Formative Assessment Practices and Their Effects on Students' Motivation and English Achievement in Vietnamese High Schools

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed at exploring formative assessment practices and their effects on students' motivation and English achievement in Vietnamese high schools. It employed a mixed-method approach to collect quantitative data through questionnaires for both educators and students, and qualitative one through in-depth interviews on five selected educators. Its sample consisted of 418 school leaders, teachers of English and 1829 students randomly selected from 38 high schools in Tien Giang province. Its results showed the feasibility of formative assessment in improving students' motivation and English achievement. The findings indicated that formative assessment contributed to enhancing learning motivation and improving students' language skills and knowledge. Noticeably, there were no significant difference in statistics for the educator group (p > .05), but difference for the student one (p < .05), in employing formative assessment on English learning. The study also suggests that teachers should use various kinds of formative assessment in fostering students' learning motivation and achievement. School leaders should facilitate and encourage teachers to use them frequently in their teaching as well as monitor their activities to make sure that they are effectively exploited. Besides, policy makers should get feedbacks from Services and schools to adjust policies appropriately to the reality.

Keywords: English achievement, formative assessment, motivation, Vietnamese high schools

***ABSTRAK:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dampak penilaian formatif (FA) terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Inggris siswa di sekolah menengah atas di Provinsi Tien Giang. Sampel penelitian terdiri atas 418 kepala sekolah dan guru bahasa Inggris serta 1.829 siswa yang dipilih secara acak dari 38 sekolah menengah atas di Provinsi Tien Giang. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode campuran, di mana pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data melalui kuesioner skala Likert 5 poin, sedangkan pendekatan kualitatif digunakan untuk menggali sikap lima pendidik terpilih terhadap FA dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris melalui wawancara mendalam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan kelayakan penerapan FA dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah menengah atas serta manfaatnya dalam proses tersebut. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan berbagai jenis FA berkontribusi pada peningkatan motivasi belajar siswa serta peningkatan keterampilan dan pengetahuan bahasa mereka. Secara khusus, tidak terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan secara statistik pada kelompok pendidik (p > .05), namun terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan pada kelompok siswa (p < .05) dalam mengeksplorasi pengaruh FA terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Inggris siswa. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, peneliti merekomendasikan bahwa guru perlu menggunakan FA secara beragam di kelas untuk menumbuhkan motivasi belajar siswa. Bagi pimpinan sekolah, perlu memfasilitasi dan mendorong guru untuk menerapkan FA sebagai bagian integral dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah menengah atas, serta secara rutin memantau proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris guru dan siswa untuk memastikan bahwa kebijakan FA segera diimplementasikan dalam praktik. Bagi pembuat kebijakan, perlu*

secara berkala memperoleh umpan balik dari dinas dan sekolah untuk menyesuaikan kebijakan FA secara tepat dengan kondisi nyata.

Kata kunci: *dampak, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, penilaian formatif, Provinsi Tien Giang, Sekolah Menengah Atas*

INTRODUCTION

Formative assessment has been widely recognised as a key pedagogical tool for improving learning (Cao & Pham, 2025, p. 121). It becomes one of the most effective tools in English learning at high schools. Especially, it provides feedback and correctives in the teaching-learning process (Wiliam, 2006). In the past few years, a great number of high schools in Vietnam have changed their ways of assessment, mainly from summative to formative. They find that formative assessment has shown a promise in improving students' learning motivation and achievement (Earl & Katz, 2006). Also, it is easy to use in "a lesson or unit" (Volante & Beckett, 2011, p. 240). It can help weak students improve their learning achievements. As stated by Black *et al.* (2004), formative assessment reduces the achievement gap by helping low achievers most. It becomes "a key priority for enhancing student learning" (Volante & Beckett, 2011, p. 252).

However, not all high school teachers exploit its full potentials in English learning. They express that formative assessment cannot be the best way to improve students' English motivation and achievement effectively. They are mostly familiar with 'teaching to the test' rather than 'teaching to communicate' (Miyasaka, 2000). In fact, they pay much attention to traditional paper-and-pencil summative measures, which are being overemphasized within contemporary schools (Volante, 2010). Especially, they use summative assessment as a main kind to report students' learning results (Brookhart, 2013) and identifying their end-of-year achievements (Haertel & Herman 2005). Similarly, in Vietnam, English language education has traditionally been driven by high stakes testing and rigid curricular structures (Ngo & Tran, 2024; Ngo, 2024). While recent reforms have increasingly called for formative practices, such as those in the language policy documents promoting the use of formative assessment in English language education (MOET, 2018). Classroom realities often reveal a disconnect between policy and implementation (Cao & Pham, 2025). For these reasons, the study examines whether formative assessment can be employed to continuously enhance students' English learning in Vietnamese high schools or not. This is conducted through two following research questions: 1) What kinds of formative assessment can be used to enhance students' English learning motivation? 2) What benefits of formative assessment can affect their English learning achievement?

Definitions of formative assessment

There are different definitions on formative assessment. According to Bhagat and Spector (2017, p. 312), "Formative assessment is feedback provided to the learner during an instructional sequence or learning activity that is aimed at helping the learner succeed". Yan *et al.* (2021) confirm that formative

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assessment is a useful strategy for promoting and increasing students' learning and achievement. Moyo *et al.* (2022) indicate that formative assessment helps to improve students' learning motivation. Hence, it is a strategy used to foster students' motivation and improve their language skills and knowledge in their learning process.

Some kinds of formative assessment to enhance students' English learning motivation

There are various kinds of formative assessment used in English learning such as "classroom observations, quizzes, written and oral assignments, group work and discussions, peer evaluations, presentations and projects" (Naka, 2023, p. 252). In the scope of this research, some kinds of formative assessment employed in classes included:

Some forms of formative assessment

Written test: is a popular form widely used by teachers in classroom. It is used to assess students' knowledge after each lesson/unit. Most teachers use it because it takes them less time preparing questions to evaluate learners. However, written test often fails to "reveal students' true progress of what they can do with the knowledge they have acquired" (Asamoah, 2019, p. 29). It "does not cover most contents of the units. Even, there exists rote learning among students, which creates a high-risk level in their exams" (Lam, 2010, p. 29). Additionally, test grading "takes teachers much time. Some bias factors impact on grading such as the teachers' strictness, mood, fatigue, absent-mindedness, or their professional levels" (Tran, 2014, p. 49).

Multiple-choice test: is commonly used in most schools at different levels. Its questions are designed with four options, among which there is only one correct answer. The characteristic of this kind of test is "to assess whole contents of the subject, which eliminates rote learning or luck in exams" (Lam, 2010, p. 30). It can limit the "guessing" or "luck" of candidates without having knowledge of the lessons. Besides, the teachers spend less time marking the tests due to using the marking software. However, multiple-choice tests take the teachers much time to prepare questions. "They do not measure students' ability of expressing, organizing, presenting and brainstorming new ideas" (Tran, 2014, p. 58). This kind of test is also designed in questions of "true/false, multiple choice, matching/pairing, short answer, written multiple choice and gap fill" (Sai *et al.*, 2020, pp. 78-93).

Oral test: is a popular form in students' English-speaking assessment. It is used to assess learners' speaking abilities and provide both teachers and learners with feedback for their appropriate adjustments. Especially, it contributes to "identifying student competency in comparison with their learning objectives, determining their learning achievements after the end of the teaching process and serving as a foundation for assessing the learning effectively" (Tran, 2014, p. 61). Also, it can be applied to quickly test students' knowledge and ability.

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However, if the oral test is not used suitably, teachers will waste a lot of time, affecting the teaching plan and losing students' interest in their learning.

Product-based assessment is a form used to evaluate "what students can do" (Tran, 2014, p. 63). It can be used to replace classroom tests including "multiple-choice or short answer questions" (Sai *et al.*, 2020, p. 97). With this assessment form, learners create products in class or at home within a certain period by basing on some given criteria. The products that students made are often related to their real life, raising their interest. Learners can evaluate the completion level and ability to perform the work. However, this kind of assessment reveals some shortcomings, i.e., teachers take much time "to build assessment criteria and complete assigned tasks" (Tran, 2014, p. 67).

Some tools of formative assessment

Checklist: is a common tool used to evaluate students' learning activities/products. It includes a "list of criteria" (Sai *et al.*, 2020, p. 106) that teachers tick the corresponding box when activities/products satisfy its requirements provided. Conversely, if they do not satisfy a certain criterion, the teachers do not tick its corresponding box. Thus, *checklist* can be used to assess students' presentations, speaking, and writing skills, picture and video products related to the lesson contents or project assignments objectively. Additionally, *checklist* is convenient for teachers to monitor students' progress. It records which details learners have or have not achieved so that they can adjust their learning process. However, the criterion construction for learning activities/ products is not easy because it sometimes reveals "subjectivity" (Little, 2005, p. 323) of the builders.

Learning portfolio is a collection of products (i.e., tests, writings of a student/group) saved in a semester or a school year. "It refers to an assessment tool purposefully collecting learning processes over a period of time in a way that reflects academic achievements, including evidence of progress, reflective thinking, learning outcomes" (Chang *et al.*, 2014, p. 325). Through it, teachers can see the products that a learner has completed during his/her learning process. Thus, it is considered "an intentionally selected product" (Sai *et al.*, 2020, p. 121). Learning products with different subjects are arranged separately. Particularly, each skill's products have to be arranged in separate sections and saved in chronological order in accordance to their purposes. They "may contain only the best samples of student's work" (Tran, 2007, p. 74), which is a good chance for "parents and learners to review their learning activities and products" (Sai *et al.*, 2020, p. 123). However, to assess learning portfolios, teachers spend much time developing comprehensive scoring criteria for each type of learning product to satisfy the goals and requirements of subject, especially "students' reading, writing, and personal development skills" (Tsao, 2025, p. 3).

Project-based assessment is a tool for student learning evaluation through projects including a series of tasks with many input and output opportunities. Remarkably, students design and implement projects by solving problems with critical thinking and using strategies in different contexts (Thomas

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& Yamazaki, 2021). The tasks, skills, and specialized knowledge involved in a project (Slater & Beckett, 2019) are connected to create more complex results. Project-based assessment can be replaced for paper/computer-based tests or practical exercises (MOET, 2021, p. 4). It helps students "find out the answer to their issue through their exploration and enhance their motivation" (Nguyen & Dao, 2015, p. 105).

Peer assessment: is a tool that a student/a group of students use(s) to assess the other(s)' learning products based on criteria of the "assessment guide" (Nguyen & Dao, 2015, p. 104) indicating "what students have not done and what they have done" (Topping, 2018, p. 3). It "enhances their self-learning" (Vogt & Froehlich, 2013, p. 161). However, initially students are not familiar with this kind of assessment, so teachers spend much time discussing and instructing them how to evaluate products appropriately. "As teachers and classes become more familiar with peer assessment, they can apply it in their teaching and learning and save much time" (Topping, 2018, p. 27).

Self-assessment: is the work of students to assess their own tasks based on standards and criteria that need to be explicitly stated and discussed (Taras & Wong, 2023). It is used to make a comparison of situations or processes with given standards. In high school, self-assessment involves evaluating learning products, classwork, presentations based on agreed criteria. Students who have a learning goal-oriented approach believe that self-assessment improves their competent level and develops their skills (Vandewalle *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, their efforts need to improve their work and become better with the ultimate goal of finding out what they do not know and wanting to master it. Self-assessment can also help learners become more active, locate their own strengths and weaknesses.

In short, from different kinds of formative assessment mentioned above, students can get feedback and identify their real competency in comparison with their learning goals. From that, they can make some adjustments to meet requirements of the learning subject.

Benefits of formative assessment in improving students' English learning achievement

There have been some studies on benefits of formative assessment in English learning. According to Kültür and Kutlu (2021, p. 155), "formative assessment practices are found to be beneficial in terms of contributing to learning processes and encouraging students to express themselves in the classroom". Besides, Zeng and Huang (2021) add that formative assessment has recently received growing attention in the EFL classroom as it is an effective learning-improvement strategy and a useful teaching-aid. Ketabi and Ketabi (2014) confirm that formative assessment promotes better results in students' learning no matter what the content is. Naka (2023, p. 252) admits that formative assessment helps teachers track students' progress and is the best guide for students to achieve their goals. Additionally, Torres (2019) discovers that formative assessment positively impacts the teachers' performance in the

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classroom and on the development of learner language skills. Ismail *et al.* (2022, p.20) states that "by assessing students during the lesson, the teachers can aid them to improve their skills and examine if they are progressing or not". Therefore, it can be said that formative assessment contributes to fostering students' learning process more effectively thanks to their teachers' instant feedbacks and create chances for students to improve their achievements. Also, it "promotes rapport in the class, which is the good relationship between students and teachers" (Torres, 2019, p. 8).

Jawad (2020, p.146) finds that "formative assessment can improve student achievement". It contributes to "reduction of test anxiety in learning language journey" (Sanaeifar & Nafari, 2018, p.539). Kealey (2010) argues that formative assessment mainly aims at the progress of each student or the whole class. "Formative assessment focuses on improving students' learning rather than assessing what they have learned" (Box, 2019, p. 26). It supplies feedback on students' learning process and contributes to significantly improving students' learning achievements. According to Duong (2016, p. 53), formative assessment helps teachers assess student's ability. It contributes to developing students' self-learning ability. Formative assessment can facilitate them to participate in self-assessment and mutual one. It fosters students' confidence and participation in learning and develop learners' creative skills (Nasri *et al.*, 2010).

In the study of Cao and Pham (2025), these two authors have extracted some viewpoints from students on using formative assessment in English learning. Particularly, it can foster students in target-oriented learning. In the interview, student 1 wrote in her reflection paper: "In writing class, the teacher introduces the rubric and learning outcomes at the beginning, so we know what to focus on." Meanwhile, students 2 emphasized that formative assessment elicited his learning evidence and said, "We create videos, lead discussions, and keep a reflection journal. It isn't just about tests." Besides, it gives useful feedback to students. Student 1 also added, "We exchange papers and comment on each other's work, sometimes it is even more helpful than the teacher's notes." Similarly, student 3 said: "I watch a recording of my group's presentation and realize I am speaking too fast."

In short, many school leaders, teachers and students find great benefits of formative assessment in fostering English learning motivation. It "helps students adjust their learning towards improving their achievement" (Le *et al.*, 2024, p.6).

METHODs

The study employed a mixed-method approach. The quantitative method was used to collect data through two questionnaires, one for educators and one for students. The contents of these questionnaires mainly aimed at two issues: Some kinds of formative assessment used in enhancing students' English learning motivation and its benefits on improving their English learning achievement. Besides, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data of the participant perceptions on using formative assessment as a tool for fostering

English learning motivation. Two questions used to ask both teachers and students: (1) What kinds of formative assessment are often used in class to foster students' English learning motivation? and (2) Can formative assessment help students enhance their English learning achievement?

Population and Sampling

The population of this study was 2166 school leaders and teachers, and 48775 students at 38 high schools in academic year 2023 – 2024. At each school, the study randomly selected two school leaders, one English group leader, eight teachers of English, and 60 students in three grades (each grade: 20 students). As a result, there were 418 educators (117 leaders and 301 teachers) and 1829 students in three forms (Grade 10: 667; Grade 11: 494; Grade 12: 669) agreeing to take part in the survey. Additionally, five other candidates (one school leaders, two teachers of English and two students) were chosen to interview. Table 1 below reveals general information about the attendees.

Table 1. Attendees' general information

	School leaders and teachers					Students		
Gender	**N**	**%**	**Position**	**N**	**%**	**Grades**	**N**	**%**
Male	281	67.2	Leader	117	28.0	10	667	36.5
Female	137	32.8	Teacher	301	72.0	11	493	27.0
Total	**418**	**100**	**Total**	**418**	**100**	12	669	36.6
						Total	**1829**	**100**

Instruments

The instruments used in this study are two questionnaires. Apart from general information of participants, each questionnaire has two sections, in which Section 1 is related to some kinds of formative assessment in enhancing students' English learning motivation; Section 2 is about the benefits of formative assessment in improving students' English learning achievements. To assure the reliability of the instruments, the study ran Cronbach's alpha of items in two groups of school leaders, teachers, and students. The results in Table 2 show that Cronbach's alpha value in total for each group was greater than .7, a high reliable level (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Besides, the in-depth interviews were conducted to modify essential information that the quantitative surveys did not obtain.

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha of items in two groups

Items	School leaders and teachers	Students
I. Kinds of formative assessment to enhance students' English learning motivation	**α = .903 (N = 4)**	**α = .913 (N = 4)**
a. Some forms of formative assessment	***Corrected Item-Total Correlation***	
1. Written test	.784	.849
2. Multiple-choice test	.810	.853

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3. Oral test	.813	.856
4. Product-based assessment	.729	.664
b. Some tools of formative assessment	**α = .915 (N = 5)**	**α = .943 (N = 5)**
	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	
5. Checklist	.746	.722
6. Learning portfolio	.814	.866
7. Project-based learning	.719	.894
8. Peer assessment	.831	.881
9. Self-assessment	.812	.923
II. Benefits of formative assessment in improving students' English learning achievement	**α = .966 (N = 13)**	**α = .968 (N = 13)**
	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	
10. Supplying feedback to the teaching process so that teachers can adjust their teaching.	.854	.722
11. Supplying feedback to the learning process so that students can adjust their learning.	.728	.762
12. Identifying difficulties and limitations of students so that teachers and students can improve their teaching and learning.	.792	.792
13. Identifying students' communicative and English linguistic competence.	.759	.811
14. Enhancing students' learning motivation.	.882	.852
15. Giving feedback on strong and weak points of students' English competence.	.879	.877
16. Helping teachers assess students' critical thinking and creativity.	.836	.871
17. Developing students' self-learning ability and their confidence in making decisions on their learning goals.	.792	.851
18. Helping students participate in self-assessment and peer-assessment.	.776	.843
19. Supplying teachers information on students' learning needs.	.813	.829
20. Fostering students' participation on their learning process.	.796	.844
21. Sharing learning responsibility among students and reducing their worriedness.	.880	.841
22. Building close relationship with students and their parents.	.812	.813

Data collection and analysis

Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires for school leaders, teachers and students designed on both Google form and paper form in Semester 2, Academic year 2023 – 2024. Then they were analyzed with SPSS 27.0 software to know mean scores, standard deviations, percentages, and p-values for each group. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews, each of which lasted from 25 – 30 minutes. The responses were recorded by a smartphone and converted into texts by the TurboScribe application. These quantitative data contributed to clarifying the research issues.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting this research, ethical principles were seriously considered. All participants were clearly explained about the purpose of the research and provided their voluntary consent. They can withdraw from the study any time if they desire. Importantly, their personal information was kept entirely confidential and removed from the report. The manuscript has never submitted to other journals and institutions so far.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Some kinds of formative assessment to enhance students' English learning motivation

Some forms of formative assessment

Data in Table 3 reveals the educator group showed a high degree of consensus, with a total mean of 3.81 and a high agreement rate of 99.5%. The highest tendency was observed in 'product-based assessment' (M = 3.85, SD = 0.617), which, alongside oral and multiple-choice tests, reached a 100% approval rating. Conversely, the 'written test' represented the lowest tendency within this group (M = 3.71, SD = 0.704), as well as the lowest percentage of approval (97.6%). This indicates that while still widely supported, traditional written formats were viewed with slightly less enthusiasm by practitioners compared to more dynamic or objective-based assessment tools.

In contrast, the student group yielded a higher overall mean (M = 4.07, SD = 0.831). The highest mean score for this group was clearly identified in the 'multiple-choice test' (M = 4.19, SD = 0.807). Meanwhile, the lowest one was found in 'product-based assessment' (M = 3.89, SD = 0.887), which also saw a relatively lower approval percentage compared to other items (94.5%). Besides, while the 'oral test' maintained a high mean (M = 4.17), it recorded the lowest overall agreement percentage (87.6%).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and t-test/ANOVA of items in forms of formative assessment

Items	School leaders and teachers (N = 418)				Students (N = 1829)			
	M	**SD**	**%**	***p***	**M**	**SD**	**%**	***p***

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1. Written test	3.71	0.704	97.6	.895	4.15	0.807	96.7	<.001
2. Multiple-choice test	3.81	0.658	100	.354	4.19	0.807	97.0	<.001
3. Oral test	3.81	0.652	100	.978	4.17	0.808	87.6	<.001
4. Product-based assessment	3.85	0.617	100	.811	3.89	0.887	94.5	<.001
Total	**3.81**	**0.652**	**99.5**		**4.07**	**0.831**	**94.3**	

Table 3 also showed the t-test results for school leaders and teachers across all four assessment items with significance values (p) ranging from 0.354 to 0.978. These values were higher than the standard alpha level of .05 (p > .05). This indicates that there were no statistically significant differences in the perceptions of educators based on their working positions. Conversely, the ANOVA results for the student group showed significance values of .000 (p < .001) for every assessment item. This indicates highly significant differences in how students perceived these assessment forms based on their grades. Unlike the school leaders and teachers, the student attitudes toward written, oral, and product-based assessments shifted dramatically as they made progress through different stages of their education. Through the interview, teacher 2 (T2) revealed:

> "With the current curriculum innovation, I and my colleagues have to diversify forms of formative assessment, which include classroom activities, classroom observation, presentation, discussion, pair work, group work to get students involved in given tasks. Sometimes, I give them some tests in written and oral forms. This can make them feel less depressed".

In addition, student 1 (S1) stated:

> "I engage in dynamic activities like presentations, role-plays, and project-based learning. These collaborative methods help me effectively apply classroom knowledge, making my academic process significantly more interactive and fulfilling."

Some tools of formative assessment

For the group of school leaders and teachers, Table 4 reveals that checklist emerged as the most familiar tool, reaching a peak mean of 3.74. While project-based learning earned the highest implementation rate at 95.4%, self-assessment trailed at the bottom with a 87.3% usage frequency. Peer evaluation recorded the most modest average of 3.63, representing the lowest score in this category. Overall, these items maintained a solid baseline mean of 3.69, suggesting a reliable commitment to diverse evaluative tools, though they appeared slightly more conservative in their scoring compared to the student group.

On the other hand, student responses reveal that peer assessment stood out as the most celebrated approach, boasting a dominant mean of 4.08 and an

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impressive 96.8% approval rating. In contrast, checklist yielded the lowest figures for this group, with a mean of 3.86 and 93.1% engagement; however, these "lowest" values still exceed the teachers' highest marks. With a total average of 4.00, learners showed a clear preference for collaborative and project-based work. This vibrant feedback highlights a strong student desire for active participation in their own progress tracking and learning process.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and t-test/ANOVA of items in tools of formative assessment

Items	School leaders and teachers (N = 418)				Students (N = 1829)			
	M	SD	%	p	M	SD	%	p
5. Checklist	3.74	0.866	92.6	.921	3.86	0.904	93.1	<.001
6. Learning portfolio	3.69	0.906	92.4	.689	4.01	0.839	95.6	<.001
7. Project-based learning	3.70	0.771	95.4	.018	4.05	0.808	96.4	<.001
8. Peer assessment	3.63	0.941	88.0	.550	4.08	0.788	96.8	<.001
9. Self-assessment	3.67	0.934	87.3	.182	4.06	0.813	96.3	<.001
Total	**3.69**	**0.881**	**91.1**		**4.00**	**0.839**	**95.6**	

Based on the data in Table 4, the t-test values showed educators' opinion across different job positions, with most p-values exceeding .05. The only notable exception was project-based learning (p = .018), indicating a genuine difference in how leaders and teachers valued this tool. Conversely, the student ANOVA results were strikingly consistent, showing a p-value of .000 for each item. This highlights a significant statistical difference among grade levels. Particularly, students in different grades had various engagement levels into these tools of formative assessment towards fostering their learning motivation. In the interview, T2 expressed:

> "To enhance the student English learning motivation and achievement, I prioritize diverse assessment tools. For writing, I utilize detailed checklists covering grammar, vocabulary, and coherence. By marking specific criteria during observations, I provide transparent instructions. This clarity empowers my students, fostering active engagement and authentic motivation throughout their learning process."

S1 modified:
> "In class, our teacher uses various activities to improve our language skills. These interactive activities make practicing enjoyable while helping us track our progress. We also use specific criteria to peer-evaluate, allowing us to learn from our classmates' strengths while refining my own communication abilities."

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Benefits of formative assessment in improving students' English learning achievements

Table 5 shows high agreement of school leaders and teachers on the power of formative assessment in enhancing students' English learning achievements, with the highest mean of 4.22 (97.4%) for providing feedback on their linguistic strengths and weaknesses. There was a clear consensus on motivation and shared responsibility, with items 14, 21, and 22 forming a high-scoring cluster (means from 4.16 to 4.11). Moderate agreement (means from 4.08 to 4.00) existed regarding instructional adjustments and identifying communicative competence. Interestingly, the lowest enthusiasm related to student autonomy; fostering active participation (Item 20) and self-assessment (Item 18) yielded the lowest scores at 3.94 (81.1%) and 3.95 (82.8%), respectively. This indicates that while teachers embraced formative assessment for high-level feedback, they remained somewhat hesitant or less confident in helping students participate in their self-and-peer assessment.

For the student group, formative assessment was primarily a tool for enhancing students' learning motivation. The most prominent value was found in providing teachers with information on learning needs (Item 19), peaking at a mean of 4.10 (96.6%). Students also highly appreciated the collaborative and motivational aspects, with peer assessment, shared responsibility, and motivation (Items 14, 18, and 21) with their means of 4.06 and 4.07. Conversely, the lowest mean of 3.92 (93.1%) involved adjusting their own learning process (Item 11), closely following Item 13 at 3.93. Despite being the "lowest," their high percentages (all above 93%) indicated a high appreciation for formative assessment among learners. They clearly viewed formative assessment as a useful tool to improve students' learning achievements rather than a purely technical mechanism for self-correcting their academic activities.

Generally, although there are some differences in means, standard deviations, and percentages of items between two groups, their overall mean scores are likely approximate each other. This shows consensus perceptions of two groups on benefits of formative assessment in enhancing students' English learning competency.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and t-test/ANOVA of items in the benefits of formative assessment

Items	School leaders and teachers (N = 418)				Students (N = 1829)			
Formative assessment has many benefits in:	M	SD	%	*p*	M	SD	%	*p*
10. Supplying feedback to the teaching process so that teachers can adjust their teaching.	4.04	0.651	93.1	.763	3.98	0.897	94.9	<.001
11. Supplying feedback to the learning process so that students can adjust their learning.	4.02	0.673	92.1	.375	3.92	0.940	93.1	<.001

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12. Identifying difficulties and limitations of students so that teachers and students can improve their teaching and learning.	4.06	0.690	93.5	.405	3.97	0.891	95.1	<.001
13. Identifying students' communicative and English linguistic competence.	4.07	0.671	94.0	.673	3.93	0.916	93.9	<.001
14. Enhancing students' learning motivation.	4.16	0.753	91.6	.492	4.06	0.866	95.5	<.001
15. Giving feedback on strong and weak points of students' English competence.	4.22	0.698	97.4	.700	4.00	0.899	94.4	<.001
16. Helping teachers assess students' critical thinking and creativity.	4.00	0.757	89.2	.334	4.04	0.891	94.9	<.001
17. Developing students' self-learning ability and their confidence in making decisions on their learning goals.	3.96	0.755	85.6	.071	4.02	0.861	95.2	<.001
18. Helping students participate in self-assessment and peer-assessment.	3.95	0.706	82.8	.272	4.07	0.885	95.3	<.001
19. Supplying teachers' information on students' learning needs.	4.08	0.784	91.4	.977	4.10	0.815	96.6	<.001
20. Fostering students' participation on their learning process.	3.94	0.835	81.1	.577	4.05	0.870	95.6	<.001
21. Sharing learning responsibility among students and reducing their worriedness.	4.13	0.699	94.5	.709	4.07	0.770	96.6	<.001
22. Building close relationship with students and their parents.	4.11	0.759	94.7	.727	4.04	0.794	96.1	<.001
Total	**4.06**	**0.725**	**90.8**		**4.02**	**0.869**	**95.2**	

Interestingly, the t-test results revealed no statistically significant differences between school leaders and teachers across all thirteen items, as every p-value exceeds the .05 threshold. The highest value appeared in item 19 (.977), indicating almost identical perspectives on identifying student needs. This remarkable consistency indicated that regardless of their working positions, educators maintained a unified professional consensus on the pedagogical benefits and implementation of assessment strategies.

In contrast, the ANOVA results yielded a p-value of .000 for every single item, demonstrating highly significant differences in perceptions based on

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students' grade levels. While the earlier t-test showed the educator harmony, its data confirmed that a student's academic year fundamentally shaped how they experienced and gave feedback. These findings imply that as students matured through different grades, their expectations and the utility they found in classroom assessments. Through the interview, the school leader emphasized:

"Formative assessment brings a lot of benefits to both teachers and learners. It provides them with feedback, from which they adjust their teaching and learning activities. It helps students evaluate their language skills and language performance. Thanks to formative assessment's various forms, learners feel more motivated and actively take part in tasks frequently. Especially, teachers can integrate them into classroom activities without causing any pressure for students." Besides, T2 added:

"Formative assessment is a good chance for teachers to discover each student's learning competence. From that, they modify some shortages of knowledge and helped us improve our shortcomings. For learners, we can evaluate themselves through formative assessment and set up the goal to achieve in the next stage."

Furthermore, T1 indicated, "Formative assessment assists learners to improve their language skills. I can monitor their learning progress and build a good rapport with them. Therefore, formative assessment has positive aspects that need sustaining."

Discussion

Some kinds of formative assessment to enhance students' English learning motivation

With a strong implementation of current curriculum innovation, clearly, there is a transition from traditional forms to alternative ones in formative assessment. Most of school leaders, teachers and students have changed their perspectives on using formative assessment at high schools. Lately, some forms and tools of formative assessment, among which are product-based assessment, multiple-choice test, and/or oral test, have been employed in class. These activities contribute to enhancing the student learning competence and their motivation. As stated by Black and London (2010), these kinds of formative assessment are considered the interactive assessments of student understanding to identify learning needs and shape teaching. On the other hand, many educators and students start using its alternative forms in English learning that were rarely used in previous decades. Remarkably, they exploit checklist to evaluate students' oral presentation and even writing. Basing on criteria in the checklist, students can identify their strengths and weaknesses (Khonamri *et al.*, 2021).

Besides, learning portfolio and project-based learning are teachers' other favorite choices. The former is used to assess student learning competence

throughout the semester (Esmaeilee, 2024, p. 2). It is considered an assessment tool purposefully collecting learning products over a period of time, including evidence of progress, learning achievement (Chang *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, the latter "promotes deeper learning and fosters the development of effective problem-solving and critical thinking skills" (Samson, 2015, p. 161). These two activities help students see their progress, especially their performance and creativity through their products. From that, they adjust their learning goals appropriately with their abilities. Last but not least, peer- and self-assessments are paid attention by a majority of educators and students. They are useful for teaching and learning. Especially, peer assessment encourages social interaction among peers and takes them as a source of academic assistance (Steed & Poskitt, 2010); whereas self-assessment fosters students to collect information about their own performance or progress, compare it to explicitly goals or standards and revise accordingly (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009).

Interestingly, the p-values in the student group are smaller than .05. This proves that students in different grades have various viewpoints on formative assessment in fostering their English learning motivation. Meanwhile, most school leaders and teachers have a high consensus on formative assessment in this issue (p > .05).

Benefits of formative assessment in improving students' English learning achievements

Through data analysis in both groups, it can be found that most school leaders, teachers of English and students express their approvals on what formative assessment has brought to their English learning. It contributes to raising students' English learning motivation and competency. It assists teachers to identify students' strong-and-weak points as well as monitor their learning process in whole school year. Xiong *et al.* (2018) state that formative assessment focuses on the learning improvement. It aids students to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, be more engaged in their learning (Wolsey, 2008). More importantly, formative assessment fosters interaction between peers and instructors, and involves a close relationship between them (Vonderwell *et al.*, 2007). Another noticeable point is that it helps teachers know students' learning needs and adjust teaching suitably (Alahmadi *et al.*, 2019). As confirmed by Black (1998), formative assessment encourages students to share their learning responsibility and reduce their worriedness. It also enhances their autonomy in English learning and improved their language skills dramatically. Especially, students feel happy with their learning and get more involved in classroom activities (Black & London, 2010).

Besides, most students find its different benefits in improving their English learning achievements (p < .05), whereas a number of school leaders and teachers have a high consensus on its advantages in learning (p > .05).

CONCLUSION

In short, some kinds of formative assessment mentioned above can be flexibly employed to increase students' English learning motivation. They bring learners a lot of benefits. Noticeably, students in different grades show their various viewpoints on its great advantages in improving their English learning motivation and achievement. Meanwhile, educators, regardless of working positions, express the same attitude on this issue. The findings also indicate that the higher grades students are in, the more various perspectives students have about formative assessment's effects on their learning competence.

Recommendations

Teachers at high schools should employ different forms and tools of formative assessment in English teaching and learning. Some of them can be checklist (Ahmadi & Montasseri, 2022), learning portfolio (Orabah *et al.*, 2022), project-based learning (Box, 2019), peer- and self-assessments (Parmigiani *et al.*, 2025), product-based assessment (Rana & Rana, 2025), classroom observation (Ahmadi & Montasseri, 2022), multiple-choice test (Nguyen, 2018) and oral test instead of written test only (Dong, 2020). Through these activities, teachers can identify students' English competence and discover their shortcomings in language skills and knowledge, helping them improve their drawbacks. Besides, to exploit these kinds of formative assessment efficiently, teachers need to build comprehensive criteria that students are able to evaluate their activities appropriately. This contributes to enhancing student confidence and motivation in English learning, getting them involved in classroom activities, developing their skills and knowledge through feedbacks.

Besides, to make progress in English learning, students firstly identify their current language competence (or where they are) and their drawbacks. They secondly set up their learning goals clearly (or where they are going) and build strategies to achieve their goals (or how to obtain their goals) (Le *et al.*, 2022, p. 64). To implement this process, they frequently take part in classroom activities and formally evaluate their progress in each stage. Students should make interaction with their teachers and peers regularly to learn new things from them and improve their language skills and knowledge sufficiently.

Additionally, school leaders should consider formative assessment one of the most prominent and important activities in English learning. To implement formative assessment effectively, school leaders should organize some training modules to equip teachers with knowledge of assessment in the setting of curriculum innovation in Vietnam. This can assist teachers to clearly understand the features and usages of some popular types of formative assessment. Especially, through these activities, teachers know the way how to use them in their classrooms efficiently. Besides, school leaders should facilitate and encourage teachers to use them in their teaching, especially monitor the effectiveness of using them in classes. School leaders should push up using formative assessment frequently, contributing to assessing the student competence exactly and decreasing testing pressure among students (MOET, 2021).

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Furthermore, policy makers should collect feedbacks and contributive ideas from high schools and Services of Education and Training on formative assessment as evidence for some adjustments in the future. Every year, Services need to send the report to the MOET to evaluate the effectiveness of formative assessment and its difficulties in English teaching and learning. Basing on these practical issues, the MOET identifies problems and suggests some improvements on policies appropriate to the practice (Razavipour *et al.,* 2018).

Limitation and further research

The study was conducted in the rage of one province in Mekong delta, Vietnam. Its results can be applied in some other regions with the same features of physical conditions, student background, and teachers already attended training modules for assessment. However, to successfully apply to other areas, especially in remote and mountainous ones in Vietnam, school leaders, teachers and students have to change their mindsets on using alternative activities in formative assessment. They have to understand its forms and tools and use them appropriately with physical conditions at their schools, student backgrounds and teacher resources. To further research in the future, the study needs to enlarge its research scopes or objects.

Declarations
Conflicts of interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest.
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Abbreviation. *M*: mean, *SD*: standard deviation

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