

Secondary School EFL Teachers' Sense of Self-efficacy and Use of Formative Assessment Strategies: Three Zones of Amhara Region in Focus

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Abstract:

The main objective of the study was to examine the relationship between secondary school EFL teachers' use of formative assessment strategies and their sense of self-efficacy. A concurrent mixed methods research design was used to address this issue. A total of 144 EFL teachers from 14 randomly selected secondary schools in East Gojjam, West Gojjam and Awi Zones were included in the year 2019. Questionnaire, observation, and interview were used to collect data. Since the data collected were both quantitative and qualitative, they were analyzed accordingly. That is, the quantitative data were analyzed using percentage, mean standard deviation, one-sample t-test and regression whereas the qualitative data were analyzed using descriptions, narrations, and quotes by categorizing the phenomenon into different thematic areas. The findings showed a positive relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their use of formative assessment strategies. According to the findings of the questionnaire and interview data, teachers used a variety of formative assessment strategies and have a high level of self-efficacy in using them. However, the data obtained from classroom observation showed that teachers used a limited number of formative assessment strategies. This implies that teachers consider themselves as they use different formative assessment strategies and they believe they can. However, what they believe and practice is different. Therefore, schools and education office experts should give training for teachers about the purpose and strategies of formative assessment so as to improve students' learning.

Key words: *Self-efficacy, Assessment, Formative assessment strategies, Students' learning*

Introduction

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to organize and execute the course of action required to produce results under

different conditions using the skills one possesses (Hartell, 2017). Thus, teacher self-efficacy can be described as a teacher's belief in his or her ability to

prepare, coordinate, and carry out activities necessary to meet educational objectives (Sarfo, Amankwah, Sam, & Konin, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Teachers' classroom behavior, actions and practice are closely linked to their self-efficacy belief (Rodríguez et al., 2014). One of the most important actions, behaviors or tasks that teachers perform in the classroom is carrying out different assessment activities (Shahzad & Naureen, 2017; Zee & Koomen, 2016). As a result, a teacher's self-efficacy in classroom assessment refers to their belief in their ability to plan, organize, use, and interpret various assessment tasks (Estaji & Fassihi, 2016; Zee & Koomen, 2016) backed up this claim by pointing out the influence of EFL teachers' personal opinions, beliefs, and abilities on the implementation of various formative assessment strategies in the class.

Even if a large body of evidence indicates that formative assessment can improve students' learning (Klapwijk, 2017; Wiliam, 2013), it can also hinder learning and undermine the self-esteem of students when assessment strategies focus on personal characteristics rather than process (Wiliam, 2011). (Del Gobbo, 2016) also tried to explore the impact of formative

assessment strategies on the motivation and self-efficacy of secondary school mathematics students. In formative assessment there are five strategies (Hartell, 2017; James, 2017; Wiliam, 2011) that can be applied to improve students' learning and self-regulation. These are: 1) clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions; 2) developing classroom talk and questioning; 3) providing feedback that moves learners forward; and 4) activating students as learning resources for one another; and 5) activating students as owners of their own learning.

However, different local research findings conducted in elementary schools, secondary schools and higher education indicated that teachers do not implement formative assessment strategies effectively to improve students' learning for different reasons (Azeb, 2013; Berihu, 2016; Dessie, 2015; Tesfaye, 2017; Yigzaw & Bishaw, 2015). Some of the factors are lack of resources, large class size, shortage of time, inadequate school support, lack of appropriate professional development activities, lack of instructional materials, and students and teachers' negative perception on formative assessment.

The challenges indicated in the abovementioned research findings are not the only factors that affect the implementation of formative assessment in the actual classrooms. As stated by different scholars, teachers' sense of self-efficacy may affect the application of formative assessment strategies in the classroom. For example, it was reported that if professionals do not believe they can do well, their performance is likely to reflect their beliefs, and their belief is one of the most predictors of one's better performance (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Renner & Pratt, 2017; Rodríguez et al., 2014; Sarfo et al., 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Other researchers also mentioned teachers' self-efficacy as a potential predictor variable of student achievement and their motivation to learn (Burić & Kim, 2020; Freeman, 1996; Sarfo et al., 2015; Wossenie, 2014; Zee & Koomen, 2016). To enhance the quality of students' learning and overall growth, it is critical to understand teachers' self-efficacy, which forms and directs their behavior.

Despite the fact that the importance of self-efficacy in EFL assessment is theoretically recognized, empirical evidence on the relationship between EFL

teachers' self-efficacy and their use of formative assessment strategies, especially in Ethiopian EFL contexts, is scarce. The researchers' teaching experiences in secondary schools and their discussions with several school teachers indicated that formative assessment is not implemented as advocated by Ethiopian Education and Training Policy because of teachers' beliefs. Thus, to evaluate the effectiveness of formative assessment strategies in schools, teachers' knowledge and their belief towards implementing formative assessment strategies need to be studied thoroughly. Therefore, the researchers are initiated to find out the relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and use of formative assessment strategies in their classrooms. Based on these, the following research questions were raised. .

- ❖ What is the extent of English language teachers' level of self- efficacy in using formative assessment strategies?
- ❖ What is the extent of English language teachers' level of formative assessment practice?
- ❖ What is the relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their use of formative assessment strategies?

Methodology

Research Design

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between high school EFL teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their use of formative assessment strategies. Thus, mixed method research design, particularly concurrent mixed method design was used to describe the characteristics of the teacher in terms of self-efficacy levels in student engagement, instructional strategies and their use of formative assessment strategies. To investigate the relationship between teachers' sense of efficacy and their use of formative assessment strategies, correlational research design was used.

Participants of the Study

The participants in this study were high school English language teachers (Grades 9-10) who worked in a variety of schools in East Gojjam, West Gojjam, and Awi Zones. In total, 14 secondary schools were chosen from East Gojjam, West Gojjam, and Awi Zones, with five, four, and five secondary schools from each zone, respectively. All schools selected for the study were included for the survey questionnaire. For classroom observation and interview, three high schools (Debre Markos, Damot-2 and Injibara) in the three zones were taken.

There were a total of 160 teachers teaching in the selected 14 secondary schools. For questionnaire, 160 of them were selected using comprehensive sampling technique. However, only 144 of them returned the questionnaire. For conducting interview, a total of seven teachers who were more experienced in the area and willing to provide the research data in the three secondary schools (Debre markos, Damot-2 and Injibara) were taken using purposive sampling technique. Similarly, the same participants who were interviewed were observed in the actual classrooms. Each participant was observed three times each 40 minutes and the necessary data were gathered using observation checklist.

Instruments of the Study

To collect the relevant data in this study questionnaire, interview and classroom observation were used. The questionnaire that was employed to gather data from the teachers has two main parts which were adapted from different sources. These two parts of the questionnaire were: part I- teachers' sense of self-efficacy scale, and part II-teachers' use of formative assessment strategies.

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) was developed by (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) to investigate the self-efficacy

levels of teachers. They proposed two different forms of this scale: the long form with 24 items and the short form with 12 items. Thus, the long form self-efficacy scale with major modification was used in this study. The questionnaire has 39 items. For the items, there is 5-point scale ranging from "cannot do at all (1)" to "can do very highly (5)".

Teachers' use of formative assessment strategies questionnaire was adapted from (Jett & Delgado-Romero, 2009) and from the review of related literature. Totally, there were 39 items with 5-point scale ranging from "never (1)" to "always (5)". Moreover, semi-structured interview and classroom observation were used to get detailed information about teachers'

sense of self-efficacy and use of formative assessment strategies.

Validity and Reliability

It is critical to ensure the reliability and validity of any instrument used in research in order to achieve the stated objectives. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, pilot testing was conducted on a sample of grade 9 and 10 English language teachers, and the reliability was determined to be satisfactory, allowing the next step to be taken. In addition, the questionnaire was handed to a group of specialists to confirm that the items in the two subscales were content valid. The reliability of the two subscales was reported in table 1 below after adjustment.

Table 1 The reliability of formative assessment practice and self- efficacy scales

No.	Factors	Reliability	
		Practice scale	Self-efficacy scale
1	Sharing success criteria	0.694	
2	Questioning	0.781	0.64
3	Provision of Feedback	0.879	0.74
4	students engagement	0.809	0.868
5	modeling quality works	0.798	0.86

Methods of Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through questionnaire from teachers was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics

with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-20 version). Whereas the qualitative data collected through observation was video recorded

and the data gained through interview was audio recorded with informed consent of the teachers. Then, the data was transcribed verbatim. The gathered data was then categorized separately for each instrument and analyzed deductively based on the predetermined themes.

Results of the Study

The purpose of this study was to see how self-efficacy is related with English language teachers' practice of formative assessment strategies. As a result, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed to address the key issues identified. The findings were organized based on the research questions.

Thus, teachers' perceived level of self-efficacy, practice of formative assessment strategies, and the relationship between the two variables were presented in this section.

Teachers' perceived level of self-efficacy

The results of the questionnaire indicated that teachers have a high level of self-efficacy regarding their ability to implement various formative assessment strategies. According to the descriptive statistics in Table 2 below, the observed mean value for each component of the scale is higher than the population mean value, indicating that teachers have a high level of sense of self-efficacy.

Table 2.English Language Teachers' Perceived level of their Self- Efficacy

Participants	Variables	μ	Obs. Mean	Std.	t-value	Sig
Teachers (N = 144)	Efficacy in Sharing success criteria	24	28.22	5.17	9.78	0.00
	Efficacy in Questioning	24	28.24	5.33	9.53	0.00
	Efficacy in Provision of Feedback	18	20.76	4.47	7.39	0.00
	Efficacy in students engagement	27	32.24	4.94	12.75	0.00
	Efficacy in modeling quality works	24	26.99	5.50	6.53	0.00

Note: μ = population mean, expected mean

The calculated one sample t-test also specified that there is a significant difference between the expected mean (μ) and observed mean in teachers' self-efficacy to implement different components of formative assessment in the teaching learning process. Thus, it is

concluded that teachers have a high sense of self-efficacy in themselves to put into practice various assessment strategies for learning.

When asked about their degrees of self-efficacy in dealing with various types of questions for their students, all the seven

teachers stated that they have a high level of efficacy. When they were asked to list the types of questions they asked their students, they cited a few, such as oral and written questions. All interviewed teachers did not mention reflecting questions, stimulating questions, hot seat questions, no hands questions, propping questions, or other forms of questioning tactics.

Furthermore, when asked about their thoughts about their capacity to provide meaningful feedback to their students, the majority of them (five out of seven teachers) stated that they have a high level of self-efficacy in this area. When asked to clarify the quality and style of their feedback, they indicated they frequently gave comments such as "excellent, very good, right and wrong answers". Such type of feedback may not openly address learning gaps and inspire students to take

action in the future. This form of feedback will probably affect students' self-esteem and drive as indicated in different research works. Teachers also demonstrate their level of self-efficacy in using model quality works in the teaching learning process, and the majority (five of seven) of them said they could do it.

Teachers perceived practice of formative assessment strategies

According to different studies, formative assessment strategies that are applied successfully will enhance students' learning. Table 3 reveals that English language teachers in the selected schools have a constructive perception about their use of formative assessment strategies. The observed mean is greater than the expected mean in all strategies of formative assessment which indicates high level of practices

Table 3.English Language Teachers' Perceived Level of Formative Assessment Practice

Participant	Variables	μ	Obs. Mean	Std.	t-value	Sig
Teachers (N = 144)	Practice of Sharing success criteria	24	28.99	4.69	12.06	0.00
	Practice of Questioning	24	28.99	5.1	11.76	0.00
	Practice of providing Feedback	18	21.17	4.25	8.97	0.00
	Practice of students engagement	27	32.69	5.23	13.06	0.00
	Practice of modeling quality works	24	27.06	5.66	6.49	0.00

Note: μ = population mean, expected mean

The one sample t-test result also indicated that there is a significant difference

between the populations mean and observed mean of teachers' perceived

practice of formative assessment strategies in the selected schools. Thus, we can conclude from the survey results that teachers have a high degree of perceived practice in sharing learning objectives and success criteria, questioning, offering constructive feedback, engaging students, and modeling quality work in the teaching learning process. However, the information gathered through interviews and classroom observations differs slightly. This occurred due to a lack of awareness among teachers, as it is a contemporary assertion.

Five of the seven teachers reported in the interview session that they use limited formative assessment strategies. Two of the respondents claimed they use various types of formative assessment procedures on a regular basis. When asked to list the various types of formative assessment procedures that they used in the classroom, they were unable to do so. Only a small number of formative assessment tools are familiar to them. Questioning, group presentations, pair work, class work and homework, and reflection are all used by the majority of them.

When the teachers were asked if they design and share learning objectives and success criteria with their students, six of

seven teachers said that they did not do it directly. For example, one respondent said: *“of course, I do not tell the objectives of the lesson and share the assessment criteria directly rather, I tell them the daily lesson.”* Another respondent stated that she did little to communicate the lesson's objectives and success criteria. She just asked a few thought-provoking questions in order to achieve the stated objectives.

In light of the quality of feedback teachers used in EFL classrooms, most of the teachers reported that they are implementing quality and constructive feedback in the teaching learning process. Accordingly, one respondent said: *“I appreciate students who participate actively and encourage high achievers to support others, I follow up whether each student does his/her homework or class work, and even I make the students to do the tasks again.”*

When asked how many teachers use self and peer assessment tools, the majority of respondents said they use them frequently. Most teachers responded that they encouraged students to assess themselves and their classmates' achievement regarding a particular topic or issue during the lesson. One respondent stated that *“I*

advise my students to check whether or not they have attended the class. I inform them that they may both learn from and teach each other.”

When the respondents were asked when they prepared questions raised during the lesson, most of them prepared at different times: before the lesson, during the lesson and after the lesson. That is, they believe

that they can prepare such questions at any time, and they are effective enough to prepare such questions. In light of this, one respondent stated *“I usually prepare classroom questions before I enter to the class. I write all of the questions at my home or office before I start the daily lesson”*.

Table 4. One-Sample t-test for the Combined Variable

Participants	Combined Variables	μ	Obs. Mean	Std.	t-value	Sig
Teachers	Total self-efficacy level	117	136.44	22.7	10.28	0.00
(N = 144)	Total practice level	117	139.22	22.65	11.77	0.00

Note: μ = population mean, expected mean

On the combined scale of self-efficacy and practice of formative assessment, observed means are 136.44 and 139.22, respectively which indicate significant differences from the population mean. Thus, the quantitative data in the questionnaire indicates that teachers have a high level of perceived self-efficacy on their ability to implement formative assessment strategies. Moreover, it shows teachers have a high level of perception in their practice of formative assessment strategies. The data obtained from the interview and classroom observation indicated that teachers frequently used similar and common assessment methods.

Most of the observed teachers did not clearly share learning objectives and assessment criteria at the beginning of their lesson. On the other hand, some of them clarify where they are going and show what has been done for their students.

Regarding their questioning strategies, half of the observed teachers used stimulating questions and closed-ended questions. Yet, such types of questions do not encourage students to think critically. Similarly, hot seat and reflective questions were never practiced among the seven observed sections (each section was observed three periods i.e, a period with forty minutes).

Teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and use of formative assessment strategies

Teachers’ self-efficacy has a significant role in determining their overall psychological wellbeing and performance in the classroom as well as students’

motivation to learn and sense of self-efficacy. Table 4 below indicates the relationship between English language teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and their use of various formative assessment strategies to improve students’ learning.

Table 5: Linear regressions model summary and analysis of variance

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	58942.319	1	58942.319	580.3	.000
Residual	14422.570	142	101.567		
Total	73364.889	143			

$R^2=.896$, Adjusted $R^2=.802$

Note: *df* = Degree of freedom; *F* = *F*-test

Multiple regression was used to assess the extent of variance in the practice of formative assessment as explained by teachers’ self-efficacy. The result of the linear regression or the R square in the above table indicates that 89.6 percent of the variance in teachers’ practice of formative assessment is attributed to the variance of the independent variable that is

teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. Similarly, *F*-test was employed to determine whether the model is statistically significant or not. The result showed that the correlation between the dependent variable (total practice sub-scale) and the independent variable was statistically significant at $F(1,142) = 580.327, p = 0.000$.

Table 6. Predictor variable in the model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	17.207	5.134	3.352	.001
Self-efficacy	.894	.037	24.090	.000

To find out how well the variable contributes to the regression model, t-test was employed. The Beta value in the t-test table indicates the contribution of variable

to the model, removing the overlapping effect of all other variables statistically. From the above table, the result showed that teachers’ self-efficacy makes a

significant contribution to explain the dependent variable. Controlling the effect of other variable/s, self-efficacy explained 89.4% ($B=.894$) of the variance in the dependent variable.

Discussions

Teachers' perceived level of self-efficacy

Nowadays, English language education has begun to recognize the importance of exploring the cognitive and affective dimensions of how language teachers' thoughts, judgments, and decisions influence the nature of language assessment. According to different research evidences, teachers' self-efficacy has been shown to be a significant factor in the effectiveness of their teaching practices, as it is a positive motivator that determines how they behave in the classroom and how much effort they put in (Klassen and Tze, 2014 as cited in (Barni, Danioni, & Benevene, 2019)). The result of this study indicates that teachers have a high level of self-efficacy in using different formative assessment strategies. Sarfoet and his colleagues conducted a study that supports this finding [3]. According to the researchers, teachers have a high degree of teaching efficacy in devising instructional strategies, managing the classroom, and engaging students.

Teachers' high self-efficacy belief suggested that they have a firm belief that they have ample knowledge and skills in using various formative assessment strategies, such as sharing learning objectives and success criteria, questioning, providing constructive feedback, involving students in self and peer assessment, and modeling quality work. This study also shows that teachers have high level of self-efficacy in using formative assessment. Thus, the finding of the above researchers on the level of teachers' sense of efficacy is almost consistent with the findings of this study.

Teachers' perceived use of formative assessment strategies

Teachers' assessment literacy affects their assessment views and practices. According to (Djoub, 2017) teachers' language assessment literacy is an important aspect of teachers' professional knowledge (Coombe, Troudi, & Al-Hamly, 2012). Being literate in assessment means "having the capacity to ask and answer critical questions about the purpose for assessment, about the fitness of the tool being used, about testing conditions, and about what is going to happen on the basis of the results" (Inbar-Lourie, 2008, cited in (Watanabe, 2011)). Accordingly,

assessment literacy provides teachers with the knowledge and necessary tools to help them understand what they are assessing, how they need to assess it according to specific purposes, and what decisions they need to make in order to assess their learners effectively and maximize learning. The findings of this study show that teachers have a high degree of perception when it comes to applying various formative assessment procedures. The qualitative research, on the other hand, suggests that there is a misunderstanding of the various forms of formative assessment that can be used to increase student learning. They did not use various formative assessment strategies. They obviously see formative assessment as a collection of different assessment techniques. This is might be due to a lack of comprehensive teacher training on the new assertion of assessment in line with learning theories. This is similar to the research conducted by (Azeb, 2013; Berihu, 2016; Desalegn, Berhan, & Berhan, 2014; Dessie, 2015; Tesfaye, 2017; Yigzaw & Bishaw, 2015). Many instructors, according to (Awofala & Babajide, 2013), misused formative assessment methods, resulting in more

continuous testing rather than continuous assessment.

Teachers' self-efficacy and formative assessment practice

The result of this study indicated that English teachers' self-efficacy has a positive relationship with their practice of formative assessment. (Bümen, 2009) Investigated the relationship between secondary school teachers' self-efficacy and their assessment and evaluation practices in science education. The results indicated that teacher self-efficacy towards assessment and evaluation practices were positively correlated with frequency of using traditional and alternative assessment tools. Another study was conducted to investigate the relationship between self-assessment and self-efficacy of pre-service science teachers in science teaching. The Pearson correlation analysis suggested that there was no significant relationship between self-assessment and self-efficacy (Kahraman, 2014). That is, this study is almost similar to the findings of [43] but inconsistent with the findings of [44].

Consistent with the current findings, a study conducted by Rohaan et al. (2012) as cited in (Hartell, 2017) also examines the potential relationships between subject

matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and self-efficacy of primary teachers in the Netherlands. They show that the growth of subject-content awareness and pedagogical content knowledge among teachers will enhance the instructional self-efficacy of teachers, and their increased instructional self-efficacy will have a positive effect on their instructional practices.

Conclusions

The results show that English language teachers used different types of formative assessment strategies in English classrooms, and their self-efficacy to use different types of formative assessment strategies is high for most teachers and medium for some teachers. In addition, the finding indicates that there is a positive relationship between English language teachers' self-efficacy and their use of formative assessment strategies.

The observation and interview result confirmed that there is misunderstanding about different types of formative assessment strategies. When asked to name the various forms of formative assessment strategies, they were unable to do so and did not properly implement them. The majority of teachers did not clearly share learning objectives and

success criteria, build a conversation in the classroom with different questioning methods, offer constructive feedback that clearly suggests future actions, actively engage students in self- and peer-assessment against the criteria, and demonstrate model quality work. Most teachers are not fortunate enough to have their students at the center of any assessment strategy designed to help them improve their learning. In general, this means that English language teachers think of themselves as using a variety of formative assessment procedures and that they believe they can use a variety of formative assessment strategies. What they believe and practice, however, is somewhat different.

Recommendation

The results of this study revealed that English language teachers misinterpret and incorrectly use various formative assessment strategies that are effective in improving student learning. As a result, concerned bodies such as education office and ministry of education should prepare rigorous practical training and guidance for EFL teachers related to purpose and strategies of formative assessment in order to enhance students' learning; as a result, add quality to the classroom. Secondary

school teacher educators in field shall revisit their curriculum and incorporate purpose and use of formative assessment strategies component within it.

Limitations

Even though this study revealed significant findings about teachers' sense of self-efficacy and use of formative assessment strategies that can be used as feedback for interventions and literature in the field, it is limited to the three Zones of the region and the data sources are only English language teachers from the selected Secondary Schools. Other subjects, such as students, principals and different subject teachers were not included. As a result, more research is required in the area.

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