

## Classroom-Based Assessment Techniques for EFL Skills and Components in Moroccan High Schools

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### Abstract

Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) utilizes a variety of techniques to provide feedback for both summative and formative decision-making. In EFL classrooms, effective feedback on language components and skills requires diverse assessment methods that capture different types of knowledge and levels of skill. Restricting CBA to narrowly defined, objective methods for summative purposes limits its potential to improve teaching and learning. This study investigates the main CBA techniques used in Moroccan EFL high schools and their alignment with sound assessment principles. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 260 teachers through an online questionnaire, followed by checklist-based classroom observations of two teachers and document analysis of tests and materials from ten teachers. Results indicate that written exams and worksheets featuring selected response and short answer formats predominate in CBA. Reading is primarily assessed via true/false and WH-questions, while writing is evaluated through paragraph tasks. Listening and speaking are seldom taught or assessed as standalone skills. Concerning EFL components, gap-filling is the most common CBA technique, followed by multiple-choice questions, providing the correct verb form, and matching exercises. Alternative CBA methods are mainly limited to projects and role plays, with occasional use of peer and self-assessment. The study concludes with practical recommendations for policy, teaching, and future research.

**Keywords:** classroom-based assessment, tests, items, alternative techniques and constraints

تقنيات التقييم الصفّي لمهارات ومكونات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المدارس الثانوية المغربية

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### ملخص

يستخدم التقييم الصفّي تقنيات متنوعة لتقديم تغذية راجعة لكل من اتخاذ القرارات الختامية والتكوينية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، تتطلب التغذية الراجعة الفعالة لمكونات اللغة ومهاراتها أساليب تقييم متنوعة تستوعب أنواعًا مختلفة من المعرفة ومستويات المهارات. إن قصر التقييم الصفّي على تقنيات موضوعية محددة بدقة لأغراض ختامية يقلل من قدرته على تعزيز التدريس والتعلم. تستكشف هذه الدراسة تقنيات التقييم الصفّي السائدة المستخدمة في المدارس الثانوية المغربية التي تدرس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ومدى توافقها مع مبادئ التقييم الفعال. باستخدام نهج متعدد الأساليب، تم جمع البيانات من 260 أستاذًا عبر استبيان أرسل عبر الإنترنت، تليها ملاحظات صفية مصحوبة بقائمة مرجعية وتحليل واثق للاختبارات والمواد من عشرة أساتذة. تُظهر النتائج أن الاختبارات الكتابية وأوراق العمل ذات صيغ الإجابات المختارة والإجابات القصيرة تهيمن على التقييم الصفّي. يتم تقييم مهارة القراءة بشكل رئيسي من خلال أسئلة الصواب والخطأ و أسئلة حول النص، ومهارة الكتابة من خلال مهام الفقرة، بينما نادرًا ما يتم تدريس أو تقييم الاستماع والتحدث كمهارات مستقلة. بالنسبة لمكونات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، يُعد ملء الفراغات أكثر أساليب التقييم الصفّي شيوعًا، يليه اختبارات متعددة، مع تحديد صيغة الفعل الصحيحة والمطابقة. أما فيما يتعلق بتقنيات التقييم الصفّي البديلة، فتقتصر هذه التقنيات بشكل أساسي على المشاريع وتمثيل الأدوار، مع استخدام أحيانًا لتقييم الأقران والتقييم الذاتي. وتختتم الدراسة بأثار ودلالات عملية على السياسات والتدريس والبحوث المستقبلية

الكلمات الدالة: التقييم الصفّي، الاختبارات، فقرات الاختبار، التقنيات البديلة، القيود.

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## 1. Introduction

Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) utilizes diverse techniques and items to collect data about students' learning progress in EFL components and skills. Principled CBA implementation involves the use of a variety of techniques, including alternative methods, such as portfolios, presentations, projects, teacher observations, and peer and self-assessment. The systematic use of these techniques signifies a shift from the traditional psychometric paradigm involving the quantifying of students' achievement towards a more inclusive and learner-centered model that integrates assessment into the core of the educational process. This model is reinforced by the recognition that EFL classrooms are complex learning environments where cognitive, social, and emotional factors interact in complex ways to shape students' performance. Consequently, CBA in the EFL context is characterized by its unique nature, triangulation, and broad applicability. On this basis, the variety of CBA techniques offers rich, detailed descriptive feedback that supports effective teaching and learning; however, during implementation, this often necessitates striking a balance between the use of formative and summative CBA techniques to meet the local demands and constraints of a particular educational setting.

Proceeding with implementation, summative written tests with objective items continue to shape CBA practices significantly in the Moroccan EFL context. In this regard, Ghaicha (2016) argues that CBA is either not adequately understood or not implemented within an educational framework. Notably, the ongoing use of discrete-item testing based on questionable constructs, such as grammar, is no longer justifiable. Instead, there is a growing need to assess actual performance and the cognitive and affective factors that influence it. As Ouakrime (2000) argued, tests are incomplete assessment tools without feedback, as it remains unclear whether test results alone are sufficient to support meaningful student learning. This highlights the need for the adoption of reflective and instructionally relevant alternative CBA techniques that integrate assessment seamlessly with instruction (Finch, 2012). These promote students' active involvement in CBA processes and foster autonomous learning, both of which are essential for developing self-regulated learning.

From an empirical perspective, CBA is an emerging area of research in the Moroccan EFL context. Arguably, further research is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of CBA practices by adopting a research agenda that both consolidates its current definitions and anchors them within theoretical frameworks (Turner, 2012). Additionally, given that CBA aims to provide authentic and meaningful assessment opportunities relevant to both students and teachers while considering all aspects of the learning process, including cognitive and affective dimensions (Finch, 2012), one of the major concerns to address is the evident disparity between the prescribed principles of effective measurement and their practical application in tackling CBA's unique challenges, purposes, and intended consequences (Ghaicha, 2016). Of greater significance here is the need to consider the culture of accountability that characterizes various EFL CBA implementations through the use of objective techniques and items, particularly in high-stakes settings. Overall, bridging the gap between CBA-related theory, its practical implementation, and the challenges it presents is essential for enhancing its effectiveness in EFL educational settings.

Within this framework, this study enhances the understanding of variability among EFL teachers' practices, particularly the inconsistent emphasis on EFL components and skills, which remains a significant research need. Accordingly, empirical research systematically examining the use of CBA to assess specific EFL skills and components is still limited. Therefore, investigating CBA techniques can help identify the most commonly employed methods, the challenges EFL teachers face in implementing them effectively, and the extent to which these practices align with CBA purposes, the learning objectives, and standards outlined in local policies and guidelines. To address these issues more effectively, research should incorporate more direct measures that yield concrete evidence, while also tackling challenges posed by variability in field settings, factors that often lead to low-quality educational research and inconsistent findings (McMillan, 2013). Thus, ensuring research quality necessitates moving beyond self-

report measures by incorporating direct approaches, such as field observations, ethnographic methods, interviews, narrative inquiry, and artifact-based measures.

## **2. Literature Review**

This section provides an overview of the theoretical and empirical insights that underpin this study. Initially, it defines classroom-based assessment (CBA) as a concept within EFL contexts. Subsequently, it highlights techniques for assessing EFL skills and components, emphasizing how these methods are implemented in the Moroccan EFL context from an empirical perspective.

### **2.1. CBA in EFL Contexts: Definition and Concerns**

CBA is a process of collecting information within classrooms using multiple diverse evidence-gathering techniques for various decision-making purposes. It is considered an ongoing and multifaceted data collection process that utilizes many formal and informal techniques to provide various sorts of feedback. In this way, it takes place before, during and after instructional cycles. For this reason, it is considered an inevitable part of classroom work as a social and culturally embedded process, a “pervasive phenomenon” (Broadfoot et al., 2001). With respect to this, McMillan (2019) considers it “complex and serves multiple purposes” (p. 88). In simple terms, moving beyond the traditional dichotomy of summative and formative assessments, data collected through CBA can serve both complementary and, at times, contradictory purposes, depending on how it is interpreted and utilized (El zerk, 2025). This is because it employs a variety of techniques to collect data meant for multiple and various decision-making.

Linked to teaching and learning processes, CBA is considered essentially formative by facilitating educational decision-making (Bailey & Durán, 2019). Additionally, by incorporating diverse task formats (Lane, 2013), CBA enables a more comprehensive assessment of students’ knowledge, skills, and processes. Yet, it is not only expected to act as a lever for formative enhancement of teaching and learning processes but also to serve as a tool for summative accountability evaluation of teachers, schools and administrations (Brown, 2022). To illustrate, CBA functions to formally document student progress, assign final grades, and report outcomes to central authorities or external funding agencies (El zerk, 2025). That said, CBA primarily supports formative decision-making, with the main goal of improving teaching and learning processes. To realize this aim, both teachers and students are expected to actively and collaboratively engage in the process by utilizing CBA techniques and applying the feedback received to drive improvement.

Shifting focus to the educational setting, the EFL context pertains to environments where English is learned as a foreign language by learners whose first language is not English and who come from diverse linguistic (non-English speaking) backgrounds (Leung & Lewkowicz, 2008). In this context, learners acquire English after their native language has been learned outside an English-speaking environment (Bailey, 2017). Depending on the educational setting, English may be taught either as a content subject in its own right or as a separate component from other subjects. Alternatively, it can be used as a medium of instruction through which other subject content and skills are taught and learned (e.g., science). When taught as a distinct school subject, EFL components and skills may be assessed either separately or through an integrative approach employing various techniques and item types. This variation is influenced by multiple factors, including CBA policies and guidelines, teachers’ assessment literacy, and their underlying pedagogical philosophies and beliefs.

### **2.2. CBA of EFL Skills and Components: Local Policies and Theoretical Insights**

In terms of local policies, CBA in the Moroccan EFL context consists of two main types: summative written tests and continuous assessment aimed at formative purposes. The summative assessment encompasses formal written techniques that focus on separate EFL components and skills. It generally includes five mandatory short written quizzes and a comprehensive global assessment written test. Shifting the focus to continuous assessment, it is primarily formative, comprising informal, ongoing, and Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) activities, such as projects, presentations, portfolios and peer and self-assessment (NCEEEO, 2007). Additionally, the assessment of the four skills is conducted using a teacher-developed rubric, specifically a checklist with numerical ratings and descriptive criteria that help

teachers judge how effectively students have met the target standards (MNE, 2007). Therefore, the CBA of EFL components and skills utilizes a variety of data collection techniques, encompassing both traditional written tests with various item formats and alternative performance-based assessments.

### **2.2.1. Language Tests**

In many EFL educational contexts, a test is considered a frequent CBA technique used to measure students' achievement related to previously covered content (e.g., knowledge and skills) in relation to specific learning objectives and standards. Bonner (2013) defines a test comprehensively as "any systematically administered set of procedures that results in some level of measurement of an attribute" (p. 88). Tests can be oral or written, discrete point or integrative. From a measurement perspective, tests are tools for making inferences based on sampled language skills and components. According to Fox (2017), discrete-point tests, particularly, faithfully represent language constructs as they are mathematically traceable, meet statistical requirements, and are reliable tools for efficient decision-making. That said, it remains unclear which content and skills tests guide students toward or whether students understand the test objectives in advance. It also remains uncertain whether teachers possess adequate skills in test item construction and analysis. Notably, tests provide a practical method for evaluating students' understanding and progress in relation to established learning standards. To achieve this, a variety of item formats are typically employed.

Written tests for assessing separate EFL components and skills feature various item formats. Generally, selected-response (SR) items typically assess lower-order cognitive skills, whereas constructed-response (CR) items are intended to evaluate higher-order thinking processes. Teachers tend to favor essay tests over objective ones for assessing higher-order cognitive skills (Gullickson, 1993). Additionally, assessing too many skills with too few items per skill compromises measurement precision and limits the usefulness of diagnostic information for guiding future instructional decisions (Jang, 2017). CR items exist along a continuum from simple to complex, or more practically, from very brief to extended responses. They are the most commonly used, while essays are surprisingly underutilized. On the other hand, the predominant SR items include matching exercises, closely followed by multiple-choice items, whereas true/false questions are employed far less frequently (Hogan, 2013). That said, there remains limited evidence regarding the types of tests and item formats teachers use to assess EFL components and skills, especially in the Moroccan EFL context.

In the classroom setting, teachers often regard tests as an administrative requirement. Notably, over-reliance on timed written tests often promotes superficial and rote learning, focusing on isolated knowledge components that students are likely to forget quickly (Black and Wiliam, 1998). More than this, it has been realized that measuring students' performance is not an exact science. Instead, it is characterized by subjectivity and value-laden choices (Elwood, 2001). This is especially important when EFL components and skills are taught and assessed as separate elements. Furthermore, written tests often neglect factors related to the test taker's psychology and the complicating psychological, cultural, and contextual factors. Therefore, over-reliance on tests may not effectively reflect students' proficiency in EFL skills and components. When intended to fulfil a formative function, one of the main distinctive uses of language tests is providing information for decision-making within the context of educational programs (Bachman, 1990). That said, a test remains one subset among various other alternative CBA techniques to capture students' depth of knowledge and practical skills that underpin communicative competence.

### **2.2.2. Alternative CBA Techniques**

Students' performance in EFL skills and components is assessed using both tests, along with a range of alternative techniques. These encompass innovative, authentic, and holistic activities delivered through diverse formats and modes of engagement, such as role-plays, projects, presentations, portfolios and peer and self-assessment. They are typically multidimensional and performance-based in nature. Besides, these techniques engage students in cognitively demanding tasks that provide evidence of their level of understanding. This evidence allows teachers to analyze student performance and offer meaningful feedback (Schneider et al., 2013). Additionally, during instruction, teachers gather information about

students' current understanding through informal evidence-collection strategies, such as questioning, discussions, observations made as students work on assigned tasks and analysis of assignments (Ruiz-Primo & Li, 2013; Russell, 2019). This is what gives CBA its formative character: the evidence gathered through both formal, planned assessments and informal, spontaneous opportunities informs decision-making about teaching and learning, with students playing an active role in the process.

Since CBA also involves collaboration among students themselves, collaborative assessment activities are also an integral part of alternative CBA techniques. To illustrate, group-based assessment activities require students to collaborate in completing assigned work, while collaborative peer assessment, such as reviewing group presentations or assessing their own group's performance (Price et al., 2011), promotes deeper involvement in CBA processes. These activities encourage students to apply a range of skills and integrate diverse types of knowledge. In specific terms, in self-assessment, students tend to reflect on their performance and follow specific steps to act on improving their learning, while peer assessment involves students providing meaningful feedback to their classmates on their work. Moreover, portfolios, which act as both an achievement product and a learning process, offer further insight into learning development. Concerning this, Finch (2007) notes that learning journals (e.g., diaries) and portfolios can serve as valuable evidence of progress. Collectively, these techniques act as learning experiences that enhance engagement, foster peer support and encourage autonomous and self-regulated learning.

Building on the above foundation while considering practical demands, specifically accountability in high-stakes EFL contexts, it is critical to achieve a balanced integration of both summative and formative CBA techniques. That said, greater emphasis should be put on alternative assessments, such as project works, portfolios and peer and self-assessments. These student-centered techniques should primarily serve formative decision-making for enhancing teaching and learning processes, with tests serving a complementary, more restricted role. This remains insufficient without students' involvement in CBA processes, such as understanding the learning objectives and assessment criteria, with training opportunities on how to use these criteria and feedback for learning improvement. Below is an overview of CBA techniques in the Moroccan EFL context from an empirical perspective.

### **2.3. CBA Techniques in Moroccan EFL High School Education: Empirical Perspective**

Upon completing middle school education, Moroccan students often begin qualifying high school at the age of fifteen by choosing one of three academic pathways: general, technical, or vocational. This academic journey typically lasts three years, comprising a one-year Common Core followed by a two-year Baccalaureate program. At the high school level, assessment is of two primary forms: CBA, which includes summative and continuous assessments, as highlighted previously, and high-stakes national standardized written exams. These assessments aim to serve multiple functions, emphasizing summative decision-making, such as determining grade promotion and reporting achievement to learners and parents. Having completed the three years of secondary school, students who successfully pass a series of these national standardized exams obtain the Baccalaureate diploma (BAC) (Llorent-Bedmar, 2014). Among these exams is the national English exam, whose results carry significant weight in determining students' success. Notably, the critical role of such examinations in determining students' academic and professional futures renders the Moroccan EFL context a high-stakes assessment environment. In this situation, one of the primary goals for both teachers and students is to prepare effectively for the successful completion of these exams, a phenomenon referred to as exam-driven pedagogy. Having outlined the assessment landscape in Moroccan high schools, the next section turns to the CBA empirical framework.

The reviewed empirical studies indicate that research on CBA within the Moroccan EFL context remains in its early stages. Ouakrime (2000) argues that the existing assessment system requires reform at the levels of organization, design, and implementation, presenting an ongoing and long-standing challenge. At the level of perception, a clear gap exists between teachers' perceptions of CBA and their actual classroom practices. In this regard, Mamad and Vigh (2021) found that most EFL teachers agreed with statements outlining the objectives of alternative assessment, indicating their recognition of its value. Similarly, Ghaicha and Omarkaly (2018) reported that the majority of EFL teachers, through self-

reports, affirmed their belief in the effectiveness of alternative assessment for enhancing both learning and instruction. They also acknowledged its alignment with their teaching approaches and instructional materials. That said, the integration of alternative assessment techniques in Moroccan EFL classrooms remains limited. It is, therefore, unclear which specific CBA techniques are used to assess specific EFL components and skills.

In the context of classroom implementation, CBA is often approached from a measurement-oriented perspective. Omarakly and Tamer (2022) emphasize that employing a variety of assessment techniques is more effective in fostering positive learning outcomes than relying solely on a single method (e.g., tests). Nevertheless, Moroccan EFL teachers tend to predominantly depend on written tests, particularly those that utilize objective item formats. Benzehaf (2017) observed that CBA practices frequently emphasize fact-recall assessments through written tests, with limited focus on critical thinking. Besides, they often lack clearly defined assessment purposes. Mamad and Vigh (2021) also reported a prevailing reliance on traditional assessment methods, such as gap-filling and matching exercises, instead of alternative techniques. To illustrate, self-assessment remains largely underutilized in EFL classrooms (Ghaicha & Oufela, 2021). Despite the minimal integration of these alternative methods, Omarakly and Tamer (2022) found that portfolio assessment had a notably positive impact on students' writing self-concept when compared to traditional summative writing tests. However, Babni (2019) concluded that alternative assessment is still viewed as less effective for providing meaningful feedback, resulting in its restricted application to a few selected techniques, such as role plays, oral presentations, and mini-projects. These techniques are typically associated with assessing productive rather than receptive skills (Ghaicha & Omarkaly, 2018).

In light of the above insights, alternative assessment in the Moroccan EFL context faces several challenges. While teachers exhibit positive attitudes toward alternative assessment, various obstacles impede its practical implementation in the classroom (Ghaicha & Omarkaly, 2018; Kasmi & Anasse, 2023). For instance, some teachers believe that these techniques do not effectively reflect their students' overall language proficiency (Babni, 2019). This may be attributed to the less clearly defined criteria of these techniques compared to traditional tests, their requirement for continuous student engagement, and the necessity for specialized teacher training (Kasmi & Anasse, 2023). Additional contextual constraints include large class sizes, limited training opportunities, rigid syllabi, and the unstructured nature of these techniques (Ghaicha & Omarkaly, 2018). Therefore, there is an urgent need for teacher training that emphasizes practical implementation skills over purely theoretical understanding (Ghaicha & Oufela, 2021). Notably, from the perspective of local policies, alternative assessment techniques remain optional in Moroccan EFL classrooms, with no official guidelines mandating their implementation. In light of these challenges, Benzehaf (2017) encouraged teachers' engagement in continuous learning, reflection, and experimentation with innovative, student-centered teaching and assessment practices, utilizing a wide range of techniques to capture the diverse dimensions of student intelligence.

#### **2.4. The Current Study**

Drawing from the insights discussed above, this study seeks to examine the predominant CBA techniques utilized for assessing specific EFL skills and components and the extent to which they adhere to the principles of effective assessment. To realize these objectives, the following research questions are addressed:

**RQ1:** What primary CBA techniques do Moroccan teachers utilize to assess EFL skills and components?

**RQ2:** To what extent do these techniques align with the principles of effective CBA implementation?

### **3. Materials and Methods**

This section details the study's research design, participant demographics and sampling strategy, data collection instruments, procedures for ensuring validity and reliability, methods of data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations.

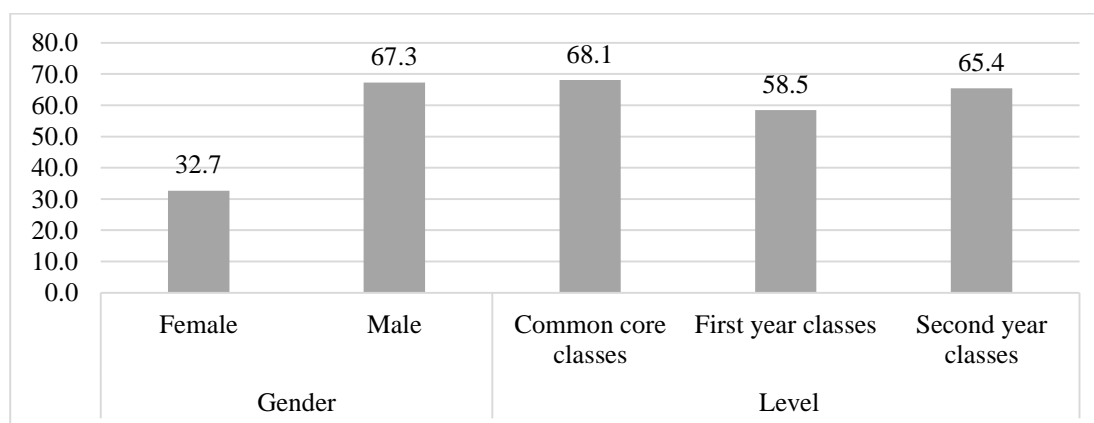
### 3.1. Research design

This study employed a mixed methods approach with a pragmatic worldview and an explanatory sequential strategy, underpinned by the assumption that collecting various types of data offers a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem, incorporating two sequential phases. The first phase involves gathering and analyzing quantitative data, followed by a second phase of qualitative data collection and analysis that builds on the initial quantitative results (Creswell, 2009; Mills & Gay, 2016). This design effectively captures quality in CBA by employing multiple measures to mitigate the weaknesses of each method with the strengths of another (Randel & Clark, 2013).

### 3.2. Participants and Sampling Strategy

In this study, the participants were EFL high school teachers (n=260) sampled conveniently based on their availability, willingness and convenience to participate in completing the questionnaire. Similarly, in the checklist-based classroom observation, the participants were two EFL male teachers who volunteered to take part in this data collection instrument. Further, in response to a cover letter, ten EFL teachers voluntarily shared documents related to their CBA implementation. The demographic information of the participants is presented below.

As shown in Figure 1, 32.7% of the teacher participants who completed the online self-report questionnaires were female, while 67.3% were male. The participants reported teaching at various high school levels, including common core classes (68.1%), first-year classes (58.5%), and second-year classes (65.4%). In addition to the questionnaires, checklist-based classroom observations were conducted with two male teachers, with teaching experience between 7 to 20 years and average class sizes ranging from 34 to 40 students. To complement the data collected during observations, ten EFL teachers voluntarily shared CBA-related documents following a formal request.



**Figure 1:** Teacher participants' demographics

### 3.3. Data Collection Instruments

In line with the research design adopted for this study, online self-report questionnaires were administered to Moroccan EFL high school teachers. To triangulate the quantitative data and gain deeper explanatory insights, checklist-based classroom observations and document analysis were also conducted. The following sub-sections provide detailed descriptions of each data collection instrument used in the study.

The self-report questionnaires administered to EFL teachers consist of three main sections. The first section collects the participants' background information, including gender and levels taught. The following two sections include multiple-response items exploring teachers' use of various CBA techniques and items to assess individual EFL components and skills. Additionally, open-ended items are distributed across these sections to allow for further comments.

The checklist-based classroom observation offers a direct measure of CBA practices. Given the inherent complexity of classroom environments, employing a structured observation scheme enhances reliability and facilitates consistent comparisons across classrooms and time periods (Dörnyei, 2007). Drawing on this, this method was used to collect supplementary qualitative data from two Moroccan EFL classrooms at Oum Rabii and Brahim Al-Mousli High Schools, located in the Salé directorate. The checklist was carefully designed with systematic categories, avoiding lengthy open-ended responses to ensure clarity and consistency.

To gain a concrete understanding of CBA techniques, document analysis, also referred to as “artifact-based measures”, was employed. It consists of the “written or visual sources of data that contribute to our understanding of what is happening in classrooms” (Mills & Gay, 2016, p. 558). These encompass items such as “lesson plans and graded tests, as the basis for assessing teacher practice” (Randel & Clark, 2013, p. 151), to provide an authentic measure of teachers’ practical application of assessment. This reduces the likelihood of overrepresenting the quality of their practices (Randel & Clark, 2013). To complement the CBA-related artifacts gathered during the observation period, a cover letter, developed by the author, was used for this purpose.

### **3.4. Validity and Reliability Concerns**

This study employed a triangulated approach to data collection instruments to provide “a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility” (Eisner, 1991, p. 110, cited in Bowen, 2009), and help avoid bias and ensure more validity of the findings. Besides, to further enhance the validity of the data collection instruments, it is essential to conduct thorough piloting and field-testing.

Accordingly, the initial version of the teacher questionnaire was piloted with a sample of twenty high school EFL teachers. Based on their feedback, revisions were made to the multiple-response items measuring teachers’ use of CBA techniques for assessing EFL components and skills. These adjustments streamlined the questionnaire by addressing these elements holistically rather than individually, resulting in a more concise instrument.

Concerning the checklist-based classroom observation, it was designed to corroborate the findings obtained from the questionnaire. The checklist for recording data was drafted with peer editing from an EFL teacher-researcher. Subsequently, it was pilot-tested with two EFL teacher participants.

### **3.5. Data Collection Procedure**

To collect quantitative data, the online self-report questionnaires were disseminated to teacher participants online via Google Forms® due to its feasibility of reaching a large number of participants in a short time.

Concerning the qualitative data collection, the checklist-based classroom observations were conducted at Oum Rabii and Brahim Al-Mousli high schools, located in the Sale directorate, Morocco. The observation period spanned four months, with two sessions held weekly in each school. The observed level in both settings was Common Core Sciences. The average class size in both school settings ranged between 34 and 40.

Further, at Oum Rabii High School, observations focused on Common Core Sciences classes 1 and 2, taught by a male teacher with seven years of experience. Sessions were conducted weekly on Thursdays from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Moreover, at Brahim Al-Mousli High School, observations were carried out in Common Core Sciences classes 2 and 3, taught by a male teacher with 20 years of experience. The observation sessions were also conducted weekly on Tuesdays, starting from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Concerning document analysis, as highlighted previously, the teacher participants were sent a cover letter to share additional CBA-related documents, intended to supplement those gathered during the classroom observations. In response to the request letter, teachers shared folders containing scanned or

PDF documents related to CBA. The received documents were divided into categories depending on their content before subjecting them to content analysis.

### **3.6. Data Analysis Procedure**

Regarding data analysis, the questionnaire data were coded using Microsoft Excel (2019) before being analyzed using SPSS 26.0 (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY), where graphs were generated per the research constructs and questions. This analytical approach enabled a comparison of CBA techniques, distinguishing between primary and other alternative techniques based on whether they targeted EFL components or skills.

Turning to the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires' open-ended responses and additional comment sections, the data were thematically analyzed using Microsoft Word (2019). This involved systematically categorizing the responses to identify recurring themes, patterns, and emerging concepts. Concerning the checklist-based observation and document analysis data, they underwent sequential thematic analysis.

### **3.7. Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were taken care of before, during and after data collection. Specifically, in the online self-report questionnaires administered to EFL teacher participants, the purpose of the study and the estimated completion time were clearly communicated. Participants were also assured in advance of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

Concerning the checklist-based classroom observation, before conducting the observations, an ethical approval form to conduct the observation was received from the Research Ethics Committee of the Doctoral Center at the Faculty of Education Sciences, Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco. Additionally, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study in advance.

As for document analysis, the cover letter for collecting CBA-related artifacts informed participants about the study's purpose, emphasizing the significance of their participation in both the research and the improvement of CBA in the EFL context. Upon receipt, each participant's documents were sorted based on their content, discarding any information that would compromise the participants' granted confidentiality and anonymity.

## **4. Findings**

This section presents the quantitative data on CBA techniques from Moroccan EFL high school teacher participants, collected using online self-report questionnaires. Following this, qualitative data were gathered through checklist-based classroom observations and document analysis, which are described below. Specifically, the following sub-sections present a sequential analysis of the quantitative and qualitative findings.

### **4.1. Quantitative Findings**

This sub-section presents an analysis of the quantitative data collected from EFL high school teacher participants using online self-report questionnaires. It also explores their qualitative insights drawn from the questionnaires' open-ended responses and additional comment sections.

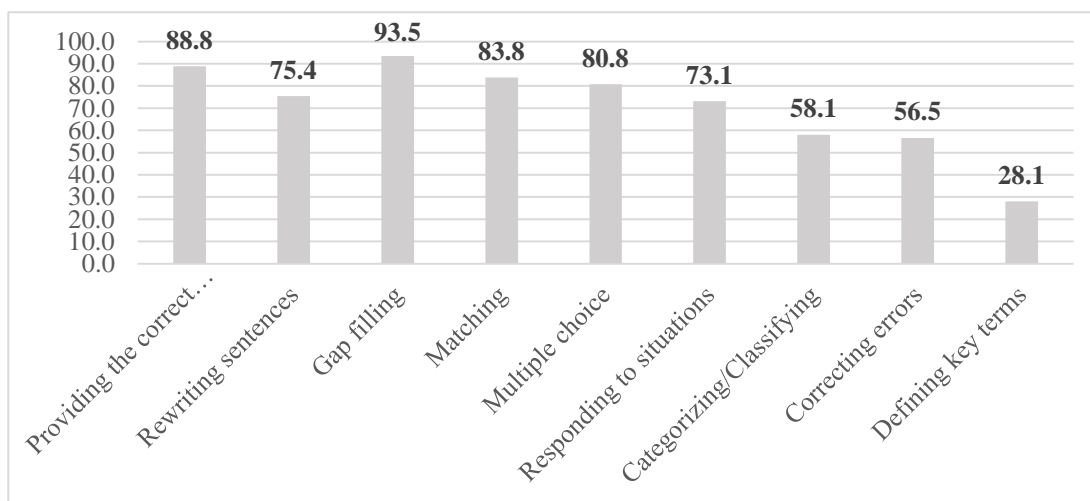
#### **4.1.1. CBA Techniques or Items for Assessing EFL Components and Skills**

When asked about their use of various CBA techniques to assess language components and skills, teachers provided responses indicating the frequency of each technique's use, expressed as percentages. These techniques were categorized based on the specific language components or skills they target and further grouped into two categories: main CBA techniques and items, and other alternative CBA techniques.

##### **4.1.1.1. Main CBA Techniques and Items for Assessing EFL Components**

As Figure 3 demonstrates, teacher participants utilize CBA techniques to assess the language components at varying frequencies. Gap-filling (93.5%) is the most frequent CBA technique. This is followed

by providing the correct form (88.8%), matching (83.8%), and multiple choice (80.8%). By contrast, relatively less employed CBA techniques include rewriting sentences (75.4%) and responding to situations (73.1%). This is followed by categorizing or classifying (58.1%) and correcting errors (56.5%). However, the least utilized CBA technique is defining key terms (28.1%).



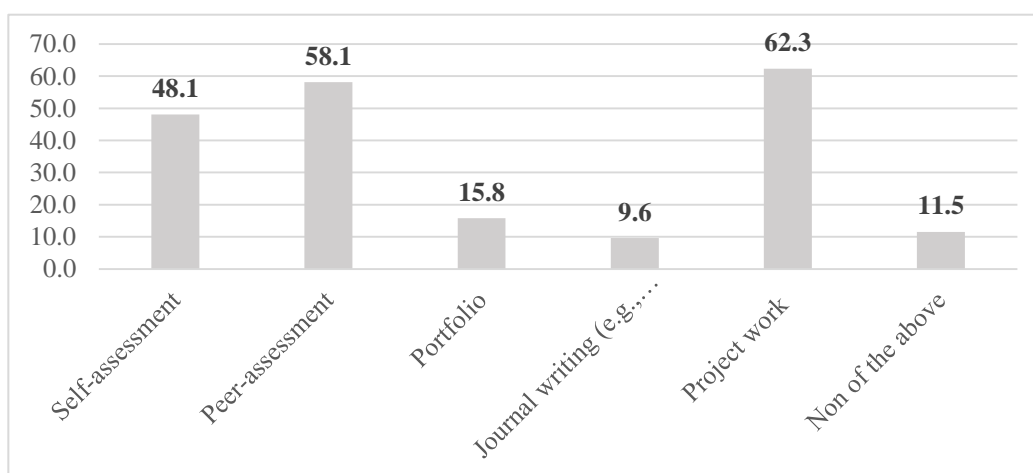
**Figure 3:** The main CBA techniques for assessing EFL components

#### *Teachers' Additional Comments on the Specific EFL Technique Targeting Individual Language Components*

When asked whether they use specific techniques or items to assess individual language components, the most commonly reported technique is “responding to situations”, used for evaluating communicative functions.

#### **4.1.1.2. Other Alternative CBA Techniques for Assessing EFL Components**

Figure 4 shows that teacher participants predominantly use project work (62.3%) to assess language components, followed by peer assessment and self-assessment (48.1%). Journal writing (9.6%) and portfolios (15.8%) are the least commonly used CBA techniques, while 11.5% of teacher participants do not use any of these techniques.

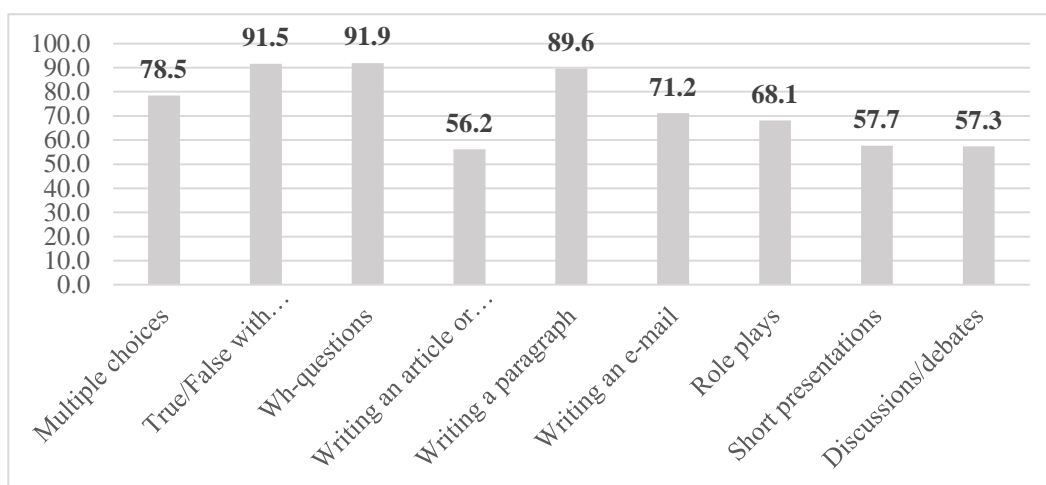


**Figure 4:** Other CBA techniques for assessing EFL components

#### **4.1.1.3. Main CBA Techniques and Items for Assessing EFL Skills**

Figure 5 demonstrates that teacher participants predominantly use various techniques to assess the four skills. WH-questions (91.9%) and True/False with justifications (91.5%) are frequently utilized.

Additionally, 89.6% employ paragraph writing, 78.5% use multiple choice items, and 71.2% use email writing. In comparison, article writing, short presentations (57.7%), and discussions/debates (57.3%) are used less frequently. Some teacher participants cited other techniques they frequently employ, including sentence completion, chart filling, and information transfer.



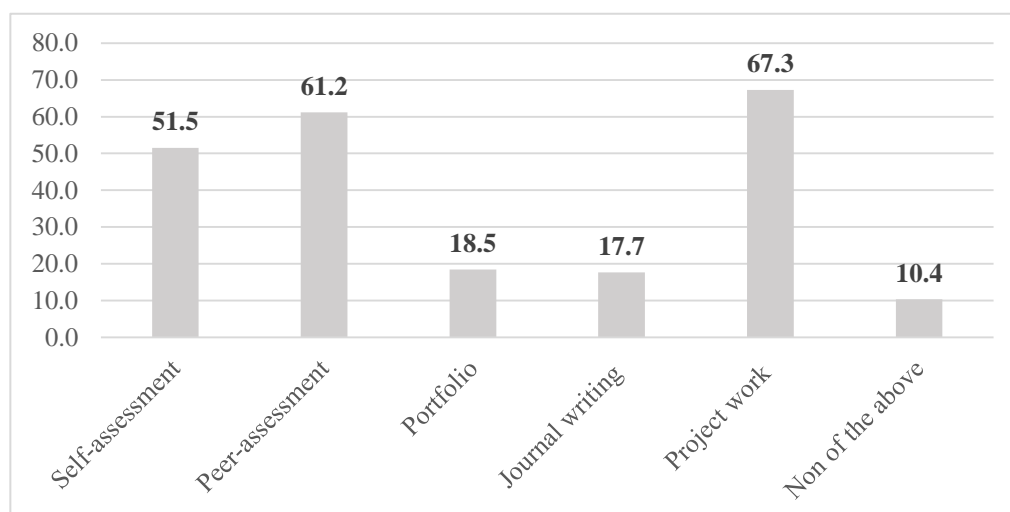
**Figure 5:** The main CBA techniques for assessing EFL skills

#### *Teachers' Comments on the Specific Assessment Technique Targeting Individual Language Skills*

When asked whether they use specific techniques or items to assess individual language skills, the most commonly reported technique is True/False statements with justifications for assessing the reading skill.

#### **4.1.1.4. Other Alternative CBA Techniques for Assessing the Four Skills**

As Figure 6 shows, 67.3% of teacher participants use project work as a CBA technique to assess the four skills. 61.2% employ peer-assessment and 51.5% use self-assessment. Comparatively, less frequently employed CBA techniques are journal writing (17.7%) and portfolio (18.5%), while 10.4% use none of these CBA techniques.



**Figure 6:** Other CBA techniques for assessing EFL skills

## **4.2. Qualitative Findings**

This section presents the study's findings according to the data collection instruments employed (checklist-based classroom observation and document analysis) to provide a comprehensive overview of the qualitative findings.

#### **4.2.1. Findings from Checklist-Based Classroom Observation**

With regard to the CBA of EFL skills in the observed Moroccan common core science classrooms, the checklist-based observation data revealed that the predominant CBA techniques for assessing reading are True/False with justification, multiple choices, WH-questions, pronoun reference and synonyms. For the assessment of writing, paragraph writing is the predominant technique, prompted through developing a topic sentence often following a model, answering a list of questions or ordering a list of sentences. As for listening and speaking, listening is generally neither explicitly taught nor assessed as a standalone skill, whereas speaking is primarily assessed through its use in language functions during the production stage of lessons. This is often done through integrating fluency-oriented performance-based activities, such as role plays, pair-work-based mini-dialogues, and short presentations. Overall, the CBA of EFL skills relies heavily on short response techniques and items.

When it comes to the CBA of EFL components, the checklist-based observation data showed that grammar is the most emphasized language component. To assess this language component, the predominant techniques and items employed are gap filling, multiple choices, providing the correct verb tense and sentence rewriting. Concerning the CBA of vocabulary, the EFL teachers observed commonly utilize gap filling, matching, and multiple choices while classifying or categorizing, and chart completion are also utilized, but less frequently. Compared to the other EFL components, communicative functions are assessed less frequently. The most common CBA techniques and items for assessing these functions are matching, responding to situations and categorizing or classifying. Furthermore, other performance-based alternative assessment techniques are utilized as well. These include mainly role plays, pair work-based mini-dialogues, sometimes accompanied by pictures or cue cards, and short presentations. These techniques are primarily employed as contextualized and meaningful CBA activities to assess EFL students' fluent use of the communicative functions.

Notably, the additional observation notes highlight that teaching predominates the learning process. This is evident in the emphasis on teaching-oriented practice, often at the expense of fluency-based activities as assessment opportunities during the production phase of the lesson. To elaborate, the learning and assessment activities are primarily teacher-made and instruction-oriented. Fluency-oriented, performance-based assessment activities are often evaluated based on teachers' personal impressions and accumulated knowledge of students' performance, rather than through a systematic approach such as using a checklist. These techniques remain limited, given contextual constraints, such as mixed ability class overcrowding.

#### **4.2.2. Findings from Document Analysis**

The documents collected from EFL teachers during the observations, along with those shared by other participating teachers, primarily consist of timed written quizzes, tests, and worksheets. These materials feature a variety of item formats tailored to the specific EFL skills and components being assessed. However, none of the participants provided a checklist or rubric for observing students' performance during classroom activities, suggesting that the evaluation process is largely impressionistic, personal, and lacks a systematic approach. Further, a closer examination of these documents reveals a strong emphasis on assessing language components, particularly grammar. Among the EFL skills, reading is the most frequently evaluated, followed by writing, whereas speaking and listening appear to be largely overlooked or not assessed as distinct skills.

Turning to the CBA techniques and items used to assess EFL components and skills, grammar and vocabulary are primarily evaluated through gap-filling exercises and multiple-choice questions. Communicative functions are commonly assessed using multiple-choice items, dialogue completions, responding to situations, and role plays supported by visual prompts such as pictures or cue cards. Regarding EFL skills, reading is most frequently assessed using True/False statements with justification, WH-questions, pronoun reference tasks, and synonym or antonym identification from the text. Writing is typically evaluated through paragraph writing activities, either by developing a topic sentence, responding to a series of guiding questions, or following a provided model.

## 5. Discussion

CBA seeks to offer authentic and meaningful assessment opportunities that are relevant to both students and teachers, taking into account all facets of the learning process, including both cognitive and affective dimensions (Finch, 2012). In light of this, the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study indicate that EFL components and skills are primarily assessed through written quizzes, tests, and worksheet exercises utilizing selected-response and short-answer formats. This reinforces Benzehaf's (2017) finding that CBA practices tend to emphasize fact-recall assessments through written tests, often lacking a clear focus on critical thinking. Despite these discrete-point tests' accurate representation of language constructs and compliance with psychometric criteria (Fox, 2017), an over-reliance on them often encourages superficial and rote learning by emphasizing isolated knowledge components that students are likely to forget quickly (Black and Wiliam, 1998). That said, the frequent use of written exams in Moroccan EFL classrooms can be attributed to their practicality for managing large class sizes, their mandating in CBA policies, and their alignment with national standardized English exam requirements.

In specific terms, CBA of the EFL skills involves various item formats depending on the skill targeted. To elaborate, the quantitative and qualitative data reveal that the predominant CBA techniques for assessing reading are True/False with justification, multiple choices, WH-questions, pronoun reference and synonyms while writing is often assessed using paragraph writing prompted through developing a topic sentence often following a model, answering a list of questions or ordering a list of sentences, especially in common core classes. On the contrary, listening is generally neither explicitly taught nor assessed as a standalone skill; speaking is mainly assessed through its application in language functions during the production stage of lessons, typically via fluency-oriented, performance-based activities, such as role plays and pair-work mini-dialogues. Although teachers are expected to use checklists with numerical ratings and descriptive criteria to assess students' progress in EFL skills relative to the target standards (MNE, 2007), none of the participants indicated using such tools for evaluating classroom performance. This absence, often accompanied by subjective and value-laden judgments (Elwood, 2001), suggests that the CBA process remains largely impressionistic, personal, and lacking in systematic rigor.

Regarding EFL components, quantitative data indicate that gap-filling is the most frequently used CBA technique or item, followed by providing the correct form, matching, and multiple-choice items. Qualitative data further reveal that grammar, the most commonly assessed component, is evaluated through gap-filling, multiple-choice questions, verb tense correction, and sentence rewriting. Vocabulary is similarly assessed using gap-filling, matching, and multiple-choice formats. In contrast, communicative functions are assessed less frequently, primarily through matching, responding to situations, and classification tasks. These findings align with Mamad and Vigh's (2021) conclusion that EFL teachers predominantly rely on traditional assessment methods, such as gap-filling and matching, rather than alternative approaches. Document analysis also suggests that these techniques are used mainly for summative purposes, such as documenting student progress, assigning final grades, and reporting results to central authorities (El zerk, 2025). For this reason, Benzehaf (2017) advocated for the adoption of innovative, student-centered teaching and assessment practices that employ a diverse range of techniques to reflect the multifaceted nature of student intelligence.

Turning to the use of alternative CBA techniques, both quantitative and qualitative datasets indicate that similar techniques are predominantly employed for assessing EFL components and skills. Project work emerged as the most frequently used technique, followed by peer-assessment and self-assessment. Qualitative insights reveal that communicative functions are mainly assessed through contextualized tasks, such as role plays and pair-work dialogues that are often aided by pictures or cue cards. These are typically implemented during the production stage of the lesson (Ghaicha & Omarkaly, 2018). These findings align with Babni (2019), who noted that alternative assessments are generally limited to a few techniques, namely role plays, oral presentations, and mini-projects, while self-assessment remains rarely applied (Ghaicha & Oufela, 2021). Despite recommendations from the NCEE (2007) advocating for the use of projects, presentations, portfolios, and peer and self-assessment, their implementation appears limited.

Furthermore, techniques such as journal writing and portfolio assessment are used less frequently, although Omarakly and Tamer (2022) found that portfolio assessment significantly enhanced students' writing self-concept compared to traditional summative writing tests.

Effective CBA requires the integration of reflective, instructionally relevant alternative assessment techniques that align assessment with ongoing instruction (Finch, 2012). However, the findings of this study indicate that the implementation of such techniques in Moroccan EFL classrooms remains limited. Omarakly and Tamer (2022) argue that using a variety of assessment methods fosters more positive learning outcomes. Although prior studies have reported teachers' generally positive perceptions and attitudes toward alternative assessment practices (Ghaicha & Omarkaly, 2018; Kasmi & Anasse, 2023; Mamad & Vigh, 2021), multiple procedural and contextual challenges continue to hinder their effective application. These barriers include the absence of clearly defined assessment criteria, the need for continuous student involvement, and a lack of specialized teacher training (Kasmi & Anasse, 2023; Ghaicha & Omarkaly, 2018). Additional constraints are mixed ability classes with large sizes and rigid syllabi (Ghaicha & Omarkaly, 2018). As a result, some teachers view these methods as less effective for providing meaningful feedback (Babni, 2019), especially in the absence of an explicit CBA framework. Moreover, observation data further reveal that most CBA practices are still centered on teaching-oriented activities, often overlooking fluency-based assessment tasks across EFL components and skills. This highlights the need for greater integration of such tasks alongside efforts to actively engage students in the CBA process.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study examined the predominant CBA techniques in the Moroccan EFL high schools and the degree to which they align with the principles of effective assessment. Employing a mixed methods design, quantitative data were gathered from 260 teachers via an online self-report questionnaire. Subsequently, qualitative data were gathered through checklist-based classroom observations with two EFL teachers at Brahim Al-Mousli and Oum Rabii high schools over four months, with two sessions conducted each school week. Additional data were collected through the analysis of tests and CBA-related materials received from ten participating EFL teachers.

Findings reveal that written exams and worksheets featuring selected-response and short-answer formats dominate CBA. Reading is primarily assessed through true/false items and WH-questions, while writing is evaluated using paragraph tasks. In contrast, listening and speaking skills are rarely taught or assessed independently. Among EFL components, gap-filling is the most common CBA item, followed by multiple-choice questions, verb form exercises, and matching tasks. Alternative CBA techniques, however, remain limited.

While the findings offer valuable insights, they should acknowledge some methodological and contextual limitations that may affect the generalizability of the findings. This study did not investigate the underlying rationale or constraints influencing EFL teachers' selection of CBA techniques, particularly in the absence of a clearly defined framework for implementation. In the online self-report questionnaire, the use of Likert scales may have been more effective than multiple-response items in capturing the frequency and emphasis of CBA techniques used to assess EFL skills and components. Additionally, the findings from the checklist-based classroom observations may not be generalizable to all EFL high schools in Morocco due to the limited sample.

In light of these findings, several recommendations emerge for policymakers to enhance CBA implementation. First, there is a clear need to develop a CBA framework aligned with learning progressions, detailing assessment techniques and items, with a strong emphasis on alternative techniques. These should be coupled with clearly defined criteria and primarily inform the formative use of assessment data. These efforts remain insufficient without reducing the reliance on standardized high-stakes testing and shifting the focus toward 21st-century and transversal skills. Accordingly, the teaching and assessment of EFL skills and components should adopt an integrative approach.

Furthermore, equally important is the need to update instructional and assessment materials while providing EFL teachers with sufficient pre-service and in-service training on innovative, student-centered teaching and assessment practices. This includes designing clear assessment criteria and offering constructive feedback that supports self-monitoring and learning improvement. To further enhance students' active engagement in CBA, it is essential to ensure they understand learning objectives and receive training in study skills, self-assessment, reflective practices, and effective feedback use. These measures aim to foster autonomous learning and a growth mindset. Additionally, incorporating collaborative assessment tasks, where students take on the role of researchers and engage in longitudinal projects throughout high school education, can further deepen their involvement and learning outcomes.

Shifting to research, the study opens avenues for further research, particularly regarding the integration of alternative assessment tools in EFL classrooms. Future research using experimental designs could investigate the impact of techniques such as portfolios, self- and peer assessment, and project-based tasks on students' motivation, self-efficacy, and learning outcomes. Further studies are also needed to explore how the use of various selected-response (SR) and constructed-response (CR) items relates to factors such as gender, academic stream, and grade level. Equally significant is the need to examine the variability in EFL teachers' CBA practices, particularly the gap between their perceptions and actual implementation, as well as the factors that hinder the integration of alternative and formative assessment practices.

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