

## TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: UNRAVELING INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS' VOICES

**Taufiqulloh**

*English Language Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, Indonesia*  
Email: [taufiqkayla@upstegal.ac.id](mailto:taufiqkayla@upstegal.ac.id)

**Meyga Agustia Nindya**

*English Language Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, Indonesia*  
Email: [meygaan14@gmail.com](mailto:meygaan14@gmail.com)

**Ihda Rosdiana**

*English Language Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, Indonesia*  
Email: [ihdarosdiana@gmail.com](mailto:ihdarosdiana@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** The current research works have put great concern on the positive impacts of the implementation of formative assessment in EFL learning and teaching. Simultaneously, the swift technological development also takes effect on supporting the practices of formative assessment. This study aims to explore EFL learners' voices on implementing technology-enhanced formative assessment in EFL classrooms. It is a case study intended to obtain detailed information from the participants for a particular case. Five EFL learners from different universities were involved in this study by using a telephone interview. The findings of this study reveal that EFL learners have positive views on the use of formative assessment in terms of getting a better understanding and promoting learning independence. Besides, most EFL learners also perceived that the integration of technology-enhanced positively affects them in working with formative assessments assigned by the lecturers. The last, the challenges of technology-enhanced formative assessment by EFL learners comprised the overload of work assignments, the difficulty of time management, the incapability of staring at laptops for a long time, the instability of LMS, and the unclear instructions as well as insufficient feedback by the lecturers. Several implications are provided in this study.

**Keywords:** *challenges; EFL learners; formative assessment; learning management system technology-enhanced.*

### INTRODUCTION

The state of pandemic covid-19 has led to a rapid transition from prominently offline to online learning. It has emerged for teachers utilize several learning strategies and incorporate technology as alternatives to facilitate conducive online learning and teaching activities. Howsoever, various aspects have been recently found to be barriers encountered by teachers during online teachings such as internet access (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Gunawan, et al, 2020), access to online resources (Johnson et al., 2020), lack of experience in using technology (Mercader & Gairín, 2020), and security problems (Telles-Langdon, 2020). After running online and distance teaching and learning activities during the pandemic, face-to-face learning can finally be

restarted in with the continued reduction in the number of pandemic cases around the world. Even so, some activities that support learning in the classroom continue to run online, some of which are collecting tasks and the assessment process.

With the boom of technology, there has been an exploration of how it is integrated into language teaching. Some studies emphasized that the use of technology in the language classroom assist teachers to be more interactive and to do more meaningful activities which can engage students to actively take part in the class (Tanjung, 2020). Anggeraini (2018) also confirmed that the integration of technology plays important role in promoting interactive learning and teaching activities as well as enhancing

learners' initiatives to learn and be more creative learners. Furthermore, technology nowadays is an inseparable thing in students' everyday lives as it provides them with access to countless online resources and materials. Students are also encouraged to be more independent since they can search for any information available on the internet related to the course without being too much dependent on the teacher during classroom practices. It also makes learning concepts more digestible through instructional video, and the like. Responding to the conditions, teachers are highly demanded to put great concern into selecting, preparing, integrating, assessing, and evaluating types of technology being employed in classroom instruction (Tanjung, 2020).

Another major of research, on the other hand, has found that some teachers appear troublesome in integrating technology into language teaching (Diningrat, et al., 2020; Safitri et al, 2015). Diningrat, Nindya, and Salwa (2020) reported that during the implementation of online learning in higher education, there are some barriers perceived by lecturers related to technology, some of which are related to limited bandwidth, connectivity, and security. These technological barriers became hindrances in the learning and teaching process which may result to inconvenient learning atmospheres. In addition, Safitri et al (2015) have also investigated teachers' perspectives and their practices in implementing technology in language classrooms. The result shows that the integration of technology in the teaching and learning process lead to the positive attitude of the teachers significantly. However, they committed that they lack ICT proficiency because they never involved in any formal training on the use of ICT and other technological supports from the school.

Many researches not only figure out the integration of technology in English language teaching, but also its immersion in the assessment processes (e.g. Deeley, 2018; Dalby & Swan, 2018; Ningsih & Mulyono, 2019; McCallum & Milner, 2020). Technology as audio visual technology in particular, beomes a medium for teachers to provide feedback for the enhancement of the quality of feedback information and easily gathered by students (Deeley, 2018). Ningsih and Mulyono (2019) also revealed the EFL teachers' perception of the integration of technology tools for language assessment. The result showed that using Kahoot! and ZipGrade encouraged the students to be involved in enjoyable and fun learning environment since the platforms are

practical with automated scoring and direct feedback. Moreover, Dalby and Swan (2018), conducted a research to find out the effect of iPad in formative assessment. And the result showed that it was effective and the students were well highly motivated in learning by using such a media.

There is a broad concept of formative assessment suggested by scholars worldwide. Brown (2004) describes formative assessment as a process of assessment that is conducted during the course of instruction to find out the students' progress or weaknesses on the lesson they have learned. Another objective of conducting formative assessment is to figure out the whole learning process so that teachers can give feedback continuously during the process of instruction. Generally, formative assessment is considered to be low-stakes assessment which can simply be in the form of informal questions, simple oral Q&A, practice quizzes, writing a summary, etc. It is different from the summative assessment which is conducted at the end of the instruction to measure outgoing development of the learners' language after a period of instruction (Oscarson, 1999).

Numbers of research have paid attention to investigating the effectiveness of formative assessment in language classroom practices. The major line of it has demonstrated that formative assessment offers promising benefits. McCalum (2021) explored how students' views and teachers' reflections on the use of formative assessment in classroom practices. Findings showed that students admit that formative assessment is effective at helping them learn to monitor their own progress, encouraging further study, and increasing a student's perceived level of learning and understanding. The use of formative assessment is further also beneficial for teachers to get insights into the learners' progress of learning which then can help them to foster student engagement and permit early intervention. Another study conducted by Akter and Khan (2020) has prompted language teachers to promote formative assessment practices regularly in their classrooms since it can be used to recognize learners' weaknesses and strengths in learning to improve their skills. Hence, formative assessment is considered to be an essential aspect of the teaching-learning process to determine the learning progress of EFL learners during the class. However, in regard to the positive impacts of the use of formative assessment, Widiastuti and Saukah (2017) reported the insufficient

understanding and infrequent practices of using formative assessment.

The foregoing studies on the integration of technology to promote language assessment depict how EFL teachers should endeavor to use assessment tools that are incorporated into advanced technology. Despite today's trends and the high demands of integrating technology in the language classroom, many studies have focused on the attitudes and the challenges of teachers to using enhanced technology (Lutfiyyah, et al., 2021; Widiastuti & Saukah, 2020). However, it is also attempting to explore the learners' voices in the use of formative assessment in ELT practices in classrooms. A study conducted by Lutfiyyah, et al (2021) found that EFL teachers view technology as a practical tool that offers a useful and meaningful platform for assessing students. It also gives an impact on students' performance, particularly on language accuracy. Regarding this, this study is in an attempt to follow up on the current study by Lutfiyyah, et al (2021) to explore learners' voices comprising the implementation of formative assessment, the impact of technology-enhanced, and the challenges of EFL learners during the implementation of technology-enhanced formative assessment. This study is crucial since the learners' voices are also deemed as a big consideration to determine further moves regarding the use of technology-enhanced formative assessment in EFL classroom practices.

## METHOD

The objective of this study is to explore the EFL learners' voices on the use of technology (LMS in particular) in formative assessment during classroom practices. It is a case study aimed at obtaining the detailed information about a particular case in English language classes. Such a study endeavors a real-life case, individual views, and multiple cases through the collection of data in depth from many sources of information (Yin, 2018). This study also figures out qualitatively how EFL learners perceived the technology enhancement for formative assessment which is expected to create ideal forms of formative assessment practices in higher education and to recommend valuable feedback for language assessment in EFL classroom.

Several criteria were used purposively to select the participants of the study. First, they were the students of university who attended offline (face-to-face) classes. The attended classes utilized LMS or other learning platforms for formative assessment. And they also experienced the technology-enhanced tools for formative assessment for more than one semester. Then, the researchers contacted several EFL learners from several universities in Indonesia to determine the participants in this study following the criteria above. The background information of each participant presented in the following table.

Table 1. *Background information of participants*

No.	Participants (Pseudonyms)	Bima	Fitria	Farhan	Diah	Elma
1.	Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
2.	Major	English Language Teaching	English Language Teaching	English Language Teaching	English Language Teaching	English Language Teaching
3.	Institutions	Private University	State University	State University	Private University	State University
4.	Province	Central Java	East java	East java	East java	North Sumatra

Table 1 figures out the background information of the participants. They were EFL learners majoring in English Language Teaching (ELT) study programs. From the interview conducted, all participants experienced the online class and used learning and teaching media or Learning Management System (LMS) provided by their universities. Even though teachers conducted offline classes, they still used LMS to post the course materials, to assign homework, and to give feedback. In regards to the technological and technical issues, all

participating EFL learners in this study did not appear troublesome and they admitted that they have the gadgets, such as smartphones and laptops, to support their learning activities.

The interview was employed in this study to collect the detailed information dealing with the EFL learners' voices on the use of technology-enhanced in the implementation of formative assessment. To ensure that all participants of this study got the same principal questions, an interview protocol was prepared to guide the researchers in maintaining the flow of the

interview process. The participants were given open-ended questions to respond so that the benefits and drawbacks of using technology in formative assessment could be figured out. Such an interview was conducted by using telephone call ranging from 35 to 50 minutes for each participant.

The interview was conducted in both English and Bahasa Indonesia. For the purpose of presentation of research findings, the participants' responses were then transcribed verbatim and transferred into their English equivalents. From the interview data, the characteristics of the language as communication were observed focusing on the content which is called content analysis (Hsieh, 2005). It aimed at organizing and eliciting meaning from the data collected and capturing key thoughts or concepts and drawing realistic inferences from it (Bengtsson, 2016; Hsieh, 2005). The data collected from the statements of the participants were marked as initial coding. Then the codes were categorized into axial coding to recognize the main categories that are closely related to research questions. The data were then depicted and elaborated in the narrative form.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

To draw the findings of the study, the results of the interview were analyzed in order to meet the objective of the study consisting of the students' point of views toward the formative assessment, the role of technology-enhanced in implementing the formative assessment, and the challenges or barriers encountered by the students for such an assessment. The details are described in the following sections.

### *Students' point of views of the existing formative assessment*

Relating to this, the researchers did not use the term formative assessment during the process of the interview. The questions were addressed to them to explore their perceptions whether or not they were assigned to do some project, homework, group discussions, group presentation, weekly quizzes, and other low-stakes tests. Their perceptions embrace the benefits and drawback while doing formative assessment. And the result showed that they had positive views on it. They shared opinions that formative assessment has tangible benefits that can constructively impact their learning improvement.

"I don't mind if the lecturers assigned the class to do a homework assignment. It brings some advantages for me, especially in terms of understanding the materials. It is better than not being assigned to do homework or group work at all because it will lead us to be incompetent to do the test in the final test." (Bima)

"The assignments given by the lecturers enforce me not to be relaxed too much and to be more responsible for my duty as a university student and help me focus on understanding the materials especially if I have to present in front of the class or have a group discussion." (Fitria)

"I believe that the assignment helps me to be an independent learner because I have to search for the materials related to the assignment by myself." (Farhan)

"The lecturers gave the assignment to the learners with the aim of helping us to understand the materials deeper and explore the materials broader from other sources such as the internet or e-books..so I think it is very beneficial for us as learners." (Diah)

"I think the activities such as presentations, group discussions, and weekly quizzes have shaped us to be accustomed to searching for materials independently without being too much depend on the lecturers." (Elma)

The responses obtained from the participating EFL learners showed that formative assessment is believed to give some advantages for them. EFL learners suggested that by being assigned to do some formative assessment, they perceived that they get a better understanding of the materials, learn to be independent learners, and become more responsible. It was further narrated by one of the EFL learners that formative assessment also helped them to face the final test which requires the learner to understand some materials during the semester. All participating EFL learners were also asked to express the drawbacks of formative assessment. Overall, similar responses showed that their drawbacks are related to the overload of work given by the different lecturers at the same submission time.

"Sometimes I cannot manage my time to finish all the work given by the different lecturers especially if the assignment is complex" (Bima)

"...it was hard when there are several deadlines which have to be finished on that day." (Fitria)

“When a particular assignment is difficult, it sometimes forces us to stay awake until midnight to finish.” (Farhan)

“An assignment seems very hard to finish when the deadline for submission is short..because at the same time there is also a deadline of other subjects from other lecturers.” (Elma)

The responses obtained from the EFL participating learners showed the same direction in terms of the perceived drawbacks of formative assessment. One of the participants admitted that they do not have any problems with the assignment, while some others viewed formative assessment as a drawback when the works or quizzes from different subjects are assigned to be submitted on the same day of submission. The situation was overwhelming because they have to manage their time to make all the assignments finished on time.

#### *The impact of technology-enhanced in the implementation of formative assessment*

The second attempt of this study is to find out the EFL learners' views on the impact of technology-enhanced formative assessment in EFL classrooms. Before addressing the main point of the question, the participants were asked whether the class adopt the online learning platforms or LMS to assist the lecturer. All of the participating EFL learners confirmed that their lecturers employ LMS created by the university and some of them used Google Classrooms as well. As the development of technology offers promising merits in language learning and assessment as well, a question was addressed to ask their voices on the role of technology, online learning media, and LMS toward the implementation of formative assessment. The question particularly points out the use of technology-enhanced tools as the media for lecturers to post assignments, give instructions, and score or give feedback. Regarding the submission, EFL learners are also assigned to post or submit the major assignment using the online learning platform or LMS. The responses obtained from the participants indicated that they have positive views toward the use of technology-enhanced formative assessment in EFL classrooms.

“...Doing such an assessment is costless. I don't have to write and print the assignments as I get used to it. Simply it is very effective and efficient.” (Bima)

“I never missed doing assignments in the LMS since the platform can be accessed in many devices including my mobile phone which I use any time. I got used to miss it when it was given in manual ways .” (Fitria)

“I have been accustomed to using Google Classroom as the learning platform to check the assignment and post the assignments...It allows me to finish the homework everywhere and anytime because I only need to bring my gadgets and search the materials online, such as preparing slides, writing papers, and so on.” (Farhan)

“Using it is costless and timeless. When I use google classroom, for instance, some features are available to check and submit the assignments..” (Diah)

The major of EFL learners under this study asserted that the use of technology-enhanced formative assessment offers some benefits with regard to its efficiency, flexibility, and utility. However, one participant admitted that even though technology-enhanced is effective, there is a need for improving the implementation of formative assessment, namely feedback. Besides, another participant also narrated different views towards the use of technology-enhanced formative assessment in EFL classes because such circumstances forced the learner to use gadgets more frequently which caused boredom and fatigue.

“...but I prefer the assignment and quizzes which are held offline in the classrooms because sometimes it is kinda boring and exhausting to stare at laptops for a long time. I also miss the atmosphere of offline quizzes.” (Farhan)

“Because the class is now face-to-face, I really hope that the assignments and other activities such as group discussions and presentations are conducted offline... I don't think the online assignment is effective because I assume that our work was not scored and even checked. Some lecturers assigned us to submit online but we never received any feedback. So I personally sometimes don't really serious about finishing the work.” (Elma)

Besides the positive responses of EFL learners towards the implementation of technology-enhanced formative assessment, one of the participants showed dissatisfaction with the use of LMS in terms of feedback from the lecturer. The learners committed that the assignment that has

been submitted is somewhat useless since it might not be checked by the lecturer. Besides, the responses obtained from the participant indicated that some lecturers did not concern about giving feedback on their learners' work. This situation has led the learner to reduce the learning motivation which is depicted by the participant's low desire to finish the work seriously.

*EFL learners' challenges of the integration of technology-enhanced in the implementation of formative assessment*

The last attempt of this study is to explore the challenges of implementing technology-enhanced formative assessment perceived by EFL learners. Overall, EFL learners under this study noted that the major challenges of technology-enhanced are related to unclear instructions, overload assignments, the features of LMS, internet connectivity, and the incapacity to stare at the laptop for a long time.

"..My lecturers often gave the assignment with unclear instructions in the LMS. I didn't know what to do with the assignment so that I had to discuss with my friends in the chat group. This became a major problem for me." (Bima)

The lecturers did not provide clear instructions when they posted assignment in the LMS so that we don't know what to do with it. I have to ask and discuss with friend to make sure what I have to do with it. This is a major challenge for me." (Fitria)

"I feel burdened and overwhelmed when the assignment load is over. It is because several lecturers sometimes gave double assignments, namely online and offline assignments. So, on the same day, we need to work on two assignments from the same lecturer. It is way harder if there are more assignments from different lecturers which should be submitted on that day." (Farhan)

"The availability of technology and online assignment has required us to stare at laptops for more hours a day to search for and prepare materials for assignments, presentations, and so on." (Diah)

"...it is challenging when different lecturers post some assignments from different subjects. Moreover, it is even so hard when the assignment requires us to explore different sources, books, and even articles from journals. These kinds of assignments need a longer time to finish." (Elma)

The responses obtained from the participating EFL learners indicated different challenges perceived by EFL from different universities. The question about challenges perceived by EFL learners in the implementation of technology-enhanced highlight the barriers that come either from the internal or external. The most frequently mentioned challenge was related to the overload of work assignments. Two EFL learners admitted that despite the positive impact of formative assessment, it sometimes became a burden because they had to deal with different assignments which had to be submitted on the same day. This barrier was closely related to the incapability to stare at laptops for a long time. It is reasonable if learners were easy to feel exhausted because they need to stand by and stare at their gadgets to finish several assignments.

Another challenge perceived by one of the participants was related to the unclear instructions from the lecturer. The online assignment posted online on the online learning platform, namely Google Classroom, was somehow confusing for the learner because the class did not get an understanding of what should be done with the assignment. Besides, it was pointed out that the absence of internet connectivity on the campus also was viewed to be one of the challenges perceived by EFL learners. The last, one participant mentioned the technical problems of LMS used in the learner's university. The technical problems narrated by the participant were deemed as a hindrance in the implementation of technology-enhanced formative assessment.

Formative assessment plays important role in the EFL learning and teaching process. It refers to an assessment process that is given during the course of instruction to show which aspect of the materials the students have mastered and where remedial work is necessary. The current work of literature has put great concern on the positive impacts on the implementation of formative assessment in EFL classes (e.g. Retnoningsih, 2013; McCalum, 2021, Akter & Khan, 2020; Widiastuti and Saukah, 2017). Simultaneously, the swift technological development also takes effect on supporting the practices of formative assessment, let alone after the enforcement of online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, this study was carried out to explore the EFL learners' voices on the implementation of technology-enhanced formative assessment in EFL classrooms. The findings of this study comprised three important

points to discuss, namely the role of formative assessment perceived by EFL learners, the impact of technology-enhanced in the implementation of formative assessment, and the challenges of EFL learners towards the technology-enhanced formative assessment.

The first issue to discuss is related to the role of formative assessment in EFL classes. Findings of this study showed that EFL learners have asserted that formative assessment allows them to get a better understanding of the materials, learn to be independent learners, and become more responsible. The results of this study are in accordance with the results of previous studies regarding the enhanced level of understanding of the materials (McCalum, 2021) and more responsible in learning (Akter & Khan, 2020) as the results of formative assessment. The result of this study is also in line with the study conducted by Bawa (2018) reports that the use of formative assessment facilitates learning engagement that potentially promotes learners' performance. Further, it should be emphasized that formative assessment gives an impact on the learners' independent learning. This is supported by Alexiou and Paraskeva (2010) and also Mahbub (2020) who suggest that formative assessment can promote learners' self-regulated learning and enhance their motivation for learning.

Aside from the positive views of formative assessment, some EFL learners also perceived some drawbacks when they were assigned to do homework assignments and finish difficult tasks. This situation may be beneficial for EFL learners in some ways, however, this might also negatively affect learners regarding their view of formative assessment as a burden. The overload and the high level of difficulty of the assignment were probably not compatible with the concept of formative assessment. Generally, formative assessment refers to low-stakes assessment which means that they have low or no point value. However, the findings of this study indicated that some lecturers might misunderstand the concept of formative assessment which actually can be simply in the form of informal questions, simple oral Q&A, practice quizzes, writing a summary, etc. These findings correspond to the study by Lutfiyyah, Aisyah, and Sulisty (2021) and Arrafii and Sumarni (2018) report that EFL teachers under their study misunderstood the concept of formative assessment. They conceptualize formative assessment as typically an essential activity to elicit information about the student's progress in learning. They were

relatively more familiar with the purpose of summative assessment than formative assessment. Besides, current studies also demonstrated similar results on the teachers' insufficient understanding of the purpose of formative assessment and how to practice it (Hasim et al., 2018; Puad & Ashton, 2020; Widiastuti & Saukah, 2017).

Another issue is related to the role of technology-enhanced in the implementation of formative assessment in EFL classes perceived by EFL learners. The findings showed that the students perceived the knowledge and skills of using technology in various ways which are beneficial for learning the course materials in the classroom. On the other sides, teachers also showed positive perceptions or point of views when they integrated technology in their class especially when conducting formative assessment activities. (Anggeraini, 2018; Brady et al., 2019; Mimirinis, 2019). Regarding the learners' perspectives, some participants are concerned about the efficiency of technology in helping them finish the work. The students have been accustomed to using technology in their daily lives so that they can well manage doing their works relating to learning and others. Simply, they have a lot opportunities and comfort in learning as stated by Cartstens et al., (2021). However, Cartstens et al (2021) highlighted that the heavy reliance on the use of technology in learning activities could potentially affect problem-solving skills.

The last issue that is worth noting is related to the EFL learners' challenges in the implementation of technology-enhanced formative assessment. Various challenges faced by the EFL learners from many universities in Indonesia also became one of the findings of this study. The overload of assignments given by the lecturers in the LMS or other platforms is the most frequently complained. Besides, the unclear instructions and insufficient feedback from the lecturers related to the assignment posted in the online learning platform or LMS also became the challenge perceived by the EFL learner. This is, of course, not in line with what is atted by Lutfiyyah et al (2021), technology can assist students in terms of workload efficiency and facilitating feedback. Another problem appeared when the lecturers rarely checked the assignment in the LMS or other platforms. They rarely gave feedback. Instead, assignments and feedback are united. Feedback in formative assessment is utilized to assist the learners to move forward to

achieve the learning goals. Feedback further can be adopted in order to assess the educators' instructions to promote the quality of teaching. The issue of connectivity, long loading on opening the LMS when used in the classrooms also became another challenge that need to cope with. The problems of learning using LMS currently studied by Larasati (2022).

Implications that this study has on ELT can be of three orientations. First, the conceptualization of formative assessment should be operationally designed to help learners obtain the benefits from it which specifically can enhance their understandings and promote learning motivation. Second, both teachers and students should be well supported in conducting formative assessment activities in the classrooms in terms of providing easy and sufficient access to digital platforms used for learning. And some trainings or courses regarding formative assessment should be intensively conducted to enhance the teachers' or lecturers' on developing formative assessment integrated with digital platforms technology. Third, the assessment-related courses provided by the department might sufficiently facilitate EFL learners to master the concept of formative assessment but not yet prepare them to be English teachers. Hence, lecturers need to function as role models for their learners in implementing formative assessment so that they can acquire and apply the formative assessment practices to their own teaching contexts in the future.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that EFL learners have positive views on the use of formative assessment in terms of getting a better understanding and promoting learning independence. Besides, the majority of EFL learners also perceived that the integration of technology-enhanced positively affects them in working with formative assessments assigned by the lecturers. The last, the challenges and drawbacks of formative assessment perceived by EFL learners comprise the overload of work assignments, the difficulty of time management, the incapability of staring at laptops for a long time, the instability of LMS, and the unclear instructions as well as insufficient feedback by the lecturers. In addition, drawn from the findings of the study, the deeper exploration and further investigation involving bigger numbers of participants through other ways of data collection such as surveys or observation is highly recommended for future researchers.

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