



PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN CEFR-ALIGNED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract The implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has significantly transformed the curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment of English in Malaysian primary schools. These changes have required teachers to shift their instructional and assessment practices, often adding pressure as they adapt to new approaches. This study explored English language teachers' beliefs about CEFR-aligned formative assessment and their classroom practices in primary schools. A mixed-methods approach using an explanatory sequential design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 161 English teachers across 30 selected schools in Selangor using cluster random sampling. Two questionnaires were administered: the Assessment Beliefs Questionnaire and the Assessment Practices Questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, t-tests, and one-way ANOVA) via SPSS Version 29. Qualitative data were subsequently gathered to elaborate on the quantitative findings. Results revealed a significant relationship between teachers' beliefs and their formative assessment practices ($r = .336, p < .001$), indicating alignment between belief and practice. Teachers' English options were significantly related to practice but not to beliefs, while CEFR proficiency levels correlated with practice but not beliefs. Teaching experience influenced beliefs but not practices, and neither CEFR-related experience nor academic qualifications showed a significant relationship with either. Overall, the study underscores a strong and consistent link between teacher beliefs and classroom practices. The findings have critical implications for teacher professional development and suggest longitudinal studies to monitor changes over time.

Keywords: CEFR-aligned formative assessment, curriculum implementation, English language teaching, Malaysian primary schools, teacher beliefs and practices



Abstrak Pelaksanaan Kerangka Rujukan Umum Eropah bagi Bahasa (CEFR) telah mengubah secara signifikan kurikulum, pengajaran, pembelajaran, dan pentaksiran bahasa Inggeris di sekolah-sekolah rendah Malaysia. Perubahan ini memerlukan guru-guru untuk mengalihkan amalan pengajaran dan pentaksiran mereka, yang sering kali menambah tekanan tatkala mereka menyesuaikan diri dengan pendekatan baharu. Kajian ini meneroka pegangan guru bahasa Inggeris mengenai pentaksiran formatif sejajar CEFR serta amalan bilik darjah mereka di sekolah rendah. Pendekatan kaedah campuran yang menggunakan reka bentuk eksplanatori berurutan telah digunakan. Data kuantitatif telah dikumpul daripada 161 orang guru bahasa Inggeris di 30 buah sekolah terpilih di Selangor menggunakan pensampelan rawak berkelompok. Dua set soal selidik telah ditadbirkan: Soal Selidik Pegangan Pentaksiran dan Soal Selidik Amalan Pentaksiran. Data tersebut dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif (kekerapan, peratusan, min, dan sisihan piawai) serta statistik inferensi (korelasi Pearson, ujian-t, dan ANOVA satu arah) menerusi SPSS Versi 29. Data kualitatif seterusnya dikumpul untuk memperincikan dapatan kuantitatif tersebut. Keputusan menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan antara pegangan guru dengan amalan pentaksiran formatif mereka ($r = .336$, $p < .001$), yang menunjukkan keselarasan antara pegangan dan amalan. Opsyen bahasa Inggeris guru berhubungan secara signifikan dengan amalan tetapi tidak dengan pegangan, manakala tahap penguasaan CEFR berkorelasi dengan amalan tetapi tidak dengan pegangan. Pengalaman mengajar mempengaruhi pegangan tetapi tidak mempengaruhi amalan, manakala pengalaman berkaitan CEFR mahupun kelayakan akademik tidak menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan dengan kedua-duanya. Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini menegaskan hubungan yang kukuh dan konsisten antara pegangan guru dengan amalan bilik darjah. Dapatan kajian ini memberikan implikasi kritikal terhadap pembangunan profesional guru serta mencadangkan kajian jangka panjang bagi memantau perubahan dari semasa ke semasa.

Kata kunci Pentaksiran formatif sejajar CEFR, pelaksanaan kurikulum, pengajaran bahasa Inggeris, sekolah rendah Malaysia, pegangan dan amalan guru

INTRODUCTION

In line with national reform goals (MOE, 2013), Malaysia's pedagogical framework shifted away from high-stakes testing, prioritising holistic, student-focused evaluation strategies under the School-Based Assessment framework. Following the formal abolition of primary school public examinations, this mandate has evolved into continuous Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA), intended to grant teachers greater autonomy over assessment for learning (Mat Yusoff et al., 2025). In primary English education, this reform is strictly guided by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) roadmap, where formative strategies such as continuous feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment are critical to driving student communicative competence (MOE, 2015; Uri & Aziz, 2018).

Despite this explicit policy mandate, successful execution depends heavily on teacher beliefs, knowledge, and classroom practices. In reality, routine implementation is frequently hindered by systemic challenges, including heavy workloads, limited classroom time, and insufficient professional training (Yusop et al., 2019). More critically, contemporary empirical data indicates that many primary ESL teachers continue to exhibit limited Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) and conceptual confusion; they frequently struggle to differentiate between formative and summative goals and express low confidence in aligning daily lesson plans with specific CEFR descriptors (Hasim et al., 2018; Sidhu et al., 2018). This gap has led



to fragmented classroom execution, where some instructors default back to traditional, exam-centric testing patterns despite displaying generally positive attitudes toward the reform framework.

Given that teacher cognition profoundly shapes pedagogical delivery and the translation of educational policy into practice (Borg, 2006), there is a distinct lack of up-to-date empirical research exploring how Malaysian primary ESL teachers navigate these evolving classroom expectations. To address this gap, this study examines how primary school ESL teachers in Malaysia conceptualise and implement formative assessment practices within CEFR-aligned instruction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Specifically, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What are English language teachers' beliefs and reported practices regarding CEFR-aligned formative assessment in Malaysia Primary schools?
- 2) What is the relationship between English language teachers' beliefs and their reported practice regarding CEFR-aligned formative assessment?
- 3) Is there any significant association between demographic profile and belief and English teachers' beliefs and reported practices regarding CEFR-aligned formative assessment?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in English Language Education

Assessment is an indispensable component of English language education, serving both to evaluate learning outcomes and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009). While summative assessment measures final performance, formative assessment (FA) functions as a continuous, classroom-based strategy designed to monitor progress, identify learning gaps, and provide feedback that informs instructional adjustments. This ongoing process encourages learners to reflect on their performance, develops their metacognitive awareness, and bolsters self-esteem in language learning (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2024). Consequently, FA has become a focal point of global research and has been systematically integrated into the curriculum policies of educational systems worldwide, including those of New Zealand, Finland, and Singapore (OECD, 2005; Hill, 2013).

Despite widespread international endorsement, implementing FA remains challenging, particularly at the primary level where traditional practices often prioritise examination performance over authentic language development. However, research suggests that young learners' communicative competence is more accurately captured through performance-based, classroom assessments than through formal testing (Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000). The success of FA is heavily mediated by teacher cognition, specifically the beliefs, knowledge, and assumptions teachers hold regarding the purpose and practice of assessment (Borg, 2003). These beliefs reflect broader pedagogical orientations that profoundly shape instructional decisions and classroom behaviours (Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Fives & Buehl, 2012).



Because teacher beliefs are socially and culturally constructed, they are continuously influenced by national policies and external prescriptions (Gao & Watkins, 2002; Brown & Harris, 2009). Rather than merely enacting mandated reforms, teachers actively interpret and adapt them (Farrell & Kun, 2008). In the Malaysian context, the adoption of CEFR-aligned formative assessment requires a process of cognitive negotiation, as teachers attempt to reconcile curriculum expectations with complex classroom realities (Sakui, 2004). Understanding these underlying beliefs is therefore critical to explaining how formative assessment is operationalised in English language classrooms and why a persistent gap remains between policy intentions and classroom reality.

Formative Assessment (FA)

Formative assessment (FA), alternatively termed assessment for learning, continuous assessment, or dynamic assessment, focuses on enhancing student learning through ongoing feedback and instructional adaptation (Stiggins, 2002; Davison & Leung, 2009). Unlike summative assessment, which evaluates achievement at the end of an instructional cycle, FA is embedded within daily classroom teaching to provide continuous indicators of pupil progress (Gronlund, 1981; Chan, 2009). This mechanism enables teachers to identify learning gaps and refine their pedagogy, whilst simultaneously prompting students to reflect on their own misconceptions, adopt accurate learning strategies, and develop academic confidence (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2024). Empirical literature demonstrates that FA is most effective when it relies on diverse strategies, such as systematic observation, strategic questioning, ungraded tasks, and peer or self-assessment (White, 2009), and when feedback is timely, constructive, and goal directed (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Weiss & Belland, 2016).

In Malaysia, FA is formalised through Classroom Based Assessment within the broader School Based Assessment framework, aiming to balance learning enhancement with institutional accountability (Mueller, 2010). To promote holistic language development, the Ministry of Education advocates for CEFR aligned formative tools, including portfolios, peer feedback, and self-assessment (MOE, 2018; Read, 2019). Despite this official mandate, actual classroom implementation remains uneven due to systemic constraints, low assessment literacy, poor rubric design, and entrenched sociocultural expectations regarding examinations (Lai, 2010; Safari & Rashidi, 2015; Rahman et al., 2021).

Crucially, research indicates that teachers underlying beliefs, attitudes, and emotions often exert a more profound influence on FA practices than structural variables like time or class size (Toh et al., 2006; Barnyak & Paquette, 2010). Misconceptions regarding FA remain prevalent (Pereira et al., 2018), resulting in a persistent disconnect between teachers professed beliefs and their enacted practices; classroom assessment frequently defaults to textbook driven assignments and shallow, mechanical tasks (Sidhu et al., 2018; Lee & Mohd Kassim, 2019). Because actionable feedback stands as the linchpin of authentic formative assessment (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007), successful implementation cannot be treated as a mere technical procedure. Instead, it requires sophisticated teacher assessment literacy, reflective instruction, and a classroom culture where learner autonomy and formative dialogue are deeply woven into the pedagogical fabric.

Assessment in Malaysia

In recent years, Malaysia has transitioned from a heavily exam-centric education model to a more holistic assessment approach through the implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA), reflecting international trends observed in countries such as Finland and the UK. Spearheaded by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate, SBA was introduced to reduce the



overemphasis on summative testing and to promote continuous, FA that captures learners' growth in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Ministry of Education Malaysia [MOE], 2013). The SBA framework comprises centralised assessments, classroom-based assessments (*Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah or PBD*), co-curricular evaluations (PAJSK), and psychometric assessments. Teachers are expected to take active roles in assessment planning, implementation, and feedback delivery, shifting the focus from product to process. This reform supports the aspirations outlined in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025, which emphasizes student-centered pedagogy and decentralised decision-making (MOE, 2013). Nonetheless, successful implementation hinges on teachers' beliefs, professional capacity, and alignment with classroom realities, all of which are factors that continue to challenge the fidelity of formative assessment practices (Azman et al., 2022; Rafiq et al., 2020). Malaysia's English language teaching is further enhanced by the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as part of its English Language Education Reform Roadmap 2015–2025 (MOE, 2015). The redeveloped curriculum includes CEFR descriptors and proficiency bands to animate the classroom assessment and monitor learners' progress along language skills. Teachers are recommended to implement a continuous and performance-based assessment method that can contribute to promoting genuine language learning (Nambiar et al., 2020; Mohamed et al., 2021). Yet, adoption is held back by scarcity of resources, time pressure and variability in the extent to which teachers are prepared (Yamat et al., 2021). There are various empirical studies that have investigated the implementation of CEFR in Malaysian schools. For example, Nambiar et al. Liu et al. (2020) found that, in general, English language teachers seemed to have a positive attitude toward CEFR reform but the implementation of aligning classroom assessment with CEFR proficiency descriptors did not go smoothly as most of the teachers had limited assessment literacy and restrictive instructional support. Similarly, Mohamed et al. cited that the CEFR is regarded to support a more learner-centered philosophy, but teachers found this problematic in terms of the interpretation of descriptors, assessment standardization and documentation (McNamara et al., 2021). Yamat et al. (2021) also found that teachers believed in the potential of CEFR-aligned assessment to be beneficial for language learning, but implementation was often limited by access to necessary resources, time pressures and uneven provision of professional development. More recently, Azman et al. (2022) determined that beyond policy directives, CEFR reforms can only be successfully implemented through consideration of teachers' beliefs and assessment competency, and there must also be ongoing institutional support in place. In summary, these Malaysian studies show how, while teachers are largely in favor of implementing the CEFR, meeting 'the general spirit' of expectations at a policy level poses serious problems for developing assessment practices at the classroom level. This finding calls for further investigation on the relationship of teachers' beliefs and their formative assessment practices in the Malaysian primary school context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Constructivism

This research is framed within a social constructivist theoretical perspective based on Vygotsky (1978) in which learning is socially mediated with knowledge being co-constructed through interaction, language, and meaning making shared within a sociocultural context (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). Traditional transmission models have been superseded by social constructivism approaches which rejects the notion of students as recipients and teachers as knowledge transmitters, rather learners are active participants in their learning with teachers acting as facilitators (scaffolding) for dialogue and collaboration (Staub & Stern 2002).



Pertinently, ZPD (Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development) is central to this view that underlines the role of guided assistance in facilitating learners to reach their maximum potential. In assessment, it promotes learner-centred and authentic practices that see students taking part in reflected feedback cycles and demonstrating their learning in meaningful, real-world tasks as opposed to rote reproduction (Brooks & Brooks 1993). In this way, FA is congruent with social constructivist beliefs as it stresses ongoing demonstrations of learning, student voice and choice, and responsive teaching. This is reinforced by Biggs and Tang's (2007) theory of constructive alignment which suggests that learning is effective when learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment procedures are aligned. In summary, social constructivism offers a suitable theoretical framework to make sense of FA as being a dynamic, interactive and developmental process situated in classroom learning settings.

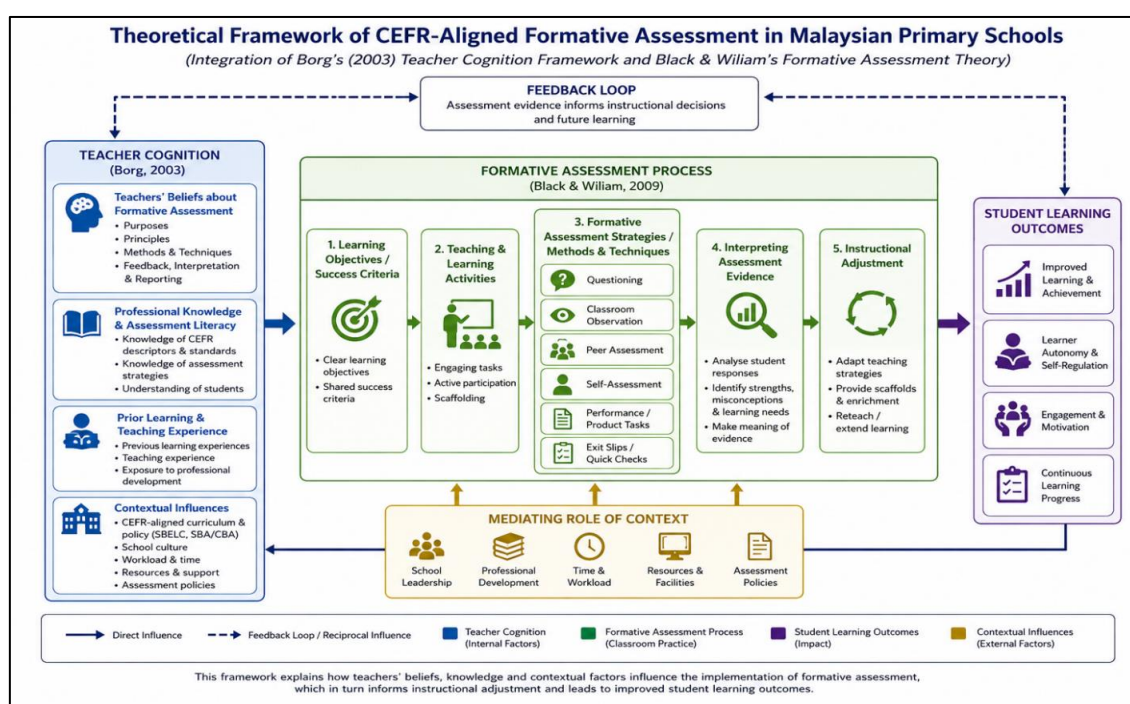


Figure 1
Theoretical Framework for CEFR-Aligned Formative Assessment in Malaysian Primary Schools
(Adapted from Borg's (2003))

This theoretical foundation that supports this study is presented in Figure 1, which synthesizes Borg's (2003) Teacher Cognition Framework and Black and William's (2009) Formative Assessment Theory to formulate explanations of practices toward CEFR-aligned FA implementation in Malaysian primary schools. Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory, which situates learning as an active and collaborative process energized via interaction, scaffolding, and ongoing feedback further buttresses the framework. While teachers drawn on Borg's framework to examine how their beliefs, professional knowledge, prior experiences and contextual factors affected classroom practise, while Black and William's FA process illustrates how these practices are enacted through setting learning objectives, implementing FA strategies, interpreting assessment evidence, and making instructional adjustments. These theoretical lenses work together to be the supports of how teachers' cognition and classroom-based assessment practices contribute to better student learning outcomes, underpinned by the Malaysian context of a CEFR.



THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Argyris & Schon's Theory-in-Use-Model

This study aims to explore the dynamic interaction between context, teacher beliefs, and classroom practices, particularly in how contextual factors shape or constrain the translation of beliefs into CEFR-aligned formative assessment. Drawing on the Theory-in-Use Model by Argyris and Schön (1974) as illustrated in figure 2.2, the framework acknowledges that stated beliefs and actual practices often diverge.

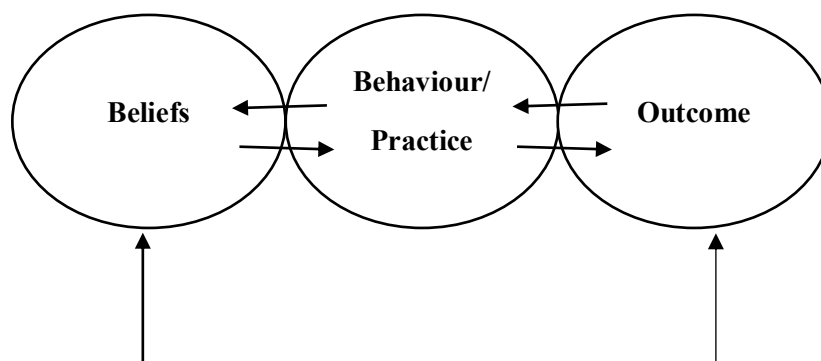


Figure 2
Inter Relationship of Beliefs, Behaviour / Practice and Outcomes
(Adapted from Argyris & Schon, 1974)

According to Argyris and Schön's (1974) Theory-in-Use, teachers may espouse formative, learner-centred values but enact different practices when constrained by contextual pressures such as large class sizes, administrative workload, rigid curricula, and accountability demands. As a result, many teachers who support formative assessment in principle may rely on summative approaches due to time limitations and institutional expectations (Lee & Mohd Kassim, 2019). This belief and practice mismatch is significant because formative assessment, particularly timely and constructive feedback, is crucial in promoting learner motivation, critical thinking, and self-regulated learning (Shute, 2008; Adarkwah, 2021; Berisha et al., 2023). However, its effective implementation is often hindered by limited teacher confidence, inadequate training, and insufficient school support. Therefore, strengthening formative assessment practices requires not only policy reform but also sustained professional development, clear assessment criteria, active learner involvement, and a supportive school culture (Cañadas, 2023).

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the Theory-in-Use Model by Argyris and Schön (1974) as a conceptual lens to examine the intricate interplay between teacher beliefs, classroom practices, and learning outcomes, particularly within the context of CEFR-aligned FA in Malaysian primary English education as illustrated in Figure 3.

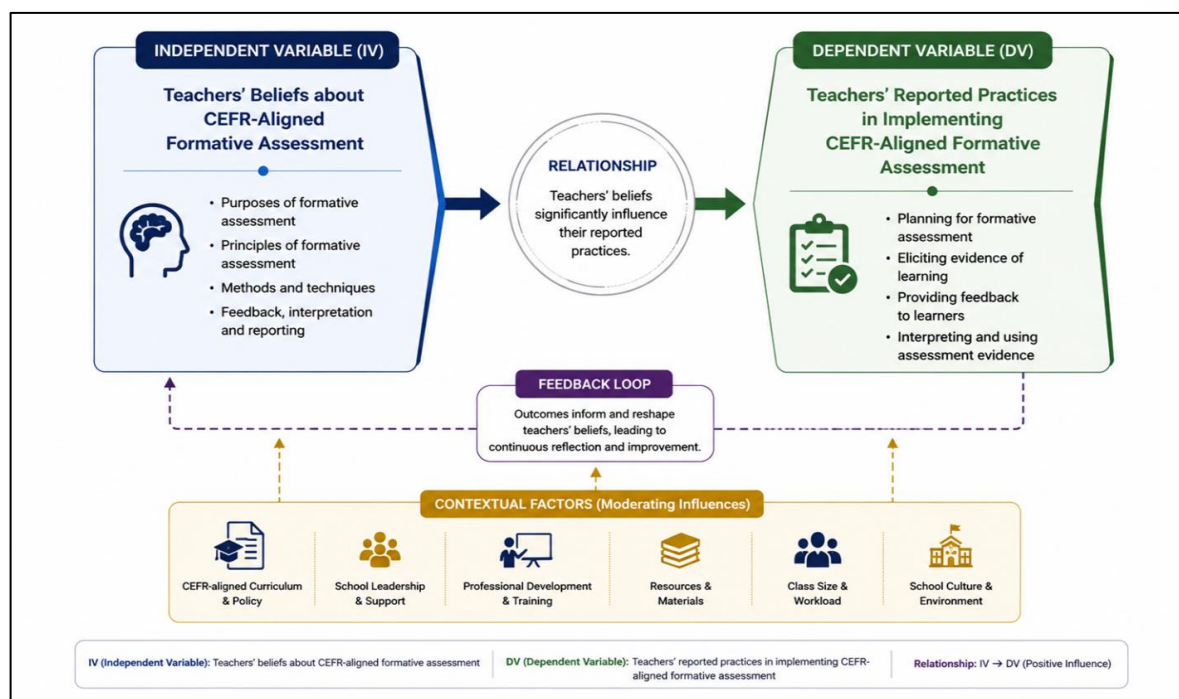
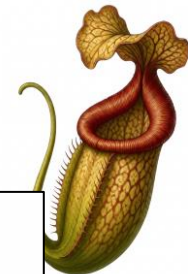


Figure 3
Research Conceptual Framework

The core conceptual framework of this study draws on Argyris and Schön's (1974) theory-in-use, is rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist perspective, and also incorporates support from existing research by Jones & Brader-Araje (2002) and Staub et al. (2002). The first of these foundational works argues that teachers' practices do not necessarily align with their publicly stated beliefs, while the second defines learning as a socially mediated process of knowledge construction. This framework rejects the traditional transmission model, positioning learners as active participants and teachers as guides who provide instructional scaffolding.

Central to this view is the ZPD, which emphasizes guided assistance to help learners reach their potential. In assessment, this perspective promotes student centred, authentic practices where learners engage in reflective feedback cycles and real-world tasks rather than rote reproduction (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). FA is thus inherently congruent with social constructivism, as it values student voice, ongoing demonstrations of learning, and responsive teaching. This connection aligns with Biggs and Tang (2007) theory of constructive alignment, which states that learning is optimised when outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment procedures are unified. Ultimately, social constructivism provides a robust framework for conceptualising FA as a dynamic, interactive, and developmental classroom process.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design, conducted in two distinct phases to explore the beliefs and practices of CEFR-aligned FA. The first phase was quantitative, involving the administration of two modified questionnaires: a 21-item Assessment Beliefs questionnaire and a 32-item Assessment Practices questionnaire (Elshawa, 2016). These instruments utilized Likert and frequency scales to measure four sub-domains;



purposes, principles, methods, and feedback. Data were analysed using SPSS to perform descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, t-tests, and ANOVA. The second phase was qualitative, undertaken to elaborate on and provide a deeper understanding of the quantitative results. This phase involved semi-structured interviews which were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's framework. This sequential integration allowed for the triangulation of data and a more nuanced exploration of teacher cognition and the situated environment. In the qualitative phase A set of interview questions was designed building on the results from the quantitative study to investigate teachers' experiences in implementing CEFR-related FA practices. Interview questions were centered on the participants' understanding of FA, their classroom implementation and barriers faced as well as any support they needed to practice. Such a role allowed the researcher to gain clarity and meaning of quantitative results in relation to lived experiences provided by participants.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in the state of Selangor, Malaysia, selected for its diverse range of urban and rural school settings and its high density of primary schools. A total of 161 English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers from 30 schools participated in the study. Participants were selected using cluster random sampling for the quantitative phase. Although the participating schools represented diverse educational settings across Selangor, the present study did not compare teachers' beliefs and practices based on school location (e.g., urban versus rural). Future research may examine how contextual differences influence the implementation of CEFR-aligned FA. According to Cohen's power analysis, a minimum sample of 134 was required; the study achieved a 75% response rate with 161 completed online questionnaires. For the qualitative phase, a purposeful sampling technique was used to select five teachers for follow-up semi-structured email interviews. These participants were chosen to provide specific insights that could shed light on the patterns identified in the survey responses. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants possessed relevant teaching experience and were actively implementing CEFR-aligned FA in primary schools. The five participants represented different school settings and levels of teaching experience, allowing the study to capture a range of perspectives. Data collection continued until sufficient depth was achieved to explain the quantitative findings.

Research Instruments

The study utilised three primary research instruments to facilitate data collection and ensure a comprehensive analysis of the research objectives. The first instrument was the Assessment Beliefs Questionnaire, a 21-item modified tool adapted from Elshaw (2016) to gauge teacher perspectives and internal orientations toward FA. This was complemented by the Assessment Practices Questionnaire, a 32-item modified instrument designed to measure the frequency and nature of actual classroom assessment activities across specific sub-domains. Finally, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured email interviews. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions organised around several themes, including teachers' beliefs about formative assessment, classroom practices, challenges in implementing CEFR-aligned assessment, assessment literacy, the influence of class size and school context, and professional development needs. Follow-up questions were used where appropriate to obtain clarification and richer descriptions of participants' experiences. Method Interviews were analysed using Braun and Clarke (2006) six phase thematic analysis. Data familiarisation was accomplished through repeatedly reading the interview transcripts. These initial codes were then systematically applied across the dataset and collated into potential themes. The review process involved defining and refining these themes whilst checking them for coherence and consistency with the research question(s). Representative quotes were



extracted to support each theme and add validity. The qualitative findings were subsequently merged with the quantitative data to develop a fuller description of teachers' beliefs and practices on CEFR-based FA. The qualitative findings of this study should also be trustworthy followed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. The findings are supported by direct quotations, a detailed description of the process of analysis is provided, and information about research context and characters has been described thoroughly for facilitating credibility and transferability. These qualitative protocols were designed to elicit in-depth reflections from participants, allowing the researcher to contextualise the quantitative findings and gain a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and successes regarding CEFR implementation in the Malaysian primary school context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Demographic Profile

The demographical profile of the respondents (Table 1) is indicative of a wide cross-section of primary ESL teachers in Selangor. The majority were female (85.1 percent), representative of the national primary teaching population. More than three-quarters of respondents had a degree (77 percent) followed by Master's (22.4 percent) and only one individual reported having a PhD (0.6 percent). The majority of the teachers had TESL or equivalent certifications (67.7 percent) and were English major option teachers (87 percent), with a smaller number of English minors (8.7 percent) and non-option teachers (4.3 percent). Regarding teaching experience, more than half (59.6 percent) had taught ESL for more than 10 years. For most of the participants, an advanced language level was measured (Table 4.1), with the majority at C1 (49.1 percent) and B2 (26.1 percent). A considerable number of them had experienced the practice of CEFR-related learning and teaching for five to six years (28 percent), indicating continuous involvement in the reform. Participants were drawn from various districts, with the highest representation from Gombak (28 percent), followed by Klang (13 percent) and Hulu Langat (11 percent). Overall, these demographics provided a diverse basis for examining teachers' beliefs and practices of CEFR-aligned FA.

Table 1
Demographic profile of the respondents

Demography Profile	n	%
Gender		
Male	24	14.9
Female	137	85.1
Academic Qualification		
PhD	1	0.6
Master's Degree	36	22.4
Bachelor's Degree	124	77.0
TESL Qualification		
other than TESL	52	32.3
TESL or similar	109	67.7
English Option		
Non-option	7	4.3
Minor	14	8.7



Major	140	87.0
EL_TeachingExp		
1-5	22	13.7
6-10	43	26.7
Over than 10	96	59.6
CEFR_Level		
Have not taken test	7	4.3
A1	1	0.6
A2	2	1.2
B1	5	3.1
B2	42	26.1
C1	79	49.1
C2	25	15.5
CEFRalignedELTeaching		
1 Year	18	11.2
2 Year	14	8.7
3 Year	18	11.2
4 Year	21	13.0
5 Year	45	28.0
6 Year	45	28.0
PPD (District Education Office)		
Gombak	45	28.0
Klang	21	13.0
Hulu Langat	19	11.8
Petaling Perdana	18	11.2
Hulu Selangor	16	9.9
Kuala Selangor	11	6.8
Sabak Bernam	10	6.2
Petaling Utama	8	5.0
Sepang	7	4.3
Klang	6	3.7

English language teachers' beliefs regarding CEFR-aligned FA in Malaysia Primary schools

Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of teachers' belief levels regarding FA. The findings show that the majority of respondents demonstrated a high level of belief, with 95.7 percent (n = 154) strongly endorsing FA as an important pedagogical approach. Only 4.3 percent (n = 7) reported a moderate level of belief, while none indicated a low level. Overall, the results reflect a strong consensus among teachers on the value and relevance of FA in classroom practice. The finding on teachers' high levels of belief towards CEFR-aligned FA support Borg's (2006) framework underlining the reasons that shape teachers' beliefs namely their prior learning, teacher education, professional development and classroom experiences. This positivity indicates that they understand the pedagogical importance of formative assessment and how it can help pupils to learn and develop their language skills. Which shows that the teachers' cognitions have been positively impacted by their professional knowledge and experience of CEFR implementation.

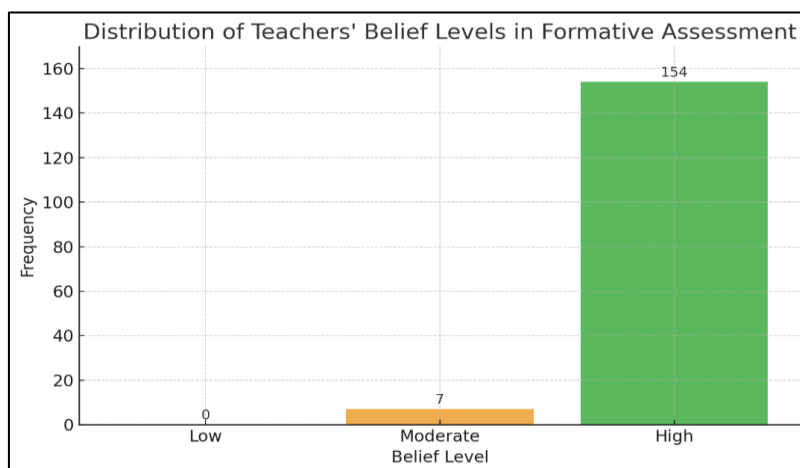


Figure 4
Level of Believe

Teacher's Believe in FA based on Purpose, Principle, Methods & Feedback

Figure 5 shows that the 161 EFL teachers had consistently strong beliefs about CEFR-aligned FA in four categories; Purposes, Principles, Methods and Techniques, and Feedback/Reporting. Teachers reached the highest level of consensus about the purposes of FA, specifically that it serves to enhance student performance ($M = 4.13$) and offer ongoing feedback ($M = 4.07$), with 98.5 percent in agreement with its developmental purpose. Within the principle's domain, the participants expressed high agreement on beliefs that focused on emphasizing students' strengths ($M = 4.15$) and using FA for instruction ($M = 4.13$), with lower scores indicated for self-assessment ($M = 3.91$). The category Methods and Techniques achieved the highest average score ($M = 4.08$), indicative of a high level of confidence on sources, such as effective questioning and multiple methods for assessment ($M = 4.13$). On the other hand, the Feedback/Reporting area exhibited relatively lower mean values ($M = 3.98$), especially in students' honesty when reporting themselves ($M = 3.71$), calling for attention and support. Taken together, these findings suggest that teachers are well-aligned with CEFR-oriented FA beliefs and point to feedback-related practices as a site for possible growth.

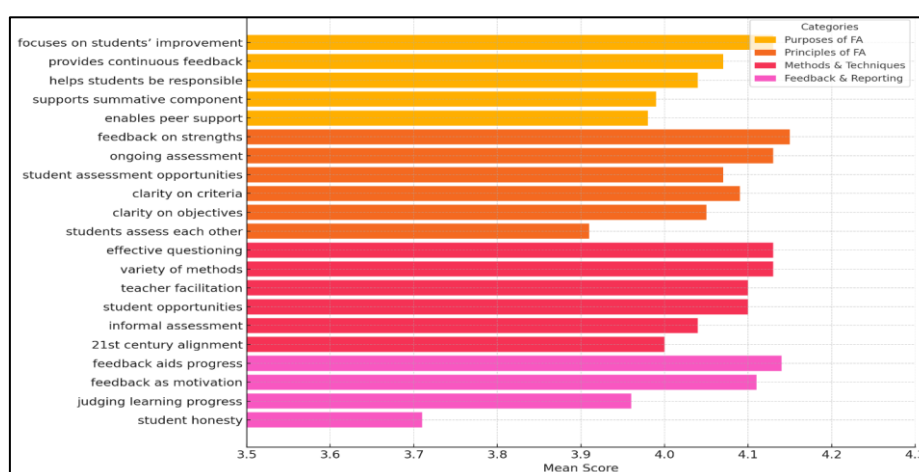


Figure 5
Level of item in Teacher's believe of Formative Assessment



English language teachers' reported practices regarding CEFR-aligned FA in Malaysia Primary schools

The distribution of the use of teachers' FA practices among 161 respondents is shown in Figure 6. About half (49.7 percent, $n = 80$) the teachers perceived that they practised formative practices to a high extent with respect to its use of continuous feedback, varied assessment methods, student involvement and instructional modifications. A similar percentage, who reported moderate practice (47.8 percent, $n = 77$), may have used FA only occasionally or irregularly, as a result of operational constraints such as lack of time, training or support within their institution. Very few (2.5 percent, $n = 4$) had low practice. In general, over 97 percent of participants showed moderate to high implementation (indicating that the majority are really using FA in their classroom) even though there is a nearly equal distribution between both moderate and high which suggests there is still potential for more progress with improved professional development support. While teachers reported relatively high levels of FA practices, qualitative findings indicated that contextual factors such as large class sizes and workload, limited resources, and requirements to report on students' assessment progress impacted their implementation of these approaches. This supports Borg's (2006) Teacher Cognition Framework, which argues that what goes on in classrooms cannot be understood simply in terms of teachers' beliefs since, as noted earlier, practice is not a direct or simple reflection of teacher cognition but rather mediated by contextual and institutional factors.

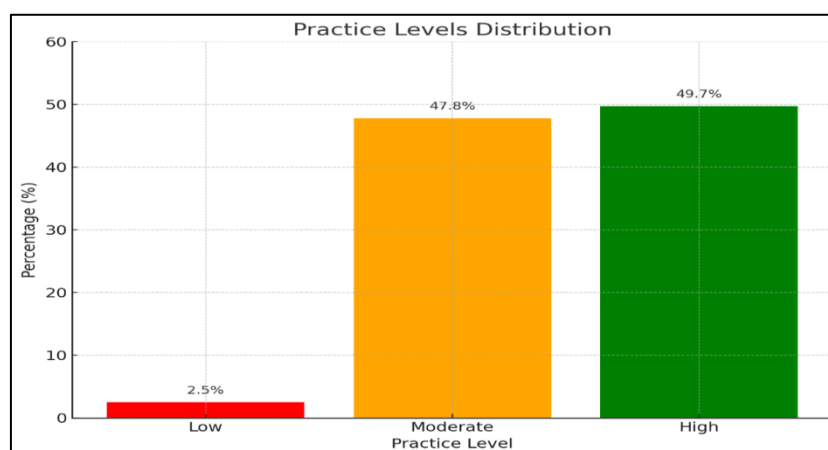


Figure 6
Level of Practice

Teacher's Practice in FA based on Purpose, Principle, Methods & Feedback

Figure 7 presents primary English teachers FA practices across four dimensions. The first dimension, purposes of FA ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.73$), reveals that teachers primarily use assessments to determine subsequent learning steps ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.86$), verify mastery ($M = 3.79$), and monitor progress ($M = 3.72$), whereas student grouping was less common ($M = 3.37$). The second dimension, principles of FA, achieved the highest overall score ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.74$), demonstrating strong conceptual awareness. Here, teachers frequently shared learning objectives ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.10$), provided immediate feedback ($M = 4.01$), and encouraged student reflection ($M = 3.84$), though fostering independent learner responsibility scored lower ($M = 3.51$). The third dimension, methods and techniques, showed moderate implementation ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.65$). Teachers regularly gathered evidence of progress ($M = 3.83$), structured questioning around student ideas ($M = 3.72$), and prompted students to generate solutions ($M = 3.66$); conversely, collaborative strategies like think pair share were less frequent ($M = 3.40$). The final dimension, feedback, interpretation, and use of results,



recorded the lowest average ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.72$). While oral feedback ($M = 4.03$) and diagnostic evaluation of strengths and weaknesses ($M = 3.73$) were common, alternative strategies such as portfolios, exit cards, and peer feedback techniques like two stars and a wish were rarely utilised, failing to reach the agree threshold (Mean range 2.72 to 3.04). Overall, these findings indicate that while teachers display robust knowledge of formative principles and instructional adaptation, a gap remains regarding collaborative methods and alternative reporting strategies.

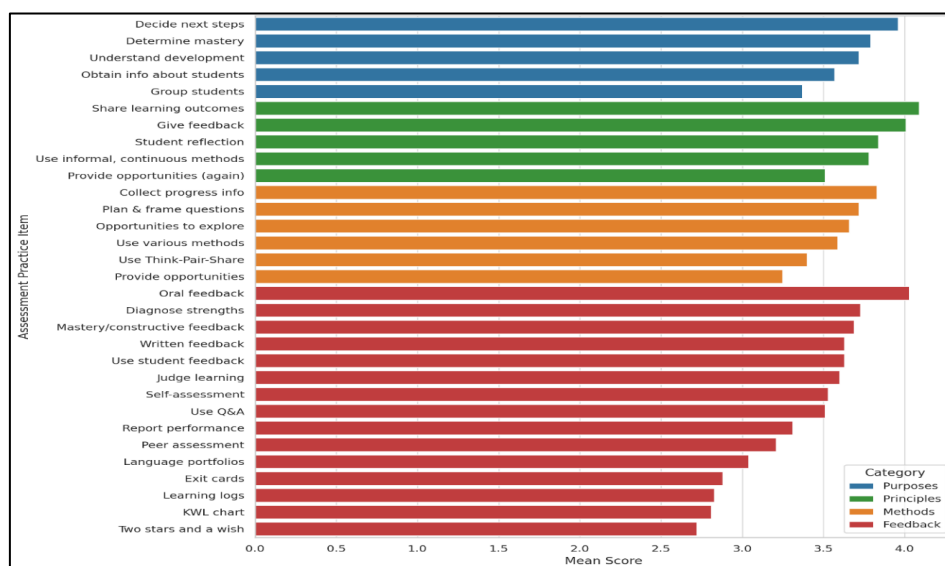


Figure 7
Level of item in Teacher's Practices of Formative Assessment

The relationship between English language teachers' beliefs and their reported practice regarding CEFR-aligned FA

Table 2
Correlation between belief and practice

		BELIEF	PRACTICES
BELIEF	Pearson Correlation	1	.336**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	161	161
PRACTICES	Pearson Correlation	.336**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	161	161

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

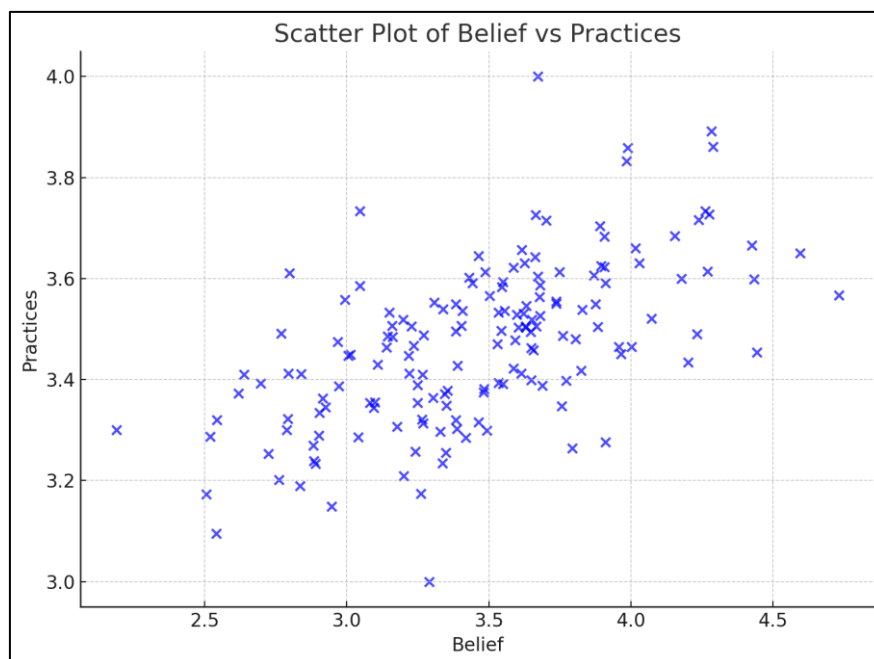


Figure 8

Scatter plot graph on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their FA practices

Table 2 indicate the Pearson correlation coefficient between belief and practices is 0.336, which indicates a moderate positive correlation. This correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), as indicated by the p-value of 0.000. This means there is a less than 1 percent chance that this correlation occurred by random chance, confirming the reliability of this relationship. In practical terms, the results suggest that teachers who hold stronger beliefs about the importance or effectiveness of formative assessment are more likely to engage in such practices in their English classrooms. Whilst scatter plot in figure 8 illustrating the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their formative assessment practices. The positive trend reflects the moderate positive Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.336$), suggesting that stronger beliefs in formative assessment are associated with more frequent or effective formative assessment practices among the teachers. Overall, this finding reinforces the connection between mindset (beliefs) and behaviour (practices), highlighting the importance of professional development that addresses both knowledge and attitudes toward formative assessment. The significant positive relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices further supports Borg's (2006) Teacher Cognition Framework which argues that teacher cognition underpins decisions about instructional methods and classroom behavior. Yet, the weak strength of relationship indicates that though teachers' beliefs favor implementation of formative assessment, some external contextual factors may restrict the extent to which these beliefs are enacted into classroom practice.

Association between demographic profile and belief and English teachers' beliefs and reported practices regarding CEFR-aligned FA

Demographic analysis revealed significant differences based on English specialisation, overall teaching experience, and CEFR proficiency level. For specialisation, beliefs did not differ significantly between major and minor teachers ($p = 0.432$), but actual practice did ($p = 0.01$), with English majors demonstrating higher implementation ($M = 3.714$) than minors ($M = 3.255$). Conversely, specific years of CEFR teaching experience had no significant impact on either belief ($p = 0.798$) or practice ($p = 0.369$).

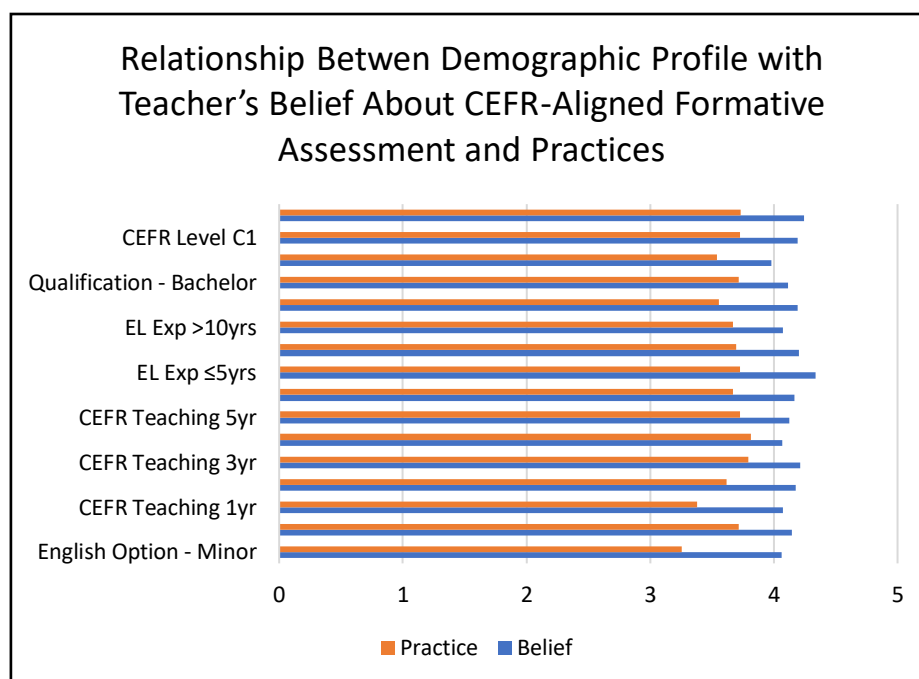


Figure 9

Combine Graph on comparison of the mean scores for teachers' beliefs and practices in formative assessment across several demographic categories

Overall teaching experience significantly affected belief ($p = 0.007$); early career teachers with one to five years of experience reported stronger beliefs ($M = 4.336$) than veterans with over ten years ($M = 4.072$), though their classroom practices remained statistically identical ($p = 0.929$). Academic qualification showed no significant differences across variables. Finally, higher CEFR proficiency significantly elevated teacher beliefs ($p = 0.002$), with C2 teachers scoring highest ($M = 4.243$) and B2 teachers lowest ($M = 3.978$), yet their actual practices did not differ significantly ($p = 0.258$). Collectively, these findings highlight a persistent belief practice gap, demonstrating that progressive teacher beliefs do not automatically translate into classroom actions.

A Thematic Analysis of English Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in CEFR-Aligned FA

The qualitative findings revealed that teachers' implementation of CEFR aligned formative assessment was shaped by a complex interplay of individual, contextual, and systemic elements. Although most participants possessed strong academic qualifications and extensive teaching experience, which fostered positive beliefs and reasonable assessment literacy, their actual practice was heavily constrained by school contexts such as class size, geographical location, and resource availability. Specifically, urban teachers frequently integrated technology enhanced formative assessment, whereas rural educators or those managing large classes relied on more traditional methods.

This instructional delivery was further challenged during the Covid 19 pandemic, where enforced isolation and minimal learning oversight reduced formative questioning and interactive dialogue to basic forms of testing. Furthermore, interpreting and reporting assessment outcomes emerged as the most problematic area across all contexts. Teachers highlighted a distinct misfit between CEFR proficiency descriptors and Classroom Based Assessment documentation, aggravated by a lack of official training.



Consequently, a pronounced belief practice gap persisted despite high teacher self-efficacy and positive attitudes. To implement the curriculum consistently and productively, participants emphasised the urgent need for targeted professional development, clearer administrative guidance, better information communication technology infrastructure, and enhanced classroom support.

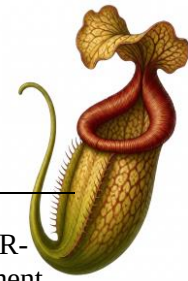
Table 3
Results of Interview

Factor	Triangulated Theme	Findings	Sample Quotes
Educational Background & Experience	Academic and professional qualification	All hold B.Ed TESL or MA TESOL/A. Linguistics; 10–16 years of experience	<i>“I have a B.Ed TESL and an MA TESOL degree.” “Teaching for 16 years in primary school.”</i>
School Environment	Student enrolment, location, facilities	Ranges from <300 to ~2000; urban schools better equipped than rural	<i>“School is 15km away from town.” “Fully equipped with smart boards and internet.”</i>
Changes in T&L and Assessment (Post-Covid)	Shift to online tools and methods	Reliance on Google Meet, Quizizz, Canva, Jamboard, WhatsApp; less written work and group tasks	<i>“Switched to WhatsApp for instructional tool.” “Challenging to gauge students’ progress.”</i>
Challenges from Changes	Engagement, assessment accuracy, tech access	Difficulty tracking learning progress, poor internet, unmotivated students	<i>“It is hard to assess without face-to-face.”</i>
ICT Tools Used	Variety and frequency	Most-used: Google Meet, Quizizz, Canva; others include Padlet, Storyjumper, Jamboard	<i>“I use Google Meet, Google Classroom.” “Jamboard allows students to interact live.”</i>
Beliefs about CEFR-FA & Class Size	Smaller classes are preferable	4 of 5 say class size influences belief in CEFR-FA; more personal focus possible	<i>“Smaller classes allow one-on-one assessment.”</i>
Practices in CEFR-FA & Class Size	Assessment method limitations	All agree large classes restrict FA practices; smaller classes improve lesson management	<i>“Large classes are too noisy and disruptive.”</i>
Assessment Competency (Self-Rated)	Confidence level	4 rated “Above Average”; 1 rated “Average”	<i>“I constantly reflect on the effectiveness of my assessment.”</i>
Most Challenging FA Aspect	Interpreting and reporting results	Cited by 4 participants due to SOW and PBD misalignment	<i>“Interpreting and reporting of results is difficult.”</i>
Support Needed	Training, human and physical resources	Need for teacher assistants, hands-on workshops, CEFR reporting training, devices for students	<i>“Need more workshops and downloadable resources.” “Training in interpreting CEFR results is needed.”</i>
Additional Comments & Follow-up	Suggestions for improvement	Better structured workshops, advance materials, all agreed to follow-up	<i>N/A (quotes not available or not applicable for this entry)</i>



Table 4
Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Quantitative Findings (Survey Results)	Qualitative Findings (Interview Themes)	Integrated Interpretation (Meta-Inference)
Teachers' Beliefs toward CEFR-aligned Formative Assessment Teachers demonstrated a very high level of belief (95.7%). Mean scores across the four belief components—purposes, principles, methods and techniques, and feedback—were consistently high ($M = 3.98-4.15$), indicating strong support for formative assessment as a means of improving learning.	Teachers expressed positive beliefs towards CEFR-aligned formative assessment, emphasising that formative assessment supports pupils' learning, continuous feedback, and classroom improvement. Participants also believed that manageable class sizes and adequate school support enabled them to implement formative assessment more effectively.	Both quantitative and qualitative findings consistently indicate that teachers highly valued CEFR-aligned formative assessment. The interview findings explain that these positive beliefs were shaped by teachers' professional knowledge, teaching experience, and recognition of formative assessment as an effective approach for improving learning. However, teachers acknowledged that contextual factors such as class size and school resources also influenced these beliefs.
Teachers' Practices of CEFR-aligned Formative Assessment Teachers reported moderate to high levels of practice (49.7% high; 47.8% moderate). Among the four practice components, the highest implementation was observed in assessment principles, while feedback documentation, peer assessment, self-assessment, and structured reflective tools were implemented less frequently.	Teachers described regularly using questioning, classroom observation, oral feedback, and digital platforms such as Google Meet, Quizizz, Google Classroom, Canva, and Jamboard to support formative assessment. However, they also reported that large class sizes, limited resources, workload, difficulties in interpreting CEFR descriptors, and reporting requirements restricted the consistent implementation of more student-centred formative assessment strategies.	The qualitative findings explain why teachers' classroom practices were lower than their beliefs. Although teachers demonstrated positive attitudes towards formative assessment, the implementation of CEFR-aligned practices depended largely on contextual conditions rather than teachers' willingness alone. Classroom realities constrained the consistent application of learner-centred assessment strategies, particularly peer assessment, self-assessment, and systematic reporting.
Relationship between Teachers' Beliefs and Practices Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant moderate positive relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices ($r = .336$, $p < .001$).	Teachers consistently reported that while they strongly believed in the value of formative assessment, classroom implementation was influenced by class size, school facilities, ICT accessibility, student engagement, workload, and assessment reporting requirements.	The qualitative findings provide an explanation for the moderate rather than strong relationship between beliefs and practices. Positive beliefs encouraged teachers to adopt formative assessment; however, external contextual factors prevented these beliefs from being fully translated into consistent classroom practice.
Association between Demographic Characteristics and Teachers' Beliefs and Practices English	Participants emphasized that practical classroom experience, continuous professional	Both datasets suggest that teachers' demographic characteristics alone do not



option and English proficiency level significantly influenced certain aspects of teachers' beliefs and practices, whereas academic qualification and CEFR-aligned teaching experience showed no significant differences.	development, institutional support, and hands-on CEFR training were more influential than formal qualifications in improving formative assessment practices.	determine successful implementation of CEFR-aligned formative assessment. Instead, continuous professional learning, assessment competency, and supportive school environments play a more important role in strengthening classroom practice.
Overall Integration	Teachers identified class size, resource availability, assessment literacy, technological support, and professional development as the main factors influencing implementation.	The integrated findings demonstrate that teachers possessed strong beliefs about CEFR-aligned formative assessment but encountered contextual and systemic barriers that limited classroom implementation. These findings suggest that successful implementation depends not only on teachers' beliefs but also on adequate institutional support, assessment literacy, professional development, and conducive classroom conditions.

Overall, integrating quantitative and qualitative findings suggested that teachers were generally positive towards CEFR-aligned formative assessment but that contextual as well as systemic factors mediated the extent to which these beliefs translated into classroom practice. The qualitative findings offered explanations for the quantitative results, revealing that classroom context, assessment literacy and ongoing professional support reinforced stronger implementation of CEFR-aligned formative assessment.

CONCLUSION

This research found that primary school English teachers in Selangor held robust, positive beliefs regarding CEFR oriented FA, implementing it to a moderate or high extent. Their integration of shared learning objectives, immediate feedback, and student reflection aligned closely with the core principles of assessment for learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Nevertheless, a substantial discrepancy emerged between teachers professed values and their actual classroom actions. This positive mindset frequently reflected theoretical ideals rather than pragmatic execution, heavily constrained by intense time pressures, large class sizes, heavy workloads, and limited digital resources, particularly within rural schools.

This contradiction echoes Argyris and Schon (1974) theory in use model, illustrating that espoused beliefs often conflict with enacted practices due to immediate environmental limitations and a lack of constructive alignment between learning outcomes, instruction, and assessment (Biggs, 2003). Consequently, the Ministry of Education should reinforce this framework by establishing clear, standardised guidelines that directly map CEFR proficiency



descriptors to Classroom Based Assessment reporting. Furthermore, authorities must provide continuous, practical professional development to elevate teacher assessment literacy (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010), bridge the rural urban digital divide, and alleviate administrative burdens. Finally, future research should incorporate student perspectives to evaluate how learner engagement impacts the efficacy of these formative mechanisms, in line with social constructivist principles of scaffolding and active participation (Vygotsky, 1978).

In a nutshell, this study lends support to Borg's (2006) Teacher Cognition Framework and indicates the salient experience driven nature of teachers' beliefs on FA practices. But the findings also show that contextual and institutional factors mediate how those beliefs play out in classrooms. While qualitative and quantitative findings can be reported side by side, their integration provides a richer understanding of teachers' cognition and practice in enacting CEFR-aligned FA.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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