assessments are valuable when learners generate and assess their ideas through peer assessment, peers provide feedback based on their observations of each other's presentations. Collaborative and constructive feedback play significant roles in enhancing learners' educational journeys (Sharma, 2023; Wiliam & Thompson, 2006). Bennett (2011) highlights the teacher's role in adapting instruction to meet the students' immediate needs, which not only fosters greater student engagement but also contributes to the development of learner autonomy and peer support within the classroom. Timely and constructive feedback enables students to effectively incorporate suggestions into their work, resulting in meaningful learning outcomes. In this regard, Dayal (2021) argues that if teachers intentionally use formative assessment strategies, such as feedback, questioning, and observation, they are most likely to adjust their teaching to support students' real-time learning, highlighting how these practices are embedded in classroom instruction and help identify students' needs, enhance engagement, and promote continuous improvement in learning outcomes.

The secondary level curriculum-2078 in Nepal describes a diverse range of formative assessment methods to measure learners' progress and learning: observation of students' linguistic behavior, anecdotal records, interviews, home assignments, portfolios, tests (class, weekly, monthly), projects, creative works, classwork, reflective practices, games, debates, simulations, role plays, group discussions, and journal writing. Here, the observation of linguistic behavior refers to the process of closely observing and analyzing how students use language in various contexts, such as during classroom discussions and homework. An anecdotal record is a brief narrative detailing specific incidents or behaviors observed in students, which is very useful for teachers to gather information regarding a student's progress and learning experiences. Classwork encompasses activities students are expected to complete during a class, whereas homework refers to tasks assigned by a teacher for completion outside regular classroom

hours. The portfolio technique involves evaluating students by compiling their portfolios, while tests are a common assessment method utilized by almost all teachers in various institutions. Oral questioning and feedback, diagnostic tests, and student presentations are other potential formative assessment techniques (UNICEF, 2022). However, each technique serves a specific purpose in evaluating students' learning progress, addressing diverse learning styles, and promoting a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum.

By incorporating various assessment strategies, educators can effectively monitor and support students' academic growth and development (see Secondary Level Curriculum, 2078). Wiliam and Thompson (2006) conceptualized five key strategies of formative assessment: namely clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success, engineering effective classroom discussions and learning tasks to elicit evidence of student understanding, providing feedback that propels learners forward, activating students as instructional resources for one another, and encouraging students to take ownership of their learning.

Numerous studies have been conducted at the international level, yet there is limited coverage of Nepalese research in this area. Bhusal (2024) highlights large-scale assessments like NASA and PA but overlooks classroom-level formative practices essential for daily student learning, leaving a gap between national evaluations and real-time feedback. Kadel (2024) shows that Bloom's taxonomy-based questioning promotes critical and metacognitive skills, aligning with formative goals, yet focuses more on teacher perceptions than on actual learning outcomes or feedback use. Similarly, Acharya's (2024) meta-analysis informs equity-driven policy through NASA data but lacks attention to formative strategies that address learner diversity in classrooms. Mijar (2024) stresses the role of statistical tools in assessment but prioritizes summative and research-level analysis over formative applications that support instructional improvement. These studies collectively contribute to the broader landscape of assessment in Nepal; however, they under-represent classroom-based formative assessment practices such as real-time feedback, peer/self-assessment, and adjusting teaching based on ongoing learner responses.

Some studies on formative assessment such as Regmi's (2014) study on "The Effectiveness of Formative Assessment in Teaching Grammar" revealed positive effects of formative assessment techniques for testing grammar. Similarly, in their retrospective study on formative assessment, Hamodi & Paster (2016) highlighted the unique use of formative assessments, such as immediate feedback and self- and peer-assessment, which were highly valued by initial teachers during their education program. However, as current teachers, they identified some barriers to implementing change within their work environments, including pupils, families, and other members of the educational community. A study conducted by Thapa (2021) examined the relationship between instruction and assessment in secondary education and found that external tests, alongside ongoing terminal and annual tests, provided limited insights to improve student learning. Likewise, Qureshi,

Shah, and Memon's (2022) study indicated that teachers' formative assessment feedback enhanced students' motivation and learning engagement, while Naka's (2023) research on the portfolio assessment technique employed by a lecturer demonstrated that continuous feedback helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses during activities in the English class.

All of the aforementioned studies reveal that most studies have largely been carried out in foreign contexts, primarily exploring the effectiveness of formative assessment in teaching and learning, thus indicating a need for more qualitative research, particularly using interpretive phenomenological analysis to uncover the practices of formative assessment in community schools and delve into the lived experiences of both teachers and students.

Research Design

This study applied an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research design suggested by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). This design is linked with understanding of personal lived experience and exploring persons' relatedness or involvement in a particular event or process (phenomenon), involving participants in exploring, describing, interpreting and situating how they make sense of their experiences. Using IPA as a lens, this study explored the lived experiences of the teachers and students on formative assessment.

Four secondary level English teachers from two selected community schools, namely Saraswati Vidhya Pith and Kalika School, were selected using a purposive sampling technique; the former was highly reputed and popular, and the latter was average type among schools located in Kathmandu Valley. Six students studying in Grade 9 from each school were selected. Altogether, 12 students and 4 teachers were the key informants for the study. For ethical considerations, all the names of the participants and schools used were pseudonyms. The brief descriptions of respondents are as follows:

Teachers. Gita and Hari were from Saraswati Vidhya Pith. Gita was a B.Ed., and Hari was an M.Ed. in English Education. Gita, who belonged to the Newar-speaking community, had 30 years of teaching experience at Saraswati Vidhya Pith, while Hari had 2 years of teaching experience at the same school. He was one of the younger faculty members at the same school. Similarly, Ram and Sita were from Kalika School. Ram was a B.Ed., who had 29 years of experience teaching English, while Sita was an M.Ed. in English and had 5 years of teaching experience.

Students. 12 students studying in Grade Nine from two schools participated in the study. Among them, 6 students were selected from each school: 4 girls and 2 boys. Preeti, Priya, Anita, and Lisha were girls, while Prabesh and Success were boys from Saraswati Vidhya Pith. Among the girls, Preeti and Priya were active and well-performers, Lisha was average, and Anita was often silent in classroom activities. Among boys, Success was active, while Prabesh was passive. Similarly, among 6 students from Kalika School, 4 were boys and 2 were girls. Nikhil, Pawan, John, and Ashwin were the boys, while Jenny and Kripa were the girls. Among the boys, Nikhil

and John were average, Pawan was passive, and Ashwin was active. Likewise, among Jenny and Kripa, Jenny was active, whereas Kripa was passive in the classroom.

The data were collected using classroom observations and interviews techniques. Each teacher's 5 classroom teaching sessions were observed. Altogether, 20 classes were observed during the study. Semi-structured interviews were subsequently conducted based on classroom practices. Each classroom observation was followed by an interview with the respective teacher and then with students to measure their experiences of the teacher's activities. The classroom observation forms and semi-structured interview guidelines, for both teachers and students, served as data collection tools. The interviews with teachers were conducted to understand how they made sense of the assessment activities used in their classrooms, while interviews with students aimed to explore how they experienced teachers' formative assessment strategies within the same environment.

The data were transcribed and translated from Nepali to English. They were then quoted, coded, categorized, and thematized, carefully adhering to ethical guidelines: upholding principles of privacy, trustworthiness, and transparency and honesty with respondents.

Analysis

The analysis of collected data led to three major themes, such as diverse assessment tactics used, student engagement strategies while conducting formative assessment and students' experiences. Each theme offers insights into how formative assessment was practiced and interpreted within the selected classroom contexts.

Diverse Assessment Tactics. Formative assessment is effective and integral in enhancing students' engagement in learning and understanding. Classwork, homework, observation of students' linguistic behavior, revision practices, vocabulary teaching, unit tests, inductive grammar teaching, group work, on-the-spot feedback, and sharing before explanation were formative assessment strategies used by almost all of the selected teachers. These tactics not only provide real-time insights into students' progress but also enable teachers to tailor their instruction to address individual learning needs.

Among multifold strategies used for formative assessment, classwork is a frequently used activity in the classrooms, regardless of contextual variations in its implementation. It was found that even the same teacher utilized different activities, such as reading, writing, and peer correction, at different times. The classroom vignettes given below provide evidence for this claim. During classroom vignette 1, Teacher Gita structured classwork that included a group activity involving true/false questions, which encouraged active participation and peer interaction. During the activity, her focus was twofold: fostering attentiveness and encouraging students to enhance their understanding. Her reflective comment

highlights the importance of remedial feedback in identifying and addressing students' strengths and weaknesses. This underscores the vitality of the classroom not only in evaluating but also in developing learning through collaboration and cooperation. Similarly, during vignette 2, Teacher Hari's approach focused on independent reading and comprehension. He employed a question-and-answer strategy. This session, complemented by immediate feedback, allowed him to assess students' linguistic understanding, promoting independent learning. This technique revealed that Teacher Hari emphasized the necessity of evaluating students' existing knowledge to tailor teaching and learning effectively. It illustrates how classwork can bridge gaps in understanding and foster a strong foundation for succeeding lessons.

Like classwork, homework was another common formative assessment strategy that enhanced learning beyond the classroom boundary. All the selected teachers maximally used this strategy to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and to provide immediate feedback. It promoted learning retention. For instance, teachers' careful use of the Nepali language to clarify vocabulary enabled students to complete tasks they initially struggled with, signifying how homework can narrow down comprehension gaps. The study found that teachers were aware of the multidimensional value of homework. In this regard, Teacher Ram highlighted the role of homework in providing appropriate feedback and implementing discipline. Teacher Sita emphasized its potential to nurture a work ethic and minimize distractions. Teacher Hari, on the other hand, outlined homework as a fundamental part of teaching, important for reinforcing active classroom learning and discouraging passive absorption. This diversity in perspectives reflects a shared belief in homework's significance as a tool for fostering active engagement, discipline, and independent learning.

The observation of students' linguistic behavior was another critical formative assessment strategy that the teachers used in their classrooms. Teachers were attentive to students' mistakes in pronunciation, reading, and comprehension, providing on-the-spot corrections to ensure clarity and accuracy. For instance, Teacher Ram corrected a student's pronunciation error during a lesson on '*Transportation*' which had to be pronounced as /*ˌtrænsˈpɔːtɪʃən*/, highlighting the importance of accurate pronunciation in language learning. He argued that incorrect pronunciation could provide an ambiguous meaning, leading to misinterpretation of the message, especially in communication with native speakers, focusing on the role of appropriate pronunciation of intonation in conveying grammatical and contextual meaning.

The revision practice was another formative assessment strategy that teachers often used in the classroom settings. All the respondent teachers proved the vitality of revising previous lessons, giving prominence to their role in bridging topics and fostering deeper understanding through the interconnection between the two. Teacher Ram's opinion "*Sometimes it is necessary to revise previous lessons to link the previous content with the new topic and it will give contribution and with on*

the given topic,” underlines the value of revision in grasping interrelated concepts. In the same line, Teacher Hari states, *“Students will feel prepared for the next lesson.”* He argues that revision prepares students with a solid foundation for subsequent lessons. These insights reflect a practical approach to learning that promotes comprehension and readiness for future academic challenges.

Some teachers used ‘vocabulary teaching’ as a formative assessment strategy. Teacher Sita taught vocabulary systematically, which was an interactive strategy for formative assessment. She provided opportunities for both guided correction and independent thinking by writing words on the board. One student responded a sentence such as *‘He was rewarded with adoring smile,’* for which he immediately received feedback from teacher Sita that validated his effort with an example sentences, such as *‘Adoring her smile he could not help but captivated’* and *‘The resort by beach was beautiful,’* that offered clear and contextually rich examples of word usage to all students. Furthermore, her assistance to struggling learners portrays her dedication and commitment to inclusive teaching and learning.

Unit tests were effectively used as formative assessments, as evidenced by Teacher Sita’s response: *“Through the unit test, I came to know how much learners have learned, what types of capacity they have; according to that, I provide feedback,”* this approach underscores the dual purpose of unit tests: measuring academic progress and identifying individual student capacities. By providing feedback based on each student’s test achievements, the teacher facilitated a personalized learning experience, aligning with formative assessment ethics outlined in the Secondary Level Curriculum of 2078. Teacher Ram and Gita used the inductive method while teaching question tags. Both of them introduced the topic with examples and provided opportunities to actively explore and engage in deriving the rules. Along with these, tasks were allocated in groups. Group work was used to facilitate peer interaction and cooperative learning. In this regard, Teacher Hari said, *“If we divide the group by mixing up brilliant and weak students, they will work together and can share, collaborate, and scaffold to the needy ones.”* They will experience the value of collaborative learning. The rotational presentations ensured equal participation, promoting confidence and communication skills among all students.

Feedback remained a central aspect in the classrooms. Feedback emerged as a critical component in all observed classrooms, emphasizing its role in developing reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Teacher Sita provided on-the-spot feedback during spelling and punctuation activities, enabling students to learn from their peers’ mistakes. Her statement that feedback has *“a positive impact on learning”* resonates with Teacher Hari’s remark, *“I always take feedback positively, which plays a vital role in learning.”* This collective focus on feedback reflects its importance in reinforcing learning, improving teaching efficacy, and guiding student progress.

Teachers also used sharing understanding before explanation as a strategy of formative assessment. Teacher Gita used this approach by asking them to share their understanding of the given topic before explaining. While we wanted to

understand how she makes sense of applying this technique, she responded, *“When students share their understanding before explanation, they will be motivated and mentally prepared to learn”*. In this excerpt, she emphasizes the motivational aspect and peer learning. Priya’s input in the classroom about the ecological change, i.e., *“temperature increasing, snow melting,”* and *“snow melting and sea level increasing”* due to global warming, illustrated active participation and collaborative learning of students.

The above description reveals the way teachers applied diverse tactics for formative assessment. However, the most applied strategies were classwork, homework and observation of their linguistic behavior. Revision practices, vocabulary teaching and unit tests were also frequently used strategies. Some techniques, such as the inductive method to teach grammar, group tasks, on-the-spot feedback and sharing students’ existing knowledge on the given topic before explanation, were other tactics used by teachers to identify students’ difficulties, weaknesses and strengths and areas of improvement. By providing targeted feedback, the teacher tried to foster a more inclusive and conducive learning environment. Teacher Gita and Teacher Hari encouraged students’ participation and confidence by adopting targeted feedback strategies that align with a differentiated teaching approach, a modern learner-centred approach in English language teaching and formative assessment. It was observed that students were not only motivated by the application of this approach but also empowered to take risks and ownership of their learning. The immediate and constructive feedback was an integral part of almost all of the observed classes. Either through group activities, individual tasks, or observation of their linguistic behavior, teachers’ feedback helped to mitigate learning gaps. However, it was observed that there are gaps still in the application of more innovative and diverse formative assessment techniques, namely: storytelling, project work, problem-based teaching, debates and discussion, as suggested by the secondary level compulsory English curriculum.

Student Engagement Strategies. By engagement strategies, we mean the methods or techniques teachers use to actively involve students in the evaluation process. Beyond traditional testing, they create a conducive and interactive learning environment where students participate meaningfully. This study explored a wider range of strategies used by teachers to actively involve students in formative assessment processes. More than using diverse engagement tactics, they underscored how these methods foster content understanding, self-reflection, interaction and self-improvement among students. Using observation and informal assessment, teacher correction, group correction, peer correction, self-assessment, class correction, scaffolding weak students, and observing and guiding and video for better understanding, teachers actively engaged students in the formative assessment process.

While analyzing correction techniques, teacher correction was the most dominant strategy used by teachers. For example, Teacher Gita encouraged

individual students to write their answers on the board and the rest of the others to correct them collaboratively. This activity allowed individual student to correct their work themselves simultaneously. In this regard, Teacher Gita clarified, *"Whenever we call students to write their answer in chorus, they will gradually develop confidence in front of the audience."* It reveals her focus on lessening hesitation and developing their confidence, fostering an open learning culture where committing mistakes is regarded as an opportunity for improvement. The engagement of students in group correction enhanced interaction and collaboration skills, and spirit among students. Teacher Hari's vocabulary teaching technique, in which students were assigned to present their answers for group validation, promoted peer or collaborative learning. With the logic, he said, *"While doing so, one group likes to share their knowledge with others, and other groups will share with different others. In such a way, it increases interaction as well as a feeling of competition to some extent."* Along with developing an in-depth understanding of the given contents, this technique fostered healthy competition and cooperation among students during and learning process.

Engaging students in peer assessment in writing encouraged them to write answers and get subsequent corrections from their peers. In this regard, Teacher Sita remarked that this technique reduces students' public-speaking anxiety by reinforcing accountability for their work. In her words, *"Some students just write sometimes they commit minor mistakes: If we correct them there, the whole class checks their answer."* It reveals that peer correction boosts peer learning and fosters collective accountability for academic achievement. Besides this, during the observation and informal assessment process, the teacher observed students' classroom activities, detecting misconceptions and areas for improvement. The use of informal assessment motivated students to self-correct and self-reflect, learning from their peers. Being involved in these activities, students not only do activities but also observe others also gaining insights into their learning gaps, enabling them to improve as targeted. In this regard, Teacher Sita used a structured activity to encourage students to complete a story. She supported struggling learners by providing hints and guiding criteria, fostering self-awareness and proactive learning. Teacher Ram used a whole-class correction strategy in the classroom. While implementing this technique, he engaged students to work collaboratively. During the activity, he asked individual students to complete tasks and then invited the class to validate their responses, encouraging collective participation and collaborative learning. The tactic allowed all the students to participate actively, sharing responsibilities that ultimately reduced individual pressure in completing the tasks. At the same time, better students were actively involved in scaffolding weaker classmates. During this activity, students were paired in a pattern of weaker-better, aiming to support weaker students by more capable ones. In this line, Teacher Gita stated, *I just call them according to their roll number... There is a rotation system in my class. This technique ensures inclusivity and equity in classroom participation while building weaker students' confidence."* While using the observing and guiding strategy, the teachers assigned students tasks, then

closely monitored their pronunciation and vocabulary usage, providing on-the-spot correction. In this regard, Teacher Hari said, *"We have to look at everything from vocabulary to pronunciation... if they make any errors and mistakes here and there, we have to correct them immediately. This immediate feedback mechanism ensures students refine their language skills continuously."*

While using unit tests as a formative assessment tactic, teachers involved students in unit tests and self-evaluation activities. Beyond measuring students' learning progress, unit tests were used to evaluate teaching effectiveness. In this regard, Teacher Sita shared, *"Through unit tests, I came to know how much learners have learned... according to that, I provide feedback."* This reflective practice improved instructional capability. Likewise, students were involved in watching videos to enhance their content understanding. Teacher Hari's integration of multimedia resources enhanced content comprehension and engagement. While teaching a text about "Wimbledon" included in Grade 9 English textbook, he used video clips to overcome students' lack of understanding. He emphasized, *"Visuals have a great influence on the mind of the students... I played a few clips so that I could motivate my students in the very beginning in the classroom."* The use of technology illustrates how innovative methods can transform abstract concepts into tangible experiences.

The above analysis reveals that teachers employed a diverse strategy tailored to meet students' varied learning needs. These strategies enhanced collaboration, encouraged active participation, and boosted students' confidence. Furthermore, the use of self-assessment, linguistic behavior corrections, and multimedia integration strategies illustrates a comprehensive approach used in the English classroom for formative assessments. It reveals that teachers effectively engaged students in meaningful learning by balancing traditional practices with innovative tools and techniques, building a foundation for continuous improvement.

Students' Responses. The study also examined student responses to the formative assessment strategies employed by their teachers. Interviews with twelve students from two schools revealed insights into their learning experiences, perceptions of feedback, motivational factors, and challenges faced during English learning.

Students appreciated interactive teaching methods and the use of multiple languages during instruction. For instance, Jenny shared, *"I had confusion before the teacher taught. I used to see a grammar book, though I had a problem understanding the text. The teacher used Nepali and English while teaching so that I could understand the content better."* Similarly, corrective feedback played a significant role in learning, as noted by Preeti: *"Once I made a mistake in pronunciation while reading a book, the teacher provided feedback by pronouncing it correctly then I learned the correct pronunciation."* These responses indicate that formative assessment strategies, particularly corrective feedback, enable students to learn from mistakes and clarify their understanding. The dual-language

approach also facilitates comprehension for students struggling with English concepts.

Most students perceived feedback positively, with ten out of twelve finding it beneficial. However, Pawan expressed a preference for spaced feedback, stating, *"I don't like regular, because I feel bored. I like the feedback in the duration of two to three days."* Priya highlighted a concern with feedback delivery, suggesting, *"If feedback is like normal, but if we made a mistake in the exam, sometimes the teacher tells by a demotivational way, in that case, I think they should tell personally."* The majority valued personalized feedback for its role in promoting progress and understanding, while some highlighted the need for constructive and non-demotivating delivery. Regular feedback was regarded as essential for improvement, as noted by Preeti: *"Regular feedback motivates us. Positive feedback makes our mindset positive. If we have any mistakes, then we can improve through the teacher's feedback."*

Students acknowledged the impact of teachers' assessments. Students recognized the importance of varied assessment methods in enhancing their learning experience. Priya shared,

Today, as you have noticed, our teacher asks us to study and understand so that we can clarify points in class. For instance, one person may have one view while another holds a different perspective. This creates an environment for exchanging views with friends, as well as teachers' viewpoints, allowing us to grasp and comprehend the text in various ways.

Such methods foster an interactive and collaborative environment, enabling students to exchange perspectives and gain a multifaceted understanding of the subject.

Similarly, students preferred feedback delivery. Students demonstrated diverse preferences for feedback delivery. Group feedback was preferred by most, as explained by Priya: *"I like to take feedback in a group if many students have made the same mistake, they get corrected."* Group feedback allows students to collectively address errors and learn from peers, while personal feedback provides individualized guidance. Likewise, factors influencing motivation included teacher encouragement, peer support, and personal aspirations. Preeti stated, *"We are motivated by friends and teachers mainly. For me, alone peaceful environment is better if I don't understand, then I consult with a teacher."* Positive learning environments and engaging teaching methods were identified as significant contributors to student focus and enthusiasm.

Students valued the use of visual aids in teaching. Success remarked, *"It was a very effective video was better than telling by mouth,"* while Anita observed, *"Games and sports differ, sir had told us when video shows games are only indoor and sports are outdoor, so sir show video about badminton so sir did better by showing the video."* The integration of videos and related visuals enhanced student engagement and understanding, making the learning process more enjoyable. Along with these,

students reported challenges in understanding English concepts and seeking clarification. For example, Priya shared, *"I feel scared to ask a question because I think the teacher may think badly of me or they may embarrass me in front of my friends."* This fear highlights the importance of creating a supportive and non-judgmental classroom atmosphere. To overcome challenges, students relied on strategies like consulting teachers, seeking peer assistance, and self-study. In this regard, Success shared, *"I have been learning from teachers and friends and through the internet."*

Discussion

The analysis highlights a range of formative assessment strategies employed to foster student engagement, demonstrating the adaptability of formative assessment as an interactive and responsive pedagogical approach. The study also reveals that formative assessment strategies build confidence and foster accountability. Teacher correction, as observed in Teacher Gita's classroom, aligns with Wiliam and Thompson's (2006) framework, which emphasizes formative assessment as a process that activates students as the owners of their learning. By encouraging students to write answers on the board and involving the whole class in corrections, this method builds confidence and reduces the fear of public errors among students. However, as this approach takes mistakes as learning opportunities, risks might occur in overlooking quieter students who require additional support to fully benefit from such practices. Besides, improvement in learning, different strategies of formative assessment promoted peer collaboration and interaction. The group and pair correction techniques used in the English classrooms in the selected schools illustrate the role of formative assessment in promoting collaborative learning, as also highlighted by Afitska (2014) through peer assessment strategies. Teacher Hari's emphasis on interaction and healthy competition resonates with Beard's (2023) notion of active engagement fostering self-directed learning. While these methods nurture cooperative skills and deepen content understanding, their success depends on effective classroom management to ensure equitable participation.

The study found that diverse strategies of formative assessment are beneficial to enhance reflective learning. Self-assessment and informal observation demonstrate a shift toward reflective learning, encouraging students to evaluate their progress. This approach is reinforced by Bennett (2011), who highlights the importance of adapting instruction to immediate learning needs. Teacher Sita's structured self-assessment activity aligns with this by empowering students to identify gaps and seek guidance. However, its effectiveness may be limited without clear criteria for success, as emphasized by Dayal (2021), which ensures students have the tools to accurately reflect on their progress. Whole-class correction, as employed by Teacher Ram, fosters a shared learning environment and minimizes pressure on individual students. This approach supports inclusivity by engaging the entire class in the correction process, as noted by UNICEF (2022) in its recommendation for collaborative strategies. However, while this method

effectively addresses collective gaps, its capacity to meet individual learning needs may be constrained, necessitating supplementary strategies such as personalized feedback. Similarly, the inclusion of weaker students through pairing and rotational systems reflects a commitment to equity, a principle reinforced by Wiliam (2010), who advocates for maximizing every student's potential. These techniques match with Viegas, Alves, and Lima's (2014) emphasis on integrating diverse strategies to enhance educational outcomes. While such scaffolding is valuable, over-reliance on peer support may place undue pressure on stronger students and limit the depth of teacher engagement with struggling learners.

The findings regarding the students' engagement tactics reveal that formative assessment practices underscore their pivotal role in fostering student learning through dynamic and tailored approaches, as emphasized by Brown (2004) and further contextualized by Pradhan (2021). While the observed strategies—classwork, homework, linguistic behavior assessment, revision practices, vocabulary teaching, unit tests, inductive grammar teaching, group work, on-the-spot feedback, and sharing understanding before explanation—highlight effective implementation, several critical insights and gaps emerge upon closer examination. Wiliam and Thompson's (2006) conceptual framework, which identifies five key strategies of formative assessment, serves as a lens to evaluate these practices. The teachers, in this study, demonstrated proficiency in clarifying and sharing learning objectives and engaging in discussions that elicited evidence of student understanding. For instance, activities such as Teacher Gita's group-based true/false exercises and Teacher Hari's independent reading and comprehension tasks fostered collaborative and independent learning. The use of immediate and constructive feedback across all observed practices aligns with Wiliam and Thompson's third strategy of providing feedback that boosts learners forward. However, there was limited evidence of activating students as instructional resources for one another or as owners of their learning. While some group tasks facilitated peer interaction, the absence of techniques like peer-assessment or self-assessment, as recommended by Afitska (2014), suggests room for improvement in promoting learner autonomy.

The integration of multiple formative assessment strategies highlights teachers' dedication to fostering an inclusive and responsive learning environment. The use of classwork, such as Gita's group activities and Hari's independent tasks, showcases a balanced approach to promoting collaboration and self-reliance. Similarly, the emphasis on linguistic behavior assessment through real-time feedback demonstrates a commitment to addressing critical language skills like pronunciation, as noted by Teacher Ram during lessons on "Transportation." Revision practices and vocabulary teaching further highlight the proactive measures adopted by teachers to reinforce learning. For instance, the systematic approach taken by Teacher Sita in vocabulary instruction highlights the value of contextual learning in fostering language acquisition. These practices align with Clark's (2011) assertion that formative assessment transcends traditional testing, creating dynamic learning opportunities.

Despite the strengths, notable gaps exist in the implementation of creative and diverse formative assessment techniques. The curriculum and literature, such as Regmi (2014) and UNICEF (2022), advocate for innovative methods like debates, storytelling, diagnostic tests, and project-based assessments, yet these were absent in the observed classrooms. The reliance on conventional strategies such as homework and unit tests, while effective to an extent, limits the potential for fostering critical thinking, creativity, and deeper engagement among students. Furthermore, the absence of systematic self-assessment and peer-assessment activities diminishes opportunities for students to reflect on their progress and develop metacognitive skills. As Hamodi and Paster (2016) highlight, these methods are not only effective during teacher education but also face barriers in practical implementation due to workplace dynamics and external influences. Addressing these challenges could bridge the gap between theoretical recommendations and classroom practices.

Constructive feedback emerged as a cornerstone of formative assessment in this study, echoing its importance as emphasized by Wiliam (2010) and Bennett (2011). The immediacy of feedback, as seen in linguistic behavior assessment and on-the-spot corrections, directly influenced students' learning trajectories. Teachers like Gita and Hari demonstrated how feedback could motivate students and guide them toward improved performance. However, the potential of feedback to foster self-directed learning (Beard, 2023) was not fully realized, as the strategies lacked mechanisms to encourage students to take ownership of their learning journey.

The Secondary Level Curriculum (2078) prioritizes formative assessment to enhance educational quality, emphasizing ongoing learning and targeted feedback. The observed practices largely align with this vision but fall short in incorporating the diverse techniques proposed by the curriculum and literature. For instance, Qureshi et al (2022) findings on formative assessment feedback boosting motivation and engagement were reflected in some strategies but could be expanded further through innovative methods. Similarly, Naka's (2023) study on portfolio assessments highlights the value of continuous feedback, which was under-utilized in the observed classrooms.

Although the teachers' efforts to implement formative assessment are commendable, a shift towards more varied and creative strategies is essential to address the identified gaps. Students' educational experiences could be enriched by incorporating methods such as debates, storytelling, and project-based learning, which would more closely align with contemporary pedagogical practices. Furthermore, students could be empowered to become active participants in their learning processes by embedding self-assessment and peer assessment into routine activities. The reflections of students provide valuable insights into the practical implications of formative assessment and its impact on their learning experiences.

For students, feedback is central to their learning experiences, influencing their understanding and motivation. As illustrated by Preeti, corrective feedback

reinforces the findings of Hattie and Timperley (2007), who highlight that effective feedback clarifies learning objectives and addresses misconceptions. While most students found regular feedback beneficial, Pawan's preference for spaced feedback suggests the need to tailor feedback delivery to individual learning preferences. Constructive feedback, delivered in a non-demotivating manner, as recommended by Priya, aligns with Brookhart's (2017) view that the tone and timing of feedback significantly affect its efficacy.

The value students gave to collaborative and interactive learning environments highlights the importance of peer engagement in learning. Resonating with Slavin's (1996) cooperative learning theory, which highlights the role of peer interaction in enhancing understanding, Priya underscored the importance of classroom discussion and group feedback. It also echoes Boud and Molloy's (2013) emphasis on peer feedback as a vital component of formative assessment. However, ensuring equitable participation in groups remains challenging as it demands carefully selected strategies and their implementation in the classroom.

Students also found that teacher encouragement, collaborative support, and self-esteem as the key motivational factors because they create a positive learning environment. As expressed by Priya, students' fear of seeking clarification underscores the need for a supportive and non-judgmental classroom atmosphere. This finding aligns with Dweck's (2006) growth mindset theory, which advocates for creating environments where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning rather than failures. Echoing Zimmerman's (2002) self-regulated learning framework, the study confirms that strategies like consulting teachers, peer assistance, and self-study reflect students' resourcefulness in overcoming challenges. These reflections reveal diverse preferences for feedback delivery, with students valuing both group and personalized approaches. Priya's preference for group feedback supports Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) view that shared feedback grooms a collaborative learning culture. However, Success's reliance on individual consultation highlights the importance of addressing specific needs. This duality suggests that a balanced combination of group and individual feedback is essential for effective formative assessment.

The students' reflections underscore the need for a multifaceted approach to formative assessment that integrates interactive teaching, tailored feedback, and motivational strategies. Teachers must balance traditional practices with innovative methods, such as multimedia integration, to enhance engagement and understanding. Additionally, fostering a supportive classroom atmosphere is crucial to addressing students' fears and encouraging active participation. All the students' reflections provide knowledge of the strengths and limitations of formative assessment strategies practiced in Nepalese ELT classrooms. Using the interactive methods, constructive feedback, and a positive learning environment, teachers can address diverse learning needs and foster students' engagement. However, they also highlighted some challenges and called for continuous

adaptation and innovation in teaching practices to create an inclusive and empowering educational experience.

Conclusion

The analysis and discussion underscore the multifaceted nature of formative assessment and its impact on their learning experiences. Interactive teaching methods and collaborative activities play a crucial role in making learning accessible and engaging. Feedback is essential for clarifying concepts and correcting errors, which can be regarded as a key element of learning. However, the findings highlight the importance of delivering constructive and tailored feedback for its effectiveness. It also found that teacher encouragement, peer support, and innovative teaching tools, such as multimedia, were motivational factors instrumental in fostering student engagement. The study emphasizes a holistic approach that integrates interactive teaching, constructive feedback, and a nurturing classroom environment for effective formative assessment. By addressing students' diverse needs and fostering collaboration, teachers can create meaningful and engaging learning experiences that promote both academic and personal growth.

The formative assessment practices observed in the selected English classrooms demonstrate a strenuous effort utilized by teachers to engage students and enhance learning outcomes. Using feedback as a fundamental tool to bridge learning gaps, teachers effectively employed classwork, homework, and linguistic behavior observations in the classroom. Yet, room remained for greater innovation and alignment with curriculum recommendations, which can further enhance the effectiveness of formative assessment in fostering holistic learning.

Overall, students expressed satisfaction with teachers' formative assessment strategies. Feedback was acknowledged as a crucial tool for improvement and learning, although its delivery requires careful consideration to avoid negative impacts. However, regular and varied assessments were recognized as effective in fostering students' motivation, enhancing their understanding, and addressing learning challenges. The study suggests that implementing formative assessment in English classrooms requires a balance of feedback quality, interactive pedagogy, and student-centred support systems. Teachers should be encouraged to adopt more innovative, curriculum-aligned strategies to further enhance learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study indicates that fostering a collaborative and motivating environment can significantly boost student engagement, ultimately contributing to both academic achievement and personal development.

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