



Revisiting Teacher-based Assessment to Enhance EFL Teachers' Assessment Literacy in South Korea

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The study aimed to extend the existing discussion on assessment literacy by focusing on English teachers' ability to implement it in South Korea where a new assessment policy was implemented as part of educational reform. Scholars have pointed out a lack of teachers' assessment knowledge and gaps in their ability to conduct the appropriate assessment for effective instruction. Thus, the scope of teacher assessment literacy needs to include teachers' ability to implement it appropriately in given contexts. Grounding our study in the notion of teacher-based assessment as a guiding framework and using a mixed-methods design, we examined how Korean teachers perceived performance assessment emphasized in the reform and how they put it into practice. One hundred and twenty-seven teachers participated in survey questionnaires and 15 teachers were interviewed as a follow-up. The findings of the study showed that there were discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions of assessment and their assessment practice and that the teachers showed diverse reactions toward teacher-based assessment from being capable to feeling powerless depending on their assessment knowledge and contextual constraints. The study suggests the importance of teachers' agency in assessment literacy as a prerequisite for teacher-based assessment.

Keywords: teacher-based assessment, teacher-made assessment, assessment literacy, performance assessment, EFL settings, mixed methods, assessment reform in Korea

Introduction

Assessment literacy has been defined as an understanding of the principles of good assessment (DeLuca, LaPointe-McEwan, & Luhanga, 2016; Popham, 2004; Stiggins, 2002), which is central to achieving and maintaining the overall qualities associated with teaching and learning. Contrary to the traditional assessment, *assessment of learning* (AoL) where teachers play often passive roles, *assessment for learning* (AfL) expects teachers to actively connect their assessment practices with instruction. As appropriate assessment is essential to improve students' learning and teachers' instruction, Popham

(2009) claimed that teachers' lack of assessment knowledge could affect the quality of education, and that teacher assessment literacy is critical to the success of teaching. To extend the existing discussion on assessment literacy in teacher education, the scope of teacher assessment literacy needs to focus not only on teachers' knowledge of assessment but also on their ability to implement it appropriately in given contexts (Herman, Osmundson, Dai, Ringstaff, & Timms, 2015; Xu & Brown, 2016).

Scholars have pointed out a lack of teachers who possess adequate knowledge about assessment (e.g., Brown, 2019; Brown & Bailey, 2008; Crusan, Plakans, & Gebril, 2016; Jan-nesar, Khodabakhshzadeh, & Motallebzadeh, 2020; Popham, 2009; Scarino, 2013; Stiggins, 1999, 2002; Taylor, 2013; Weigle, 2007; White, 2009). These scholars note gaps not only in teachers' knowledge about assessment but also in their ability to conduct the appropriate assessment in their classrooms to provide effective instruction. However, any gap or divergence in teachers' assessment practices is not always evidence of teachers' lack of knowledge as assessment practices are influenced by the given context (see Xu & Brown, 2016). The way teachers put their knowledge into practice is highly contextual and affected by their experiences (e.g., Freeman & Johnson, 1998) and their values and beliefs (Pajares, 1992). In this light, there is a need for understanding teachers' assessment practices from a situative perspective which accounts for educational contexts where teachers are placed.

In language teaching, an emphasis on communicative language teaching (CLT) calls for authentic and performance-based assessment which measures students' communicative competence. It rejects traditional standardized written tests which mostly measure students' linguistic knowledge. Especially in countries where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), the implementation of authentic assessment is critical because of its alignment with CLT. Researchers (Jeon, 2009; Kim, 2014) argue that teachers' practice of CLT is constrained by accountability pressures from the traditional and standardized written format of high stakes college entrance exams in EFL settings, such as in China and Korea. Thus, the criticism of the washback effect of these traditional tests has led to enacting assessment reform that emphasizes understanding students' learning process and solving the concern of the validity of language assessment.

Considering the importance of teachers' role in conducting and practicing assessment, it is necessary to investigate the interplay among teachers' beliefs about language assessment, assessment practices, and their contexts. Identifying any gaps between beliefs and practices will help researchers and educators understand the dynamics of assessment practice and the importance of assessment literacy, which will enable them to provide teachers with viable and practical suggestions. In this sense, we ground our study in teacher-based assessment (Davison & Leung, 2009) as a guiding framework and examine how teachers perceived language assessment and how they put assessment into practice in their teaching contexts.

Literature Review

In this section, we define teacher assessment literacy and teacher-based assessment and describe the South Korean context where a new assessment policy is implemented as part of educational reform. The relevant literature which addresses questions on English teachers' overall perceptions of assessment, the impact of school levels, and any gap between perceptions and practices is presented in this section.

Teacher Assessment Literacy

Assessment literacy emphasizes the role of teachers in assessing student learning and the connection between instruction and assessment in the classroom. It involves generating effective instructions for better student learning, including individualized and level-appropriate learning activities and meaningful feedback. As Popham (2009) and Stiggins (2002) stated, assessment literate teachers could analyze the assessment results and apply them to improve classroom instructions. White (2009) further maintained that assessment-literate teachers understood the purpose and function of assessment and were skillful in

executing appropriate assessments. However, many teachers felt unprepared to conduct a sound assessment (e.g., Lee, 2007; Mertler, 2009; Park, Kim, & Kwon, 2013; Zhu, 2004). Studies on teachers' conceptions of assessment have suggested that teachers have inconsistent understandings of assessment purposes (Barnes, Fives, & Dacey, 2017; Brown, Lake, & Matters, 2011). Brown, et al. (2011) compared primary and secondary teachers in Australia and discovered different concepts of assessment in use regarding instructional improvement and student accountability. The teachers' different views on assessment are due to their' lack of knowledge and skills of assessment (e.g., Brookhart, 2011; Popham, 2009) and/or contextual constraints (e.g., Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004; Troudi, Coombe, & Al-Hamly, 2009). The existing studies addressed the conceptions and practices of assessment literacy more than an in-depth understanding of the causes of the inconsistencies.

Studies on EFL teachers' assessment practices also revealed inconsistencies in their assessment practices and argued for the dynamics in assessment practice (e.g., Davison, 2004; Kim & Yun, 2015; Lee, 2008; Park, Kim, & Kwon, 2013; Troudi, Coombe, & Al-Hamly, 2009; Xu & Liu, 2009). These EFL teachers' gaps in assessment practices were often interpreted as teachers' ill-preparedness and contextual constraints. While teachers' ill-preparedness included so-called internal factors such as individual teachers' limited assessment knowledge and the lack of confidence in assessment, external constraints such as the lack of training on assessment, large class sizes, and limited support from districts and schools also came into play. Lee (2008) reported that there were prevailing misunderstandings about performance assessments among teachers in Korea and that they were concerned about conducting speaking and writing assessments in terms of maintaining accountability and reliability. Park et al. (2013) also reported that the interviews with Korean teachers revealed that they felt unprepared for assessing students' speaking and writing skills.

Other studies addressed teachers' lack of assessment literacy, especially regarding performance assessments (see Kim & Yun, 2015; Park et al. 2013). In Kim & Yun's (2015) study, assessment literate teachers showed different preferences in using assessment from those who did not. The existing studies about EFL settings view assessment literacy as a fixed construct and offer a space for teacher agency to understand teachers' practices and the dynamics of teaching contexts.

Drawing on a situative perspective in teacher learning (Borko, 2004), we argue that teacher assessment literacy needs to focus on teaching contexts where teachers often face challenges. Contextual factors such as high-stakes exams and grade levels affected teachers' assessment practices greatly. Davison's (2004) comparison study of secondary schools in Hong Kong and Australian settings demonstrated how different educational and cultural contexts affected teachers' attitudes towards assessments and their practices. Butler's (2009b) study revealed different practices of teacher-based assessment between elementary and secondary schools in Korea and confirmed the influence of contextual factors on teachers' assessment practices. Despite several studies acknowledging the influence of contextual factors on teacher assessment practices, there is a limited understanding of how teacher knowledge and their perceptions of assessment interplay with teaching contexts in assessment practices.

Teacher-based Assessment

Teacher-based assessment, unlike the standardized tests and teacher-made tests, stresses teachers' active involvement in creating and conducting assessment and indicates that teachers have sufficient knowledge about assessment (Davison, 2004; Davison & Leung, 2009). Teacher-based assessment is the term that appropriately reflects the assessment reform in Korea (Butler, 2009a; Kim & Yun, 2015).

While standardized tests are mostly done as summative and written tests, teacher-based assessment involves formative and performance assessments. Teachers are expected to plan and implement their own assessments in a way to monitor students' progress in their classrooms (David & Leung, 2009). One criticism of the traditional standardized tests is their washback effect on students' learning and teachers' instructional practices. Pressure from the high-stakes standardized tests turns classrooms into a place for teaching to the test and pushes teachers to focus more on the assessment itself than on student learning.

Those tests weaken teachers' authority and agency not only in assessing students' performance but also in monitoring the learning process. For the meaningful and accurate assessment, it is critical for teachers to have both assessment knowledge and power in decision-making from planning, implementing, and interpreting assessment. Teachers' decision-making power in assessment also includes determining the purpose of assessment and selecting appropriate methods based on students' levels and abilities. These aspects comply with what the teacher-based assessment approach promotes (Davison, 2004; Davison & Leung, 2009).

Teachers play multiple roles in students' learning, as a facilitator, monitor, and assessor. Some scholars view that teachers' overlapping roles result in messy decisions (Airasian & Jones, 1993), success biases (Cizek, Fitzgerald, & Rachor, 1996), or idiosyncratic practices (Millan & Nash, 2000). It is expected that teachers could face dilemmas and challenges in assessing students' work, especially if it has high-stakes. Divergence in ways of grading students' performance between teachers and assessment specialists is also anticipated as teachers tend to be influenced by various factors such as students' motivation, effort, improvement, and participation (Cheng & Sun, 2015; McMillan, 2001). Thus, teachers' assessment practices appear to be complicated and somewhat not based on objectivity. Davison (2004) argued that creating a culture and communities which respected and supported teachers' decisions on assessment was important to establish sound teacher-based assessment.

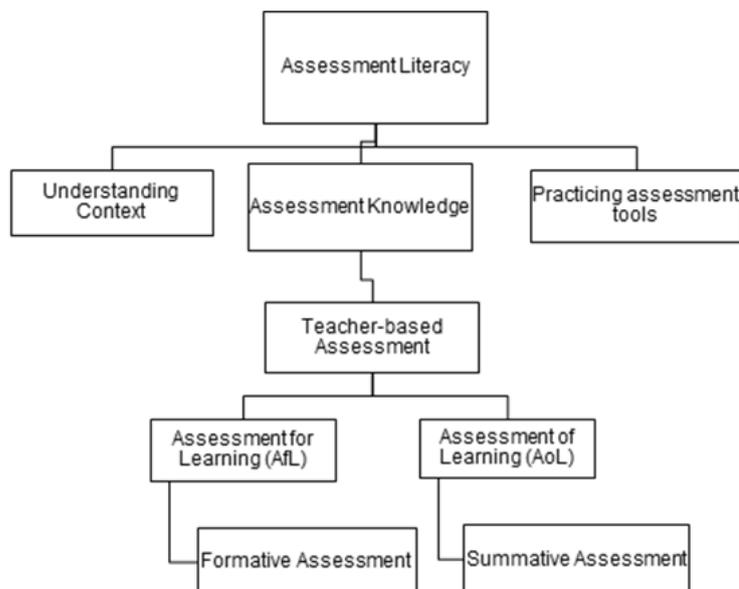


Figure 1. Conceptual map of assessment literacy.

Davison and Leung (2009) have well defined teacher-based assessment as teacher-developed and instruction-related assessments which embrace features of authentic, performance, and formative assessment in language education. Compared to the high stakes standardized tests which are usually large scale summative assessments, teacher-based assessment is highly local, context-dependent, and formative in nature (e.g., Butler, 2009a, 2009b; Davison, 2004; McNamara, 2001). Teacher-based assessment is responsive to a current shift in language assessment from AoL to AfL and from standardized written tests to authentic performance assessments. As an example of teacher-based assessment, performance assessment offers valid and authentic tools measuring students' communication skills and reflecting the goals of the CLT approach (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Teachers who implement CLT methods in their classrooms find performance assessment relevant and valid to assess their students' learning. By aligning learning objectives with assessment purposes, they can scaffold students' classwork to meet the criteria of formative performance assessment. Understanding the purposes and the role of teacher-based assessment is a prerequisite for teachers to conduct a meaningful and valid assessment. This study used the teacher-

based assessment approach (Davison & Leung, 2009) to understand and analyze teachers' perceptions of assessment and their reflection on assessment practices.

Educational Reform and Performance Assessment in Korea

CLT has had a significant impact on teaching methods and language assessment in South Korea starting in 1992. The 7th Education reform in 1997 has adopted performance assessments to reduce the washback effect of the standardized written exams and reinforce the implementation of CLT. However, this new assessment has not been executed in classrooms as expected for a variety of reasons including teachers' limited assessment knowledge and lack of school support (e.g., Kim & Yun, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2004). The assessment reform requires teachers to monitor students' progress systematically as well as to evaluate the outcomes of their learning. Further, the reform expects teachers to implement various types of performance assessments including teacher observations, projects, self-evaluations, peer-evaluations, and essay writings to compensate for shortcomings of the existing standardized exams. Despite the aim of the reform to closely connect assessments with CLT, critics argue that teachers' assessment practices have not been modified accordingly (Kim & Yun, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2004; Li, 2012).

When performance assessments were newly implemented in Korea, there were concerns about gaps between the realities of EFL settings and ideal settings for performance assessments. The EFL realities include large class sizes, students' various levels of language proficiencies, and grammar-focused instruction. In implementing performance assessments, school teachers, especially in secondary levels, have voiced their concerns about the top-down reform without detailed guidelines and instructional support which are appropriate for local contexts (Lee, 2008; Oh, 2002; Park et al., 2013). Thus, the reform effort did not result in an authentic and formative nature of performance assessment.

Compared to elementary, secondary schools which focus on the preparation of the standardized college-entrance exams are more restricted in terms of curriculum modifications. As shown in Chinese settings (e.g., Cheng & Qi, 2006; Cheng & Sun, 2015), secondary school teachers' instructions in Korea are greatly influenced by the high-stakes tests. For instance, speaking and writing skills which are essential to CLT are not taught and assessed enough in Korean secondary schools due to the washback effect of the high-stakes exams (Park et al., 2013). Not only the EFL contextual constraints but also the high-stakes written exams influence secondary school teachers' instruction and assessment practices. Butler (2009b) argued that the exam-oriented culture in Korean secondary schools led them to practicing more AoL than AfL.

For a successful implementation of the assessment reform, there is a need for an in-depth understanding of whether teachers' understanding of teacher-based assessment is related to their assessment practice, how teachers' assessment literacy plays out in their teaching contexts and how they enact agency in their assessment practices.

We developed the following three research questions to guide this study:

1. What are Korean English teachers' overall perceptions of assessment in their classrooms?
2. How important do Korean English teachers perceive teacher-based assessment to be in their classrooms? Do teachers' perceptions of teacher-based assessment differ by school levels?
3. How well do Korean English teachers' reported practices of assessments reflect their perceptions of teacher-based assessment? Do teachers' preferences in assessment types differ by school levels?
4. In what ways do Korean English teachers cope with their perceptions about teacher-based assessment and their preferred assessment in their classrooms?

Research Design

Methods

The current study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014). We conducted the study in two stages: First, we conducted a survey questionnaire with 127 teachers, and second, among the participants who took the survey, we randomly selected and interviewed 15 teachers. The follow-up interviews with the survey participants were done for an in-depth understanding of teachers' use of assessment. Listening to teachers' voices through interviews provided us with a backdrop behind their responses to the previous assessment survey and their assessment practices.

Participants

There were 127 in-service English language teachers in Seoul and Kyung-sang provinces who participated in the survey study. There were 104 females, 19 males, and four unidentified. In school levels, 60 teachers were from elementary schools (from 1st grade to 6th grade) and 67 teachers were from secondary schools (from 7th grade to 12th grade). We included teachers from multiple areas (Seoul, Incheon, Daegu, and Kyung-sang) to minimize any regional bias. The participants were recruited from teacher workshops and through email invitations to teacher-networks in Seoul and Kyung-sang provinces. Table 1 displays the detailed information of the participants.

TABLE 1
Background Information of Participants

	Elementary school teachers (60)	Secondary school teachers (67)
Gender	Male (6); Female (50); not-mentioned (4)	Male (13); Female (54)
Age	20s (7); 30s (25); 40s (17); 50s (4); 60s (0); not-mentioned (7)	20s (16); 30s (24); 40s (18); 50s (7); 60s (0); not-mentioned (2)
Education	B.A. (30); M.A. (19); Ph. D (1); not-mentioned (10)	B.A. (31); M.A. (31); Ph. D (2); not-mentioned (3)
Number of participating in professional training	None (13); 1-2 times (24); 3-10 times (8); more than 10 times (13); not-mentioned (2)	None (4); 1-2 times (35); 3-10 times (20); more than 10 times (7); not-mentioned (1)
Years of teaching	None (1); 1-3 years (5); 4-10 years (16); more than 10 years (36); not-mentioned (2)	None (0); 1-3 years (13); 4-10 years (26); more than 10 years (28); not-mentioned (0)

Note. The numbers in parenthesis refer to the numbers of responses.

One-to-one interviews were conducted to obtain an in-depth understanding of the teachers' perceptions. We selected randomly fifteen teachers (five elementary and ten secondary teachers) from those who took the written surveys and agreed to participate in interviews.

Data Collection

A questionnaire of 13 multiple choice items and 11 open-ended items was used to understand teachers' knowledge and perception of English assessment and their assessment use. The survey consisted of two questions for English education, six questions for English assessment, eight questions for teacher-based assessment¹, four questions for assessment practices and policies of schools, four questions for suggestions for English education, and five questions for biographical information. Open-ended question items following multiple-choice questions were added to obtain reasons and explanations behind

¹ The term and concept of teacher-based assessment are widely used in South Korea as part of the educational reform in Korea.

responders' selections. In this way, we tried to identify their understanding of teacher-based assessment and obtain in-depth information about their responses. Before conducting the survey, the survey questionnaires were reviewed by five Korean English teachers and revised based on their feedback to avoid any misunderstanding of questions and unclear expressions in the survey.

After collecting the survey responses, interviews with the participants were conducted. The interview questions were semi-structured based on the survey questionnaires and focused on obtaining detailed information of assessment practices in school settings. Each participant was interviewed once for 40 minutes.

Data Analysis

The survey responses from the participants were compiled and saved by using the Microsoft Excel program and categorized into two groups by the school levels: one from elementary teachers and the other from secondary teachers. To test the group differences, a series of independent t-tests using PASW Statistics 18 were conducted on the questions asking teachers' perceptions on assessment types. Open-ended responses from the surveys were collected and saved in the Excel program. The compiled responses were grouped into categories and then compared with interview data.

As for the qualitative data, the transcribed interview data were analyzed inductively to find common and contrasting themes among the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). All assessment relevant words were identified and coded to categorize them. Then, the elementary and the secondary groups were compared to discover any differences in the teachers' perceptions of assessments and their practices. In analyzing the qualitative data, we applied Clandinin and Connelly's (1996) concept of 'sacred' and 'secret' stories to capture multi-layered educational and social contexts affecting teachers' assessment in schools. 'Sacred' stories refer to teachers' knowledge constructs that are shaped by the official discourses such as curriculum, educational policies, and theoretical knowledge learned in teacher education programs. 'Secret' stories refer to teachers' personal and practical knowledge of teaching gained through their lived experiences. The data from the fifteen interviewees were marked in alphabetical order to protect their identity: Secondary school teachers being marked from Teacher A to J and elementary school teachers from K to O.

We intended to understand a comprehensive picture of teachers' perceptions from elementary through secondary schools through "voices" of teachers (Wertsch, 2009) that reflected their thoughts and practices in their contexts. Comparing teachers' sacred voices with their secret voices would reveal discrepancies that might exist between their perceptions of assessment and practices. Further, understanding teachers' voices would provide an insight into how teachers coped with the external and internal constraints on their assessment practices.

Findings and Discussions

Research Question 1: What are Korean English teachers' overall perceptions of assessment in their classrooms?

We asked the teachers about the following two items: 1) the purpose of assessment, and 2) the importance of performance and formative assessment. First, for the purpose of assessment, both elementary and secondary school teachers considered 'to check how well students have understood' (option 2) to be most important for English assessment (39 % on average). While the two groups viewed the purposes of assessment in a similar pattern, they showed a subtle difference (See Figure 2 which displays the proportions of the choices on the purpose of English assessment). The elementary teachers thought that 'to make a class better' (option 1) was more important than 'to confirm what students have learned.' (option 6). But the opposite was observed with the secondary teachers. The

discrepancy indicates that the secondary teachers valued summative oriented assessments more while the elementary teachers had an inclination for formative ones.

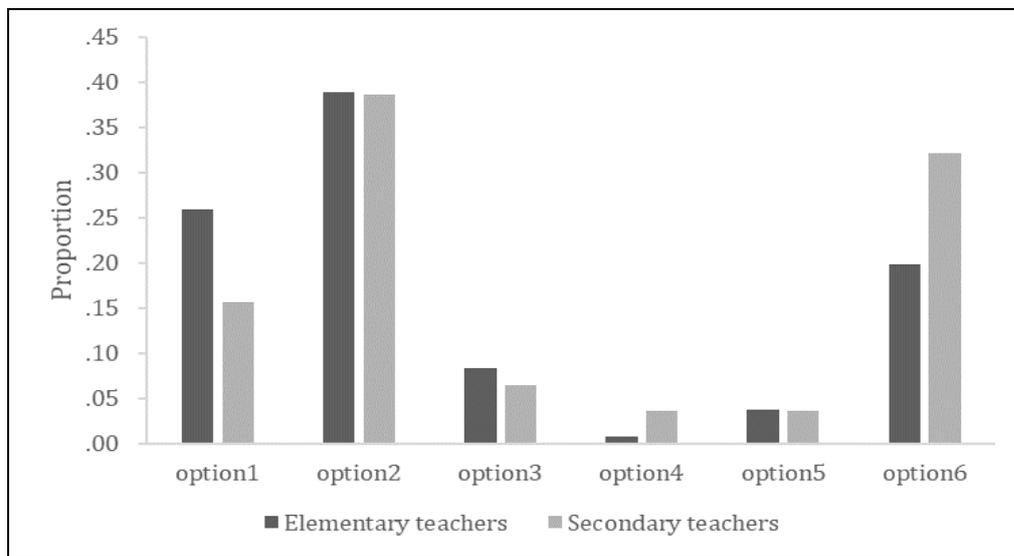


Figure 2. The proportions of each option that represents the purpose of English assessment (option 1 referring to *to make a class better*; option 2 *to check how well students have understood*; option 3 *to check the effectiveness of curriculum*; option 4 *to compare students' performance with other students' performance*; option 5 *to grasp students' excellence and weakness in English learning*; option 6 *to confirm what students have learned*).

Second, to examine teachers' perception of performance and formative assessment, we asked the teachers to rate the importance of the assessments from not important to very important. For analysis, we assigned 1 to 4 points to their responses; that is, 1 point for 'unimportant,' 2 points for 'somewhat important,' 3 points for 'important,' and 4 points for 'very important.' The teachers rated performance assessment to be relatively important ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .89$) with trending differences ($t(106) = 1.77$, $p = .08$) between the elementary teachers ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .88$) and the secondary teachers ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .90$). As indicated in Figure 2, the elementary teachers rated the importance of performance assessment more highly than the secondary teachers did. Regarding the importance of formative assessments, both the elementary teachers' ratings ($M = 2.85$, $SD = .79$) and the secondary teachers' ratings ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .83$), $t(106) = -.20$, $p = .84$) showed no differences.

Research Question 2: How important do Korean English teachers perceive teacher-based assessment to be in their classrooms? Are there any differences in the teachers' perceptions depending on school levels?

About half of the responses marked that teacher-based assessment was important to them: 56% from the elementary school teachers and 41% from the secondary school teachers. See Table 2 which displays the frequency distribution of teachers' responses to the question of "How important do you think teacher-based assessment is?"

TABLE 2

The Frequency Distribution of Teachers' Responses to the Importance of Teacher-based Assessment (Proportions in Parenthesis)

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Elementary school	1 (.02)	18 (.41)	20 (.45)	5 (.11)
Secondary school	2 (.03)	36 (.56)	17 (.27)	9 (.14)

To quantify the degree of the teachers' perception of the importance of teacher-based assessment, we converted each choice to a numeric value: 1 for the choice of 'unimportant,' 2 for the choice of 'somewhat important,' 3 for the choice of 'important,' and 4 for 'very important.' The average of converted scores from the elementary teachers ($M = 2.66$, $SD = .71$) was not different from those of the secondary teachers ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .79$). When all converted values were submitted into an independent t-test with a fixed factor of the school level, the results reported that teachers did not differ in their perceptions on teacher-based assessment ($t(108) = .77$, $p > .1$). In converging the scores corresponding to 'important' with those corresponding to 'very important,' we also found no differences in teachers' perceptions on teacher-based assessment between the elementary teachers and the secondary teachers ($t(50) = -1.35$, $p > .1$).

We asked both groups about how they would use the data obtained from teacher-based assessment in their classrooms. They were allowed to choose multiple options for this question. About half of the teachers marked 'to confirm students' understanding' as their preferred use of teacher-based assessment (See Table 3). The patterns of their responses did not differ by the school level. Both groups responded that they understood the main purpose of teacher-based assessment as monitoring students' learning.

TABLE 3

The Frequency Distribution of Teachers' Preferred Use of Results from Teacher-based Assessment

	To provide feedback to students	To confirm students' understanding	To improve instruction	To plan supplementary classes	Do not use the results
Elementary school	11 (.19)	31 (.53)	11 (.19)	5 (.09)	0 (0)
Secondary school	17 (.20)	48 (.56)	13 (.15)	6 (.07)	2 (.02)
Total	28 (.19)	79 (.55)	24 (.17)	11 (.08)	2 (.01)

Note. Proportions are in parentheses.

The one-to-one interviews with the teachers yielded detailed information about the survey data. Eleven out of 15 teachers in both groups acknowledged the value of teacher-based assessment, supporting the findings from the survey questionnaire. They mentioned that teacher-based assessment was better for checking students' learning (Secondary teacher B & F) and it allowed them to practice teaching and conduct assessment in a way that fitted their students (Secondary teacher I & Elementary teacher K, L & M). Elementary teacher L and M used teacher-based assessment as part of their teaching such as observing students during the class and planning a follow-up lesson based on students' comprehension. In the case of Elementary Teacher M, she gave extra review lessons to students who were falling behind.

Both the survey and the interview data revealed that the teachers were positive about teacher-based assessment. However, there was some hesitation to use teacher-based assessment as a major assessment approach. For example, Secondary teacher G said that although she was aware of its importance, she did not implement teacher-based assessment due to the pressure to prepare for the high-stakes test. We discussed the discrepancies between teachers' perceptions of teacher-based assessment and their use of it further to understand the reasons behind their hesitation in the next research question.

Research Question 3: How well do teachers' preference of assessment practices reflect their perceptions of teacher-based assessment? Do teachers' preferences in assessment types differ by school levels?

We examined how teachers' preference of assessment practices would reflect their perceptions of teacher-based assessment. We hypothesized that if teachers' perceptions of teacher-based assessment were well reflected in their reported assessment practices, the assessment types or tools that teachers preferred using in their classroom would be consistent with teacher-based assessment. The teachers who value teacher-based assessment would prefer teacher observations or projects that focus on communicative skills over traditional paper and pencil tests and exams.

Figure 3 below displays teachers' responses to which assessment types they prefer in their classrooms. The survey data revealed that the degree of how much teachers preferred using teacher-based assessment types was only 34%: teacher's observation (12%), project (6%), interview (5%), self-evaluation (5%), peer-evaluation (3%), group discussion (2%), and writing an essay (0%). In contrast, the degree of how much teachers preferred using assessment types less consistent to teacher-based assessment was 66%: oral response (15%)², exam (15%), quiz (13%), assignment (10%), practice (7%), and dictation (6%). As a result, the degree of teachers' preference for using assessment types less consistent with a teacher-based assessment approach was much higher than that of teachers' practice in using assessment types consistent with teacher-based assessment (i.e., 66% vs. 34%). This overall difference indicated that teachers' perception and their preference for the practice of a teacher-based assessment were fairly discrepant.

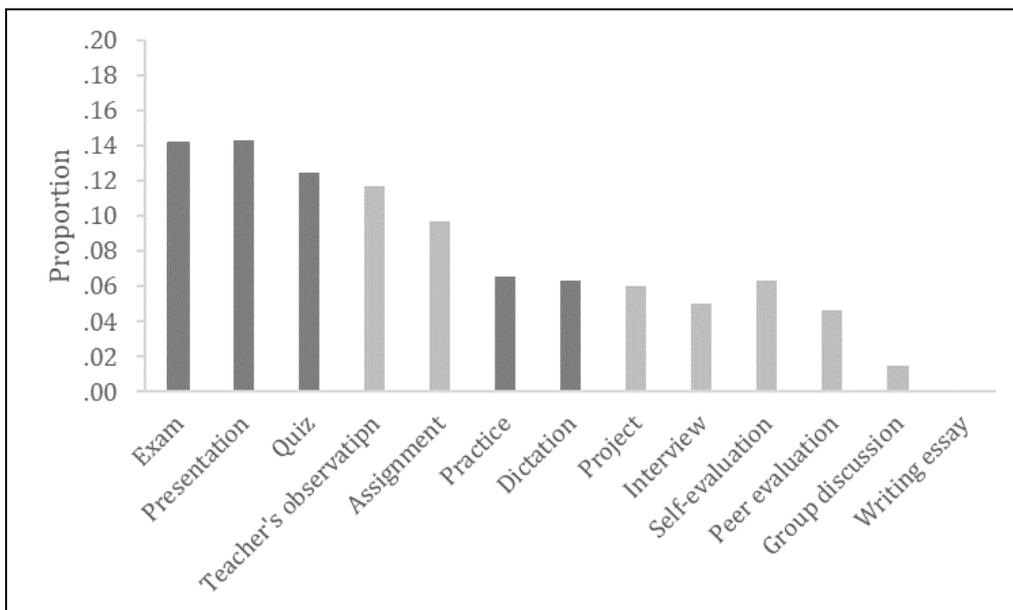


Figure 3. Assessment types that English teachers use in their classrooms: Light gray bars refer to the types consistent with teacher-based assessment and dark gray bars refer to the types inconsistent with teacher-based one.

To further examine the discrepancy across school levels, we divided teachers' preferred assessment types into three groups: 1) Type 1 (types that elementary and secondary teachers equally favor or disfavor to use), 2) Type 2 (types that elementary teachers favor using more), and 3) Type 3 (types that secondary teachers favor using more). We presented the analysis in Figure 4. First, in Type 1, exams and oral responses were preferred the most, but peer evaluations and group discussions were less preferred in both school levels. Interestingly, no teacher selected 'writing an essay' to assess students' English abilities.

² Oral response is teacher-initiated student-response, which is a typical whole-class assessment tool in Korea.

Second, the types listed in Type 2, consistent with teacher-based assessment, were preferred by the elementary teachers. Third, the lists in Type 3, less consistent with teacher-based assessment, were preferred by the secondary teachers. Due to the contextual constraints, we expected that performance assessment types were less likely to be favored in secondary classrooms than in elementary classrooms and the relationship between teachers' perceptions and their reported practices of teacher-based assessment would be less consistent among secondary teachers than among elementary teachers. The asymmetric patterns shown in Figure 4 supported our hypothesis that the degree of discrepancy between the teachers' perceptions of teacher-based assessment and their preferred practices was higher in the secondary group than in the elementary one.

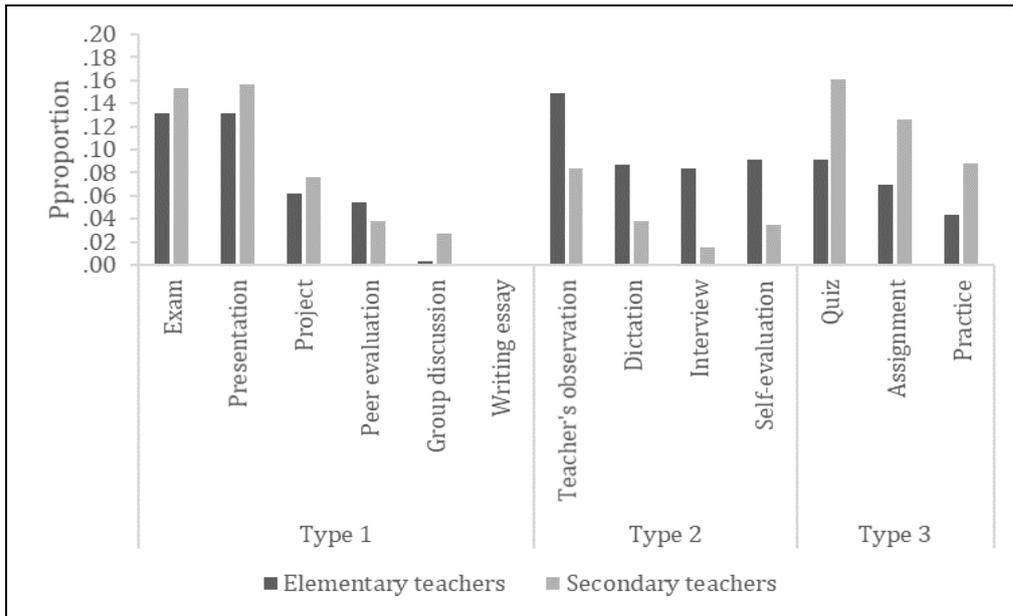


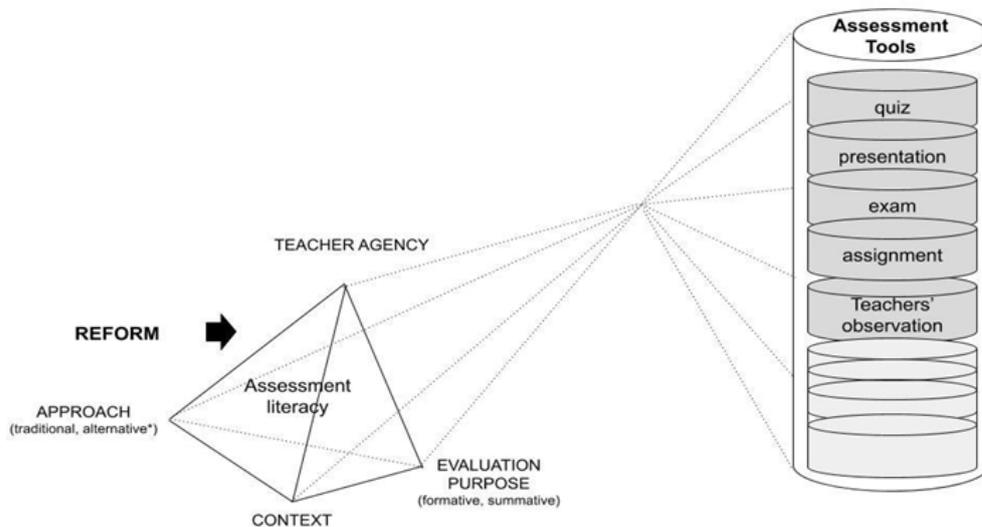
Figure 4. Proportions of teachers' preferred assessment types by school level.

The data from the follow-up interviews revealed that the teachers preferred standardized exams because the exams provided clear and objectifiable scores of students' understanding and knowledge. Their preference for standardized tests indicated disparity from their responses to the survey questions about the value of teacher-based assessment (see Table 2 & 3). Despite the awareness of teacher-based assessment and the assessment reform, the teachers' use of group discussions, projects, peer evaluations, and essay writings was limited.

The interviews also confirmed the difference between the two groups in using formative assessments. The elementary teachers were more familiar with these assessment tools than secondary teachers were. For example, Elementary teacher L and M said that they observed students' learning progress and modified their lessons accordingly. They also used comprehension-check questions as part of formative assessment. Teacher M said, "Final-term exams might not be necessary if the purpose of the assessment was to improve students' learning [since it is part of my routine to check how they are learning]". Although most secondary teachers answered that "using a variety of assessment tools is valuable", they said that "doing so is not practical" due to the high-stakes college entrance exams. Secondary teachers used quizzes (by Teacher A, B, & I), vocabulary tests (by Teacher A, B, & J), and tests on the memorization of the textbook reading texts (by Teacher J) as performance assessment. Interestingly, in the cases of secondary teachers A, B, F, and H, "homework assignments of completing exam-preparation workbooks", which were quite similar to the traditional written exam, were used as a formative assessment. While both groups showed a discontinuity between their perception of teacher-based assessment and their preferred assessment practices, the gap within the secondary teachers was bigger than the gap between the secondary and the elementary teachers. This difference appeared salient in their

descriptions of the performance assessment practices they did in their classrooms. Although the teachers knew that performance assessments should be conducted in a manner of reflecting students' learning progress, they said that they faced obstacles in implementing it.

In interpreting the data, we realized that making a judgment of teachers' preferred assessment types without considering their procedures, purposes, and supporting approaches might limit an in-depth understanding of teacher-based assessment. This led us to consider the multiple dimensions of assessments in understanding teachers' preferred practices. The model below is part of our attempt to understand and explain a mechanism of how teachers' different intent and preference resulted in different assessment practices. For example, a quiz or an exam might be a combined outcome of either teachers' traditional approach with a summative purpose or teachers' alternative approach with a formative purpose. Figure 5 illustrates how assessments are varied and multidimensional in terms of evaluation purposes, supporting approaches, contexts, assessment literacy, and teacher agency.



Note. Teacher-based assessment is proposed as an alternative approach.

Figure 5. A combinational projection of the multidimensions of teachers' assessment practices.

It needs to be noted that assessment types or tools cannot simply be categorized as serving a certain approach or a format. For example, it is commonly believed that traditional assessments focus on evaluating students' learning by memory, usually in paper and pencil test formats, while alternative assessments seek to employ various formats and types other than those used in the traditional approach. A careful examination is required on what procedures and purposes teachers hold and what role teachers play in assessment practices. Thus, even the same assessment type, such as a quiz, can be functioned as either formative or summative depending on the purpose and use of the assessment results, which requires a multidimensional analysis of teachers' assessment in practice.

Teacher agency and assessment knowledge are important in negotiating with contextual constraints and reduce the gap between teachers' beliefs and practices in assessment. Xu and Liu (2009) highlighted the role of teacher agency and negotiation in assessment practices when they examined assessment practices in EFL settings. Using Connelly and Clandinin's (1996) framework of teachers' professional knowledge landscape, they tried to understand the gap between the Chinese teacher's assessment knowledge and their practices. Teachers' assessment literacy and their practice of knowledge reflecting local assessment culture shaped their secret voices in dealing with dominating sacred voices. Considering various contexts that teachers face, teachers are required to have assessment literacy which supports holistic knowledge of how to plan and implement assessment and how to interpret it in particular contexts.

Research Question 4: In what ways do Korean English teachers cope with their perceptions about teacher-based assessment and their preferred assessment in their classrooms?

Based on the interview data, we explored the discrepancy between teachers' perceptions about teacher-based assessment and their assessment preferences in its broader social and institutional context. The interview data revealed multiple teachers' voices disclosing how they held their perceptions and negotiated them in their complex social, political, and educational contexts. Viewing curriculum and teacher training as sacred voices, we found that the teachers' sacred voices came from different sources such as the National Curriculum, the Ministry of Education, the district offices, and the school administrators. The 7th National Curriculum reform provided the main source of the sacred voices and teachers' knowledge about assessment. On the survey, the teachers expressed that assessments should be "connected to the instruction, evaluating the process of student learning, and the achievement of the learning standard" and could "employ a variety of assessment tools" including "teacher observations, oral interviews, and demonstrations" which echoed the statements of the reform (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The sacred voices reflected in the interviews did not show any differences between the elementary and the secondary groups. Both groups shared a common perception that the role of assessment did not merely lie in evaluating students' learning achievement, but in providing feedback on individual students' performance (Secondary teacher H & J) and helping them develop English ability (Secondary teacher C). They were aware of the benefits of monitoring students' learning progress through various assessment tools such as discussions, group projects, and presentations (Secondary teacher G, H, I, & J, Elementary teacher M), which reflected their knowledge of formative and performance assessments. Eleven teachers acknowledged the value of teacher-based assessment and admitted that teacher-based assessment was good "to serve unique needs of their students" (Secondary teacher I, Elementary teacher K & L) and "to understand student learning" (Secondary teacher B, F, & H). The teachers were aware of the value and the benefits of the new reform.

In the process of interpreting teachers' reported classroom practices as secret voices, we were able to understand how they adjusted their preferred assessment practices to cope with the sacred voices. The inductive analysis of the data led us to categorize the teachers into *adapters*, *negotiators*, and *contenders* as their implementation of teacher-based assessment in their classrooms was found to be active, passive, and negative respectively. First, as for adapters, those teachers said that they conducted performance assessments in the way that they believed to be relevant and helpful to student learning. The elementary teachers felt relatively freer from the external constraints such as standardized exams than the secondary teachers did. It explained why the elementary teachers preferred teacher-based assessment tools as shown in Figure 4. They actively implemented various performance assessments to follow the reform with modifications. For instance, when the district office recommended separate assessments for four language skills, Elementary teacher M said that she conducted a combined assessment of reading and writing, which skills her students needed to improve most.

For the teachers who were heavily dominated by their school contexts, their reactions to teacher-based assessment were passive and their descriptions of assessment practices were quite different from the curriculum recommendations. Noticeably, there were more secondary teachers than elementary teachers who negotiated demands both from the reform and the contextual constraints. More secondary teachers responded that they used unit tests, vocabulary tests, and recitations of a text as performance assessments. Teacher J mentioned that he used his students' recitation of a textbook as a speaking assessment. Teacher B said, "The purpose of any assessment including performance assessments is basically to help students prepare for the college entrance exam." This teaching to the test practices showed even in portfolio assessment. Secondary teacher H said, "You call it a portfolio, but it is actually a compilation of the practice sheets." In some cases, a performance assessment was also used as a tool to control students' classroom behaviors. Secondary teacher J said that he used students' classroom attitudes as part of speaking assessments, taking points away every time a student did not behave well and pay attention in

class. He said that this form of performance assessment practices was widely accepted by other teachers and parents in secondary schools in Korea. The teachers in the category of the negotiators believed that they negotiated in order to serve students' goals of preparing for the college entrance exams.

Lastly, some teachers revealed uneasy feelings about the gap between the sacred voices and their assessment practices. Some of the secondary teachers showed strong resistance to the idea of teacher-based assessment in the reform and expressed the dilemmas about their new role in teacher-based assessment. During the interview, Secondary teacher A pointed out that, "If you want to teach your students to improve English communicative ability you'd better forget about preparing them for the college entrance exam." Secondary teacher J said, "To be honest, many teachers have a resistance to the reform." and added, "you need to understand that teachers are basically public employees. They don't want to be innovative [by giving up all the traditional assessment forms and trying new performance assessments]." He described "slow to change" as one of the characteristics of the Korean teachers whose jobs were stable and secure. Overall, the contenders' responses and feelings were mixed with uneasiness, reluctance, and powerlessness to the idea of teacher-based assessment and the government-driven assessment reform.

The teachers' reactions to the sacred voices revealed not only the contextual constraints but also teachers' different ways of enacting their teacher agencies. The teachers showed diverse reactions toward teacher-based assessment from being capable to feeling powerless. As Xu and Liu (2009) reported, the teachers selected assessment tools to meet their students' needs in given contexts. As seen in the adapter group, the teachers' empowerment based on both assessment knowledge and less external pressures enabled them to actively develop and implement appropriate assessment tools for their students. However, as the contender group expressed, teachers felt disempowered and lacked their expertise in designing and conducting assessments (Troudi et al., 2009). Due to their limited knowledge about assessment and the contextual constraints they faced, formative and performance assessments as part of the reform were not fully implemented by the Korean EFL teachers.

Conclusions

The findings of the study emphasized the importance of teachers' assessment literacy as a prerequisite for teacher-based assessment. As Davison and Leung (2009) argue, teacher assessment literacy needs to be viewed as empowering teachers to implement teacher-based assessment appropriate in given contexts. The finding of the data showed that while the teachers were aware of the importance of teacher-based assessment, most of them did not prefer using it in their classrooms. The reasons behind their limited use were their limited assessment knowledge and contextual constraints. Considering their challenges, assessment literacy needs to stress teachers' ability to implement assessments in given contexts.

Based on the findings of the study, we drew the following two conclusions to understand the teachers' assessment practices. Firstly, as shown in the findings, a contextual component of assessment literacy was critical for EFL teachers in different school settings. Evidence from the interviews confirmed that the challenges that the teachers faced in assessment practices were influenced by local contexts, such as, the ministry of education, the district office, the school, and the school level they were situated in. Thus, dialogues on the gap between knowledge and practices without considering contextual factors do not fully explain teachers' different ways of practicing their assessment. The finding confirmed what Butler (2009b) mentioned about the teachers' dilemma in meeting the pedagogical needs of local students and the accountability requirements. We argue for stressing teachers' ability and agency to implement teacher-based assessment in a given context.

Teacher agency allows teachers to actively respond to the contextual constraints. The gap in the teachers' assessment practices resulted from the ways they enacted agencies to negotiate between their knowledge reflecting their teaching experience and the prescribed assessment policy. As Troudi et al. (2009) argue, teachers' voices and choices are often missing in the implementation of assessment, and

assessment decisions are externally imposed. To strengthen teachers' assessment literacy, language assessment training that guides teachers to build on their practical knowledge of assessment needs to be offered for both preservice and in-service teachers.

Secondly, we conclude that a teacher-based assessment approach (David & Leung, 2009) could be the framework that closes the gap between teachers' perception of assessment and their own practice. In the case of the contender group who were less inclined toward teacher-based assessment, they showed reservation in using formative and performance assessments. To encourage teachers to initiate and implement formative and performance assessments, it is necessary to empower classroom teachers to become an assessor and a facilitator, not a passive follower of the prescribed top-down assessment protocol. Teacher-based assessment allows teachers to consider their local contexts and their students' needs and interests.

The teachers' concerns about performance assessment came from the lack of schools' support in terms of providing procedure guidelines and grading criteria. The assessment guideline (Ministry of Education, 2015) did not provide assessment types and grading criteria for each grade level and rubrics for various methods in detail, which is necessary for the accountability and validity of the assessment. Schools and government agencies must provide professional assessment training regularly to boost teachers' assessment literacy and confidence. The teachers' concerns were also derived from their being excluded in decision making about assessment approach and design. Teachers' voices need to be included in the planning of the assessment reform.

We propose the following three recommendations. First, it is critical for educational administrators, policymakers, and teachers to develop the knowledge of what teacher-based assessment is and seek ways to implement it in current EFL classroom settings. They should understand that teacher-based assessment is not a fixed method but an overall approach with various ways to implement it. Our suggestion is that assessment needs to be integrated with instructional practices and be part of the teaching methods and curriculums so that teachers know how to use assessment in a pedagogically sound way. Professional development seminars and workshops should be provided for administrators and teachers to help them develop a common knowledge ground of teacher-based assessment. Secondly, when a new assessment is implemented, guidelines to accommodate various contexts such as student backgrounds, students' proficiency level, and lesson contents need to be provided. Detailed information from successful assessment practices would help teachers overcome their reservations and make them feel confident in using teacher-based assessment. Lastly, English performance assessment needs to be grounded in teacher-based assessment, which empowers teachers' teaching and their assessment practices. Within the constraints from the high-stake college entrance exams in EFL settings, teachers' secret voices need to be discussed as a way of promoting teacher-based assessment.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaires

Part 1. English Education

1. What do you think is the best indicator of students' English skills improvement (e.g., active participation in classes, etc.)?
2. In what ways can teachers support students' learning of English skills in their classrooms?

Part 2. English Assessment

3. How often do you evaluate students' ability to communicate in English?
 1. Not at all
 2. 1-2 times a week
 3. 1-2 times a month
 4. 1-2 times a semester
4. What do you think is the purpose of the English evaluation? (You can choose multiple answers)
 1. To make a better class
 2. To check students' understanding
 3. To check the effectiveness of the curriculum
 4. To compare with other students
 5. To grasp students' excellence and weakness in English learning
 6. To confirm what students have learned
 7. Other (please) _____
5. How important do you think teacher-based assessment is?
 1. Unimportant
 2. Somewhat important
 3. Important
 4. Very important
6. How do you use the results of teacher-based assessment?
 1. To provide feedback to students
 2. To confirm students' understanding
 3. To improve instruction
 4. To plan supplementary classes
 5. Do not use the results
7. How important do you think it is to introduce performance assessment in English classrooms?
 1. Unimportant
 2. Somewhat important
 3. Important
 4. Very important
8. How important do you think formative assessment is?
 1. Unimportant
 2. Somewhat important
 3. Important
 4. Very important

Part 3. Perceptions about Teacher-based Assessment

9. How important do you think teacher-based assessment is?
1. Unimportant
 2. Somewhat important
 3. Important
 4. Very Important
10. Which assessment types do you use in your classrooms? (select all that apply)
1. Exam
 2. Oral response
 3. Quiz
 4. Teacher observation
 5. Assessment
 6. Practice
 7. Dictation
 8. Project
 9. Interview
 10. Self-evaluation
 11. Peer-evaluation
 12. Group discussion
 13. Writing essay
 14. Other (Specify) _____
11. How often do you conduct assessment using the types you selected in question 10?
1. Every class
 2. 1-2 times a week
 3. 1-2 times a month
 4. 1-2 times a semester
12. What is the simplest and most efficient teacher-based assessment type? (e.g., quizzes in class, etc.)
13. Why do you think the assessment type you answered on question 12 is simple and efficient?
14. What is the most complex and difficult teacher-based assessment type?
15. Why do you think the assessment type you answered on question 14 is complex and difficult?
16. For what purpose do you mainly use the results of teacher-based assessment?
1. Providing students with feedback
 2. Understanding students' learning
 3. Improving teaching methods
 4. Planning makeup teaching
 5. Do not use evaluation results

Part 4. Assessment practices and policies of schools

17. Please write down all English assessment types currently used in your school (e.g., academic achievement test).
- Diagnostic test _____
- Standardized test (Example: academic achievement test) _____
- Teacher-based assessment _____

Formative (intermediate) assessment _____
Summative assessment _____
Performance assessment _____
Other (Please fill it out) _____

18. How often does your school conduct English tests?
1. Not at all
 2. Once a year
 3. 2-3 times a year
 4. 4-10 times a year
 5. More than 10 times a year
19. How does your school use students' English assessment results? (e.g., class placement, diagnostic test, etc.)
20. In your school, is teacher-based assessment as important as standardized tests?
1. Unimportant
 2. Slightly important
 3. Very important
 4. Very important

Part 6. Suggestions

21. What types of assessment would you like to use in the future?
22. What support do you think is essential for a successful teacher-based assessment?
23. What suggestions would you like to give about how to evaluate English achievement?
24. What kind of assessment training would you like to attend?