

Turkish Language Teachers' Formative Assessment Competencies and Barriers for Formative Assessment: A Mixed-Methods Study

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-method study aims to examine Turkish language teachers' formative assessment competencies and to identify the barriers affecting these competencies. Designed according to a sequential explanatory design, 76 Turkish language teachers participated in the questionnaire in the first phase of the study and 7 Turkish language teachers participated in the semi-structured interview in the second phase of the study. Quantitative findings showed that teachers were not at the desired level in the dimensions of formative assessment including assessment competence, time allocated to language skills, and feedback. The qualitative findings revealed four barriers to formative assessment that can be categorized as "teaching environment and conditions, students, teachers, and family-community". The results indicate that there is a need to improve teacher competencies in formative assessment, allocate separate class hours to language skills development processes, expand national policies, and reduce the negative effects of the test-oriented examination system.

Keywords: Formative assessment, Turkish language teacher, teacher competency, mixed-methods study.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is an essential component of effective teaching practices (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Shepard, 2000). In particular, students' need for meaningful feedback on their work and teachers' responsibility to regularly monitor progress to adapt and personalize their teaching have made formative assessment a central element of innovative pedagogies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, [OECD], 2017).

Formative assessment is an active and deliberate process designed to collect evidence of learning continuously and systematically in order to improve instruction (Fisher & Frey, 2007; Moss & Brookhart, 2009; DeVries, 2015). The main purpose of this assessment is to provide a comprehensive view of students' strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Thus, students can explore their own learning experiences (Butler & McMunn, 2006) and plan the steps they need to take for their progress (Coles, 2002). In other words, this assessment process focuses on students' self-direction and making informed decisions about themselves based on the inferences they draw. Students who gain awareness about their learning and learn to choose among various strategies using this information are also on their way to becoming more "independent, self-confident and capable" (Moss & Brookhart, 2009). In short, formative assessment transforms education from the current system in which students progress through grade levels to a system in which they progress constantly as a result of their competence (Marzano, 2006).

On the other hand, in this system, the role of the teacher does not become passive as students take control of their learning. On the contrary, the teacher and students work both individually and collaboratively to achieve effective learning outcomes throughout the formative assessment process (Durukan & Kansizoğlu, 2023). Teachers assess and evaluate students' progress continuously by observing and analyzing their work as well as making instructional decisions accordingly. As a result, both students and teachers make decisions about what more can be done to facilitate development (Bennet, 2011).

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Formative assessment is characterized as an “assessment for learning” rather than an “assessment of learning” with its structure that is not only based on recording and measuring (Chappuis et al., 2014; Cheng & Fox, 2017; Hargreaves, 2005; Fisher & Frey, 2007). The purpose of assessment here is not only to measure student achievement through tests after the teaching is completed but to check whether learning has taken place accordingly. Assessment is seen as an integral part of teaching, not as a process carried out in addition to or separate from teaching (Shermis & Di Vesta, 2011). Therefore, formative assessment is based on shaping instruction through regular and frequent assessments rather than grading or comparing students (Butler & McMunn, 2006). This is a necessity for language teaching and Turkish language education as in all disciplines of education. As stated in the secondary school Turkish curriculum (MoNE, 2024), assessment, which is handled with a formative approach that explains the “what”, “how” and “why” in Turkish language education, is a basic tool in determining students’ strengths and weaknesses, deciding what their learning needs are, supporting the learning process, deciding on learning content, and changing their perspectives on teaching and learning strategies (MoNE, 2024, p. 27). The stakeholders primarily responsible for all these processes are teachers, who are active participants and supporters of learning.

The Teacher’s Role in Formative Assessment

Many studies in the literature (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Karaman, 2021; Näsström et al., 2021; Torrance, 2012; Yao et al., 2024) report that teachers’ formative assessment practices play a key role in the development of student learning. Many comprehensive reviews of language teaching (Graham et al., 2015; Kingston & Nash, 2011; Radford, 2014; Xuan et al., 2022) confirm these findings. As Black and Wiliam (1998) point out, the success of this process depends on teachers’ conscious, adequate practices and continuous efforts. Adequate implementation of formative assessment is closely related to teachers’ assessment literacy. Assessment literacy is defined as “an interrelated set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that a teacher can use to design and implement a coherent and appropriate assessment approach within the classroom context and school system” (Pastore & Andrade, 2019, pp. 134-135). A variety of skills fall within the scope of assessment literacy, such as using a repertoire of assessment methods based on sound principles; aligning classroom assessments with intended student outcomes in the curriculum; designing, selecting, and using high-quality assessment tasks that accurately capture students’ learning, performance, and competencies in core subjects; and striking

a balance between formative and summative assessment (Koh, 2019).

In formative feedback, teachers aim to increase student achievement by performing activities such as identifying learning needs, planning the next step (Chappuis et al., 2014), creating opportunities for students to share their ideas, and providing effective feedback (Shepard, 2000). While carrying out these processes, it makes a joint effort by assuming different roles with teachers, students, and other stakeholders. This leads to a process in which teachers are more productive and students are more active (Moss & Brookhart, 2009). Teachers are also expected to be competent in knowing, selecting, or developing appropriate assessment tools to guide instructional decisions (Cunningham, 1998). All this contributes to regular, robust, predictable learning outcomes about student progress. However, despite its various reported functions, it is difficult to say that formative assessment is widely used in mother tongue education in Türkiye (Arın, 2023; Göçer & Şentürk, 2019). Findings reveal that Turkish language teachers (“Turkish teachers” in the rest of the text) have problems in assessing their students’ writing (Şengül, 2019), speaking (Çalışkan & Sur, 2022), and listening (Bayram, 2019; Dölek & Demirel, 2022) skills and neglect to assess them (Deniz & Keray-Dinçel, 2019; Karatay & Dilekçi, 2019; Türkben, 2022). According to a large-scale study conducted by the OECD, assessment in many classrooms in Türkiye currently prioritizes memorization over complex competencies such as critical thinking and problem-solving. Moreover, teachers in Türkiye prefer closed and short-answer assessments such as quizzes and multiple-choice tests and lack confidence in using performance-based assessments such as portfolios, research, or writing (Kitchen et al., 2019).

Rationale and Purpose

When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are many evidence-based studies (Almahal et al., 2023; Cañadas, 2023; Box et al., 2015; Gotch, 2021; Hopfenbeck et al., 2023) examining the formative assessment practices of teachers working in different branches. However, there is no mixed-method study examining Turkish teachers’ formative assessment practices and competencies. In addition, the literature that examines the difficulties that teachers face and the support they need in formative assessment in language teaching is limited. To address these issues, this study aims to examine Turkish teachers’ formative assessment practices, their competencies, the support they need, and the difficulties they face. Therefore, this study is designed to expand the understanding of formative assessment in language teaching. The findings of the study have the potential to enhance the quality of teachers’ professional development, strengthen the

relationship between assessment and instruction, and support student learning. In addition, considering the culturally situated and context-sensitive nature of classroom assessment, it is believed that conducting this study in Türkiye, a country with a different education system and learning culture; will contribute to the international literature.

The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

Q1: What is the level of Turkish teachers' practices and competencies regarding formative assessment?

Q2: How do the opinions of Turkish teachers explain the barriers that prevent teachers from being competent in formative assessment?

METHOD

Design

This study reports a sequential exploratory mixed-methods study of secondary school Turkish language teachers' formative assessment practices and competencies and the reasons behind these findings. The rationale for answering mixed research questions by using qualitative and quantitative methods together in the study is complementarity. Complementarity mixed method research aims to elaborate, extend, illustrate, and explain the results of one method with the results of the other method (Greene et al., 1989).

The second stage in the explanatory sequential design, which starts with quantitative data collection and analysis, continues with the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Ivankova et al., 2006). In this context, quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire, and qualitative data were collected through online interviews with participant teachers.

The purpose of linking these two phases is to explain and elaborate on the results obtained from the first phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2020). The integration of the data provided a deeper understanding of teacher competencies and practices. The visual model of the study design is shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1 provides a visual diagram of the study design and the flow of procedures. Capital letters indicate the primacy of the quantitative method in the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2020). The study consists of two consecutive and complementary parts: A quantitative survey section followed by a qualitative online individual interview section. The numerical data collected in the first quantitative part provided an overall picture of teachers' formative assessment practices and competencies. Qualitative follow-up interviews with a subset of purposively selected survey participants aimed to explain quantitative trends and helped to elaborate statistical results. In the final phase of the study, findings from the two types of data were integrated to generate meta-inferences to provide insightful answers to the research questions.

Participants

The quantitative part of this study included 76 Turkish teachers actively working in public or private schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. The qualitative part includes 7 teachers randomly selected among 76 Turkish teachers. Information about the teachers participating in the study is presented in Table 1:

Table 1 shows that the average age of the Turkish teachers in the quantitative part was 32.6 ($SD = 6.2$; 22-46). The age range with the widest participation was 22-27 ($f = 25$). 60.5% ($f = 46$) of the teachers were female and 39.5% ($f = 30$) were male. While 75% ($f = 57$) of the teachers were university

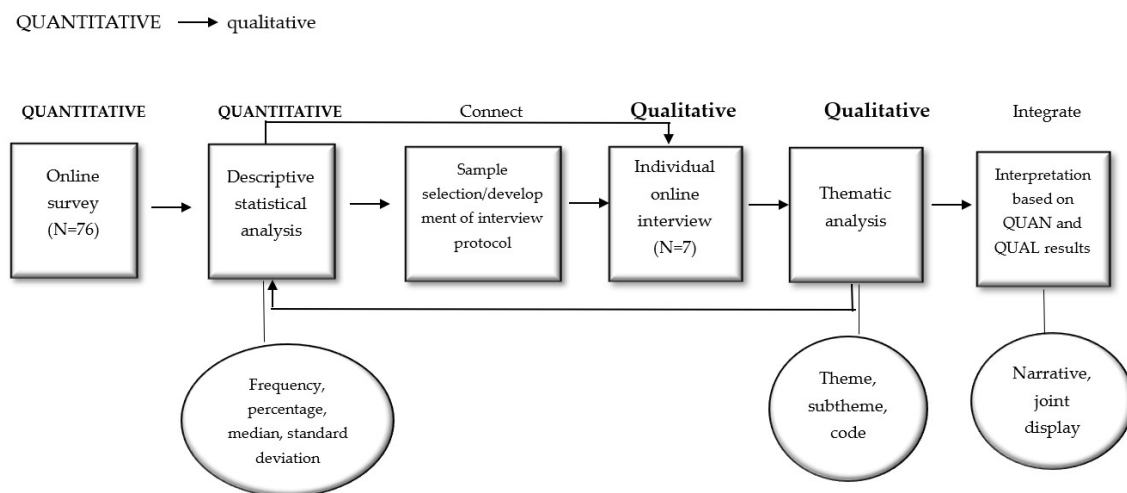


Fig. 1: Visual Model of the Study Design [Adapted from Ivankova (2014)].

Table 1: Characteristics of the Participants

	Quantitative Phase		Qualitative Phase	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Gender				
Female	46	60.5	4	57.1
Male	30	39.5	3	42.8
Age				
22-27	25	32.9	0	0
28-32	14	18.3	2	28.5
33-37	16	20.9	1	14.2
38-42	15	19.6	4	57.14
43-+	6	7.8	0	0
Graduation Status				
Undergraduate	57	75	5	71.4
Master's degree	18	23.7	1	14.2
PhD	1	1.3	1	14.2
Region of Assignment				
Mediterranean	14	18.4	0	0
Eastern Anatolia	11	14.4	2	28.5
Aegean	1	1.3	0	0
South East Anatolia	12	15.7	1	14.2
Central Anatolia	2	2.6	0	0
Black Sea	27	35.5	3	42.8
Marmara	9	11.8	1	14.2

graduates, 23.7% ($f = 18$) had a master's degree and 1.3% ($f = 1$) had a doctorate degree (PhD). 35,5% ($f = 27$) of the teachers work in the Black Sea region, 18,4% ($f = 14$) in the Mediterranean, 15,7% ($f = 12$) in South East Anatolia, 14,4% ($f = 11$) in East Anatolia, 11,8% in Marmara ($f = 9$), 2,6% ($f = 2$) in Central Anatolia and 1,3% ($f = 1$) in the Aegean region.

The average age of the Turkish teachers in the qualitative part of the study was 35.7 ($SD = 3.9$; 32-40). The age range with the widest participation was 38-42 ($f = 4$). 57.1% ($f = 4$) of the teachers were female and 42.8% ($f = 3$) were male. While 71.4% ($f = 5$) of the teachers were university graduates, 14.2% ($f = 1$) had a master's degree and 14.2% ($f = 1$) had a doctorate. 42.8% ($f = 3$) of the teachers work in the Black Sea, 28.5% ($f = 2$) in Eastern Anatolia, 14.2% ($f = 1$) in South Eastern Anatolia and 14.2% ($f = 1$) in Marmara Region.

Procedures

Written consent was obtained from all participants before starting the questionnaire and verbal consent was obtained before starting the interview. Therefore, participation in the study was voluntary. The quantitative data collection period

was 30 days; the qualitative data collection period was 14 days.

INSTRUMENTS

Quantitative Phase

Questionnaire

In this study, a questionnaire was employed to collect data on the assessment and evaluation competencies and practices of Turkish teachers working in secondary schools in different regions of Türkiye. Questionnaires, the most common assessment data collection strategy used in teacher belief research, are extremely useful for a variety of reasons, including being easy to administer and score, measuring multiple constructs within a single set of questions, being amenable to complex statistical analysis, and providing a comparative basis across different studies (Schraw & Olafson, 2015). In this context, a comprehensive literature review was conducted before the questionnaire questions were created and the questionnaire questions were reviewed periodically for accuracy and clarity. To ensure content validity, the final draft of the survey questions was reviewed by two experts in the field.

As a result of the feedback from the experts, a questionnaire form with a total of 25 questions was created, which took an average of ten minutes to complete. The questions in the questionnaire reflect 8 different content areas: demographic information, teacher training program, in-service training, teacher competence, collaboration/support, amount of time spent on assessment, preferred assessment tools, support for struggling students, and feedback. Most of the questions were five-point Likert-type questions, with multiple-choice questions allowing for one or more than one response.

Qualitative Phase

Semi-structured Interview Form

The interview protocol was based on the content of the questionnaire items and structured with six questions that aimed to better understand the role of teachers in assessment and evaluation. In addition, detailed probes were created to elaborate on these questions and encourage the participants to talk. Necessary corrections were made as a result of feedback from an expert in the field to reduce possible mistakes and prejudice before the interview form was created. In addition, a pilot interview was conducted with a Turkish teacher selected from among the participants through convenience sampling. At the end of the interview, which lasted an average of 25 minutes, an interview question that was characterized as “not comprehensible” was restructured. In the end, a six-question semi-structured interview form consisting of questions such as difficulties in measurement and evaluation, feedback strategies, education given in teacher training programs, and suggestions for improving measurement and evaluation and feedback processes was created.

Data Analysis

The means and standard deviations of teachers' responses to Likert-type questions about formative assessment competencies and practices were calculated using SPSS 27.0 software. It was assumed that the five-point Likert-type questions in the questionnaire with a mean below 3 indicated a critical problem and the comments focused on these.

Teachers' responses to the open-ended questions designed to explore teachers' formative assessment practices, their competencies, the support they need, and the challenges they face were subjected to content analysis. MAXQDA 2022 software (VERBI Software, 2021) was used to analyze these qualitative data. Using the software, themes, and categories were hierarchically organized and categorized in a network structure. The data set was read and coded more than once by the researchers. The codes were then organized according to similarities and differences, and relevant labels were assigned to the codes and these formed themes and categories. To determine the reliability at the category assignment stage, the themes obtained were first assigned categories by the first author of the study and then by the second author. The analyses made by the two researchers were compared. The agreement rate of the categorization was calculated with Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula and was determined as .94.

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

Table 2 shows the results regarding the number of courses taken, finding the courses taken sufficient and in-service trainings on measurement and evaluation by Turkish teachers:

As seen in Table 2, 68.4% of the teachers stated that they had taken one course on measurement and evaluation, 18.4% stated that they had taken 2 or more courses, 7.9% stated that they had never taken a course and 5.3% stated that they did not know that they had taken a course. While 47.4% of the teachers found the course on measurement and evaluation moderately sufficient, 32.9% found it moderately sufficient, 32.9% found it somewhat sufficient, 9.2% found it mostly sufficient, 5.3% found it quite sufficient, and 5.3% found it not sufficient at all. Teachers' level of finding the course adequate is below average ($M = 2.7$; $SD = 0.89$). Table 2 also shows that more than half of the teachers (55.3%) did not receive in-service training on measurement and evaluation. However, 39.5% of the teachers received 1-3 in-service trainings, 1.3% received 6 or more in-service trainings and 6.6% received 3-5 in-service trainings.

Table 2: Measurement and Evaluation Background

	2 and above	1	0	Unknown			
Lesson learned	18.4	68.4	7.9	5.3			
The course adequate*	(5) %	(4) %	(3) %	(2) %	(1) %	M	SD
	5.3	9.2	47.4	32.9	5.3	2.7w	0.89
Number of in-service trainings	6 and above	3-5	1-3	0			
	1.3	6.6	39.5	55.3			

Notes. Very much (5), Mostly (4), Moderately (3), A little (2), Not at all (1)

Table 3 shows the results of Turkish teachers' difficulties in measurement and evaluation competence, using different measurement and evaluation tools, measurement and evaluation at different stages of the course, and collaboration with colleagues/stakeholders.

As seen in Table 3, 42.1% of the teachers stated that they had difficulties in measurement and evaluation mostly, 39.5% sometimes, and 7.9% always. Although no teacher claimed that they never had difficulties in measurement and evaluation, 10.5% of the teachers rarely had difficulties. However, the level of Turkish teachers' having difficulties in measurement and evaluation is above the medium level ($M = 3.4$; $SD = 0.79$). The majority of the teachers (52.6%) considered themselves competent in using different assessment and evaluation tools, 31.6% sometimes, 7.9% rarely, and 2.6% always. However, 5.3% of the teachers do not consider themselves competent in this regard. In general, the level of Turkish teachers' use of different assessment and evaluation tools is above average ($M = 3.3$; $SD = 0.88$). Table 3 also presents the findings regarding the teachers' use of assessment and evaluation at different stages of the course. The findings show that the majority of the teachers (64.5%) mostly conduct assessments and evaluations at different stages of the course. 19.7% of the teachers sometimes, 14.5% rarely, and 1.3% always conduct assessment and evaluation at different stages of the lesson. When evaluated in general,

the Turkish teachers' assessment and evaluation at different stages of the lesson is above average ($M = 3.5$; $SD = 0.75$). According to another finding in Table 3, a significant portion of the teachers (42.1%) consider themselves competent in collaborating with colleagues/stakeholders. In addition, 26.3% of the teachers always, 18.4% always, 11.8% rarely, and 1.3% never consider themselves sufficient to cooperate. In general, Turkish teachers' level of cooperation with colleagues/stakeholders is above the medium level ($M = 3.6$; $SD = 0.96$). Moreover, it is noteworthy that this competency is at a higher level than the other competencies in Table 3.

Table 4 shows the results regarding the time Turkish teachers allocate to all assessments and evaluations and listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar.

As seen in Table 4, almost half of the teachers (46%) allocate 10% to 20% of their teaching time to assessment and evaluation. In addition, almost all of the teachers (82%) allocate 10% to 20% of their time to the assessment and evaluation of listening. Similarly, the vast majority of teachers allocate between 10% and 20% of their time to the assessment and evaluation of reading and writing skills. Only 50% of the teachers allocate at least half of their assessment and evaluation time to grammar.

Table 5 presents the results regarding the frequency of Turkish teachers' use of different assessment and evaluation

Table 3: Teacher Competence in Assessment and Evaluation

	(5) %	(4) %	(3) %	(2) %	(1) %	M	SD
Difficulties in measurement and evaluation	7.9	42.1	39.5	10.5	0	3.4	0.79
Using different assessment and evaluation tools	2.6	52.6	31.6	7.9	5.3	3.3	0.88
Assessment and evaluation at different stages of the course	1.3	64.5	19.7	14.5	0	3.5	0.75
Collaborate with colleagues or stakeholders	18.4	42.1	26.3	11.8	1.3	3.6	0.96

Notes. Always (5), Mostly (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)

Table 4: Time Allocated to Assessment and Evaluation

	(100) %	(90) %	(80) %	(70) %	(60) %	(50) %	(40) %	(30) %	(20) %	(10) %	0
Time allocated to all assessments and evaluation*	0	0	3.9	2.6	1.3	7.8	10.5	26.6	26.3	19.7	0
Listening	0	0	1.3	2.6	0	0	2.6	10.5	38.1	44.7	0
Speaking	1.3	1.3	0	2.6	0	0	11.8	14.4	44.7	23.6	0
Reading	1.3	1.3	2.6	0	1.3	3.9	3.9	30.2	43.4	13.1	0
Writing	1.3	0	1.3	1.3	0	1.3	10.5	19.7	43.4	21	0
Grammar	0	1.3	0	1.3	0	5.2	17.1	18.4	32.8	23.6	0

Notes. *On average, what percentage do you think belongs to the categories? (Ratio their sum to 100.)

tools and their use of tools with open assessment criteria in assessing language skills.

According to Table 5, from the most frequently used tool to the least frequently used tool, teachers used multiple-choice tests ($f=65$), short-answer tests/gap-fill-in-the-blank tests ($f=55$), oral exams ($f=51$), performance/project assignments ($f=43$), true-false tests ($f=36$), student product files (portfolio) ($f=20$), rubrics ($f=20$), concept maps ($f=18$), checklists ($f=15$), observation forms ($f=13$), word association test ($f=12$), self/peer/group assessment form ($f=11$), diagnostic branched tree ($f=16$).

Table 6 shows the results of the feedback practices for learning areas.

As can be seen from Table 6, the learning areas where teachers give the most feedback are grammar ($M = 4$; $SD = 0.87$), speaking ($M = 3.8$; $SD = 1.09$), writing ($M = 3.7$; $SD = 0.99$), listening ($M = 3.5$; $SD = 1.2$) and reading ($M = 3$; $SD = 1.01$). While Turkish teachers mostly give feedback to grammar activities, they give moderate or above feedback on other learning areas.

Table 7 shows the results regarding the types of feedback used by the teachers:

According to Table 7, teachers stated that they preferred teacher feedback the most ($M = 4.2$; $SD = 0.80$), followed by self-feedback ($M = 2.7$; $SD = 1.24$), peer feedback ($M = 2.6$; $SD = 0.93$) and computer/online/electronic feedback ($M = 2.2$; $SD = 1.11$). It is understood that teacher feedback is used frequently, whereas other types of feedback are used at a low level.

Table 8 shows the results regarding the feedback tools used by the teachers:

Table 8 also presents the findings regarding teachers' use of feedback tools. Verbal feedback ($M = 4.3$; $SD = 0.75$) is the most frequently used feedback tool, followed by non-verbal feedback ($M = 3.7$; $SD = 1.16$) and written feedback ($M = 3.1$; $SD = 1.12$). In general, Turkish teachers' use of feedback tools is above average.

Table 9 presents the results regarding the homework correction techniques used by the teachers.

Table 5: Assessment and Evaluation Tools

Type of measurement tool*						M	SD
Multiple choice tests						65	
Short answer tests/Blank fill tests						55	
Oral exams						51	
Performance/project assignments						43	
True-false tests						36	
Portfolio						20	
Rubric						20	
Concept map						18	
Checklist						15	
Observation forms						13	
Word association test						12	
Self/peer/group evaluation form						11	
Diagnostic tree						6	
	(5) %	(4) %	(3) %	(2) %	(1) %	M	SD
Use tools with explicit assessment criteria to assess language skills	9.2	35.5	36.8	13.2	5.3	3.3	0.99

Notes. *Please mark the 5 most preferred measurement tools.

Table 6: Feedback Practices (According to Learning Areas)

Learning areas	(5) %	(4) %	(3) %	(2) %	(1) %	M	SD
Listening	27.6	31.6	19.7	13.2	7.9	3.5	1.2
Speaking	34.2	27.6	23.7	13.2	1.3	3.8	1.09
Reading	38.2	31.6	21.1	7.9	1.3	3.0	1.01
Writing	28.9	30.3	34.2	3.9	2.6	3.7	0.99
Grammar	34.2	35.5	26.3	3.9	0	4	0.87

Notes. Always (5), Mostly (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)

The findings obtained from Table 9 show that teachers mostly used the joint homework correction technique ($M = 3.65$; $SD = 1.16$), followed by class correction ($M = 3.39$; $SD = 1.27$), self-correction ($M = 3.21$; $SD = 1.21$), mutual correction ($M = 3.05$; $SD = 1.37$) and group correction ($M = 2.46$; $SD = 1.24$). It is also noteworthy that the use of group homework correction technique is below the average.

Table 10 shows the results regarding the additional support teachers provided to students.

Among the additional support provided by teachers to students, alternative assignments/tasks were the most preferred ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 1.11$). This was followed by additional time ($M = 3.46$; $SD = 1.10$), encouragement ($M = 3.09$; $SD = 1.19$) and peer support ($M = 3.02$; $SD = 1.23$).

Table 11 presents the results regarding the collaboration practices carried out by teachers.

Table 11 shows that the level of sharing assessment results with students is quite high ($M = 4.6$; $SD = 0.56$), while the level of sharing with parents is above average ($M = 3.3$; $SD = 0.91$). In addition to all these, teachers consider themselves competent in informing/encouraging students about their strengths ($M = 4.3$; $SD = 0.71$) and informing students about

how to improve their weaknesses ($M = 4.1$; $SD = 0.71$). Teachers' competence in discussing the answers with each student after the assessment ($M = 3.7$; $SD = 0.76$) is above the medium level.

Qualitative Results

In the qualitative dimension of the study, interviews with teachers were analyzed to reveal the factors affecting the results obtained from the quantitative phase. The hierarchical network model in Figure 2 shows the factors affecting Turkish teachers' formative assessment practices:

As can be seen in Figure 2, the factors affecting teachers' formative assessment practices are grouped under 4 themes: teaching environment and conditions, teacher-centered factors, student-centered factors, family and community-centered factors. It is seen that the factor that affects formative assessment the most is the teaching environment and conditions. Under this theme, teachers frequently state that time management and time constraints are obstacles to assessment. In this regard, P-1 states the following:

“Since we go on the basis of four language skills and grammar, we actually need to evaluate students from

Table 7: Feedback Practices (Types of Feedback)

Types of feedback	(5) %	(4) %	(3) %	(2) %	(1) %	M	SD
Teacher feedback	48.7	28.9	22.4	0	0	4.2	0.80
Peer feedback	0	19.7	32.9	35.5	11.8	2.6	0.93
Computer/online/electronic feedback	5.3	9.2	27.6	22.4	35.5	2.2	1.1
Self-feedback	7.9	25	21.1	27.6	18.4	2.7	1.24

Notes. Always (5), Mostly (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)

Table 8: Feedback Practices (Feedback Tools)

Feedback tools	(5) %	(4) %	(3) %	(2) %	(1) %	M	SD
Written feedback	11.8	26.3	35.5	17.1	9.2	3.1	1.12
Verbal feedback	51.3	31.6	17.1	0	0	4.3	0.75
Non-verbal feedback (such as gestures, facial expressions, body posture)	31.6	30.3	18.4	17.1	2.6	3.7	1.16

Notes. Always (5), Mostly (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)

Table 9: Feedback Practices (Homework Correction Techniques)

Techniques	(5) %	(4) %	(3) %	(2) %	(1) %	M	SD
Homework correction as a class	26.3	19.7	30.3	14.5	9.2	3.39	1.27
Group/cluster homework correction	5.3	18.4	23.7	22.4	30.3	2.46	1.24
Mutual homework correction	21.1	15.8	27.6	18.4	17.1	3.05	1.37
Correcting homework together	32.9	21.1	26.3	18.4	1.3	3.65	1.16
Self homework correction	15.8	27.6	28.9	17.1	10.5	3.21	1.21

Notes. Always (5), Mostly (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)

Table 10: Feedback Practices (Additional Supports)

Additional supports	(5) %	(4) %	(3) %	(2) %	(1) %	M	SD
Encouragement	44.7	18.4	25	9.2	2.6	3.09	1.14
Additional time	17.1	36.8	26.3	14.5	5.3	3.46	1.10
Alternative assignments/tasks	22.4	32.9	28.9	10.5	5.3	3.56	1.11
Peer assistance	10.5	28.9	28.9	15.8	15.8	3.02	1.23

Notes. Always (5), Mostly (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)

Table 11. Feedback Practices (Collaboration)

Collaboration	(5) %	(4) %	(3) %	(2) %	(1) %	M	SD
Sharing evaluation results with parents	9.2	36.8	35.5	17.1	1.3	3.3	0.91
Sharing evaluation results with students	67.1	28.9	3.9	0	0	4.6	0.56
Discussing the answers with each student after the measurement procedures	15.8	48.7	31.6	3.9	0	3.7	0.76
Informing/encouraging students about their strengths	43.4	44.7	10.5	1.3	0	4.3	0.71
Informing students on how to improve their weaknesses	31.6	51.3	15.8	1.3	0	4.1	0.71

Notes. Always (5), Mostly (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)

5 different branches, which puts us in a bit of difficulty. Because every time we try to evaluate writing and speaking, we have a lot of time problems. I think one of the biggest difficulties we will face is that our course is under a single title but it requires measuring different areas.” [P-1].

Similarly, P-4 draws attention to the limited time factor in the assessment of speaking skills. From P-4’s statements, it is also understood that the evaluation of speaking skills is not carried out based on observation at certain intervals during the process:

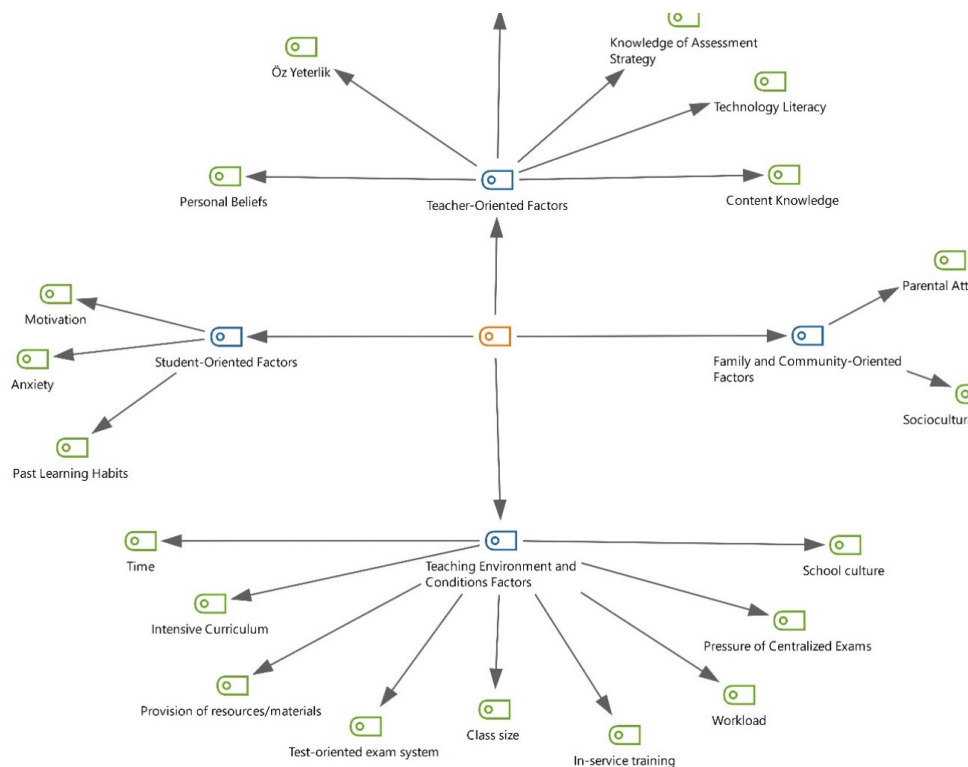


Fig. 2: Barriers for Formative Assessment

“One lesson is definitely not enough to assess speaking skills. That’s why I devote two consecutive hours to assessing children, but for example, some of my friends take weeks. Because they wait for the children to be ready, they evaluate 2-3 students in each lesson. Unfortunately, I don’t have enough time to deal with and evaluate each student individually. The limited class time makes it difficult for me to deal with each student one-on-one and follow them. Therefore, I inevitably have to make a general evaluation.” [P-4]

Most of the teachers emphasize the intensive curriculum content as a limiting factor in assessment practices. They state that the fact that the Turkish course has a wide range of content on a grade-by-grade basis creates disadvantages. In this regard, P-7 expresses the following:

“We have to complete the curriculum in a certain period, so even when everything is going well, we have difficulty in completing the curriculum. Apart from that, we also do speaking and listening exams. These also take a certain amount of time. Sometimes children don’t do very well, they want to do it again. We treat them more tolerantly.” [P-7].

Sharing similar statements, P-5 explains that a broad curriculum is an obstacle to assessing language skills:

“..... is very difficult because, as I said, there is a curriculum we have to catch up with. Besides, what happens? There is a listening exam in at least one lesson. Now the exams are common, for example, if one of the common exams coincides with our other course, a week’s subject is already late. When this happens twice a semester, we fall behind in completing our 23-week course content. This is negatively reflected in the evaluation.” [P-5].

Provision of resources/materials is a less emphasized but noteworthy factor. Teachers agree that schools should allocate a budget for the provision of materials. P-1, who states that ready-made materials/resources can provide convenience, especially for new teachers who do not have teaching experience, explains his thoughts as follows:

“Actually, I think that schools should allocate more budget and resources to assessment and evaluation materials. As teachers, it can provide us with a lot of advantages in terms of evaluation. In fact, it would be very advantageous to have access to different materials for teachers who are new to the job and facing a new system like us. After a certain period of time, we can improve ourselves in preparing our own materials.” [P-1].

P-3, on the other hand, stated that although she is an experienced teacher, she needs the support provided by the school to follow the innovations as follows:

“I have been a teacher for 20 years and I try to keep up to date as much as I can, but the student profile has changed and it is not always easy to find suitable and interesting materials for them. Schools need to support us in providing resources for assessment.” [P-3].

Teachers characterize the existence of a test-oriented exam system as a factor affecting assessment. In this context, they underline that students have a built-in understanding based on testing. Therefore, it is stated that this understanding is also reflected on the teacher and the teaching process. P-6 explains his thoughts on this issue respectively as follows:

“I mean, children have always gotten used to test-style exams. They usually solved multiple-choice questions, they were evaluated that way, and it was easy to evaluate them. Since the classical exam, speaking exam, and listening exam came this year, they have a lot of difficulty.” [P-6].

It was frequently mentioned by the teachers that the class size is high and that this is a factor that affects formative assessment. Teachers state that crowded classrooms make it almost impossible to monitor individual students. As P-4 stated, the process of giving feedback is negatively affected by this factor:

“I have a class of 40 students. It is not possible to do measurement and evaluation and give proper feedback in this class anyway.” [P-4]

Similarly, P-6 explains his views on this issue by making a comparison as follows:

“In crowded classes where the number of students is close to 40, it is difficult to make this assessment specific, that is, individualized. I mean, I don’t think there is a very special educational tactic in Finland. You can do anything in a group like in Finland where there is no employment problem in a class with a small number of students. ...because the classes are crowded, we have sifting and heavy criteria. Also, when there are fewer students, you can give more effective feedback, but with many students, unfortunately, you follow a more general approach.” [P-6].

According to the opinions of the teachers, one of the conditions for becoming more competent in formative assessment is to be subjected to qualified in-service training. Teachers state that they were unprepared for the transition to a system of separate assessment of language skills and grading accordingly in Turkish lessons as of this academic year. P-5 explains his ideas on this issue as follows:

“Since it is not established, you cannot make a formative assessment to the students as desired, it still proceeds in

the exam order. Because a seminar should have been given and information should have been given beforehand. For example, I would have liked to receive training such as you are going to do a speaking exam, but you can do it in this way. They could have done this in the form of vocational training on Zoom.” [P-5].

P-7 criticized that the seminars were given with a more general understanding and underlined that in-service trainings specific to the content area of the Turkish course should be increased. However, he also criticizes the inadequacy of the practical dimension of the seminars:

“... but sometimes there are seminars or trainings on subjects that improve teachers. These trainings are for all teachers. For example, when they give examples, they give examples from math, science or other subjects. I am very uncomfortable with this. It would be much more useful if they gave examples related to my course. The seminars we have received recently are really good, but they are not oriented towards our field, we get very useful information. But it remains in the dimension of knowledge, we have difficulties in putting it into practice. The trainings and seminars given to us always stay in theory, but when it comes to practice, we have difficulties.” [P-7].

One of the factors listed under the theme of teaching environment and conditions is workload. Especially the fact that Turkish teachers deal with many tasks independently of the lessons is seen as a factor that interrupts evaluation activities. In this regard, P-1 states the following:

“... apart from time, for example, they usually say that teachers are very relaxed, but teaching is one of the professions that brings work home. We have to stay at school during breaks, lunch breaks, sometimes even after school and do these kinds of things, or at home. If they offer us a process that will not make us too hectic and overwhelm us, we can be more efficient in accomplishing the targeted tasks.” [P-1].

Similarly, P-2 expresses the excessive workload with the following words:

“We have to carry out the projects that should be carried out mainly by the students. When this happens, we lose a lot of class hours. When the students are not involved too much, the responsibility falls on the teacher. There are really a lot of celebration programs and other activities that interfere with our class time. Of course, it is good to do these, but when they interfere with the lesson flow, it creates disadvantages. Inevitably the evaluation process is also affected by this.” [P-2].

The pressure of centralized exams is a factor frequently mentioned by teachers who have classes with 8th-grade students. It is reported that there is pressure, especially from the administration and parents, to prepare for the LGS exam and that students, teachers, and ultimately formative assessment activities are affected by this pressure. P-1 expresses his views as follows, respectively:

“I usually teach 5th and 8th-grade classes. In the senior grades, the LGS exam creates a lot of pressure on both students and teachers. Especially in the second semester, with the pressure of both the administration and parents, the normal lesson process is unfortunately mostly spent with exam preparation. In such a process, evaluation is only related to test results.” [P-1].

School culture is the last factor under the theme of teaching environment and conditions. It is better understood with the teacher's explanation that assessment activities are not only teacher-based. P-3 explains her opinion as follows:

“I am a teacher in a school that prioritizes academic success and I even teach in a language class with successful children. Therefore, exam results are very important. Therefore, it is more important to follow students' success in exams than to follow their abilities and skills.” [P-3].

The theme of teacher-centered factors is as broad as the theme of teaching environment and conditions. According to the findings, teachers' personal beliefs shape the formative assessment process. These personal beliefs are mainly related to assessment methods and tools. P-1 explains his views on this issue as follows:

“I try not to use digital methods much in giving feedback or evaluating students, because I think it slows down their thinking process, so I have never needed or used digital methods.” [P-1].

P6's opinions about the assessment of speaking and writing skills, which were placed in the personal belief category, are as follows:

“I don't think students should be evaluated on their speaking ability in their academic success. Let's talk about writing is also a talent. Okay, we give points for punctuation, spelling, and so on, but the main thing is the content. How he expresses his feelings in writing, whether he expresses them effectively, and whether he uses verbal arts, are looked at, but writing is also a talent. I am not raising a child to be a literary scholar. When they go to a department related to this, they will improve themselves academically at the university. The ability to express oneself cannot be developed by evaluating the student.” [P-6].

The findings reveal that teachers' self-efficacy is a factor that directs formative assessment. Teachers' self-efficacy perceptions are also reflected in their assessment practices. P-1 explains this situation as follows:

"As a teacher, I think I am always on the side of the students, I think I can empathize, I understand the students by empathizing and I always act in a way that is to their advantage, but I am definitely not enough. With the change in the system, expectations have also changed, so I want to improve my assessment skills." [P-1].

According to the findings, teachers' established habits cause their assessment practices to remain fixed and they cannot keep up to date. P-4 explains his views under the category of past assessment habits as follows:

"Yes, we make students do something, but they also want an evaluation and feedback in the process. Most of us don't actually do this. If we need to make self-criticism as teachers, most of us do not practice this. There is no condition that you have to take an exam and evaluate it that way, but we present some things to children a bit like an exam." [P-4].

Knowledge of assessment strategy is a frequently recurring category among teacher-centered factors. According to the opinions of the teachers, it is understood that this factor has a very restrictive effect on teacher competencies. Teachers especially have difficulties in determining assessment criteria by the skills. P-7 explains this situation as follows:

"Our articles are completely open-ended, so of course we have problems in measuring and evaluating. Because we have problems in the scoring dimension. The child reads the text to generate ideas. You ask a few questions about the text and develop alternative answers. For example, my problem has a comprehensive answer. The child has answered part of it, it is not wrong. Yes, it is not wrong, but it does not satisfy us. We have problems here when giving points." [P-7].

Another factor placed under this theme is technology literacy. As P-2 stated, using digital tools including artificial intelligence has a positive potential in the formative assessment process. P-2's views on this issue are as follows:

"There was no technology in assessment 20 years ago, but now there is technology. With the use of technology, artificial intelligence can be used in assessment and evaluation, when giving homework or feedback. It is necessary to be equipped to use such applications. In the end, I think human beings should never consider themselves fully sufficient. Because technology is advancing. Every

day, different methods, different technologies, and different activities are included in our lives. So it is important to catch up with this. For example, I can say that I am not very good at technology. In the evaluation, I try to learn things as much as I can, consult with someone, research, and find them from somewhere" [P-2].

Teachers state that solid content knowledge plays a key role in formative assessment. P-6 expresses his views on this issue as follows:

"After I took office, I realized that the education we received was very inadequate. I have been a teacher for how many years, for example, today when I am doing my master's degree, I look at the courses of undergraduate students. They really have a lot of courses related to Turkish that can be useful for them. They see it in detail. In fact, when I first started working, I thought that I would have done it much more comfortably if I had worked as a literature teacher in high schools for years." [P-6].

The findings obtained from the teachers' opinions show that motivation is one of the most important student-centered factors. According to the teachers, high motivation of students makes formative assessment an interactive process, while low motivation can have the opposite effect. P-3, who developed a simple method for feedback, conveys the importance of motivation with the following words:

"... if their homework is in the form of weekly assignments, I have stamps. I give feedback with the seals. I give feedback according to how he did it, half homework, full homework, very good, well done, you did very well. ... so I can say that he is more careful and excited somewhere in his notebook or book to be able to see it." [P-3].

P-6 stated that student motivation is important in giving feedback as follows:

"Maybe 60% or 70% of the students do not pay attention to feedback, do not care. I don't see such a desire in most of the students. They make the same mistakes again in the next exam. Student achievement is not at the level we want." [P-6].

Anxiety is another category placed under the theme of student-centered factors. Teachers observe that students develop anxiety, especially when assessing speaking skills, and that this negatively affects the formative assessment process. P-5 expresses his views as follows:

"I can't give too much feedback about speaking to the student because that age group thinks that I couldn't do it and criticized me and my friends will make fun of me." [P-5].

Past learning habits are among the student-centered factors. The opinions of P-6 placed under this category are as follows:

“Students have been evaluated with a result-oriented system for many years. Of course, their participation in the lesson, and fulfillment of their responsibilities and tasks were taken into consideration. However, with the current system, language skills were evaluated separately, which affected their success. In the classes I am currently in, there are no students who got 100, for example, they have a lot of difficulty.” [P-6].

In the theme of family and community-centered factors, there are two categories: parental attitude and sociocultural dynamics. Teachers have difficulties communicating with parents and giving them feedback. This is another factor that interrupts the student assessment process. The opinions shared by P-7 regarding parent attitudes are as follows:

“Most parents want their children to get high grades, so much so that some of them are so focused on getting high grades that they don't even like the grade they get, they even question it. This inevitably creates pressure on both the child and me. Most of my time is spent on how to improve students' exam success. On the other hand, I have to focus less on other aspects of students, such as improving their expression skills or writing skills.” [P-7].

Sociocultural dynamics is another factor placed under this theme. P-4 explains his views on this category as follows:

“What society expects from us and students is very clear. Students should get high grades, enter a good high school, eventually succeed in the university exam, and graduate from university. Students don't have to develop their interests and talents. In other words, how good a student's communication skills, and whether can they express themselves effectively, are not very important. Society's expectations affect our education system and evaluation system.” [P-4].

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This mixed-method study aimed to examine Turkish teachers' practices and competencies in formative assessment and to reveal the factors affecting the results obtained from this quantitative phase through interviews with teachers. At the end of the study, it was determined that teachers were not at a sufficient level in formative assessment and that four basic factors conceptualized as “teaching environment and conditions, teacher-centered, student-centered, family- and community-centered” were in the background of this

inadequacy. These main factors are gathered around various sub-factors such as knowledge of assessment strategy, school culture, class size, test-oriented system, and resource/material supply. A review of the literature reveals a large number of evidence-based studies (Almahal et al., 2023; Cañadas, 2023; Box et al., 2015; Gotch, 2021; Hopfenbeck et al., 2023) that identify the factors limiting formative assessment practices of teachers working in different branches. Although almost all of these studies were conducted with teachers other than language teachers, it is noticeable that the reported barriers to formative assessment are common. Similar to the results obtained in this study, content knowledge, cultural norms, curriculum requirements, workload, social pressure, and lack of practice are among the time constraints in these studies.

As it is known, it is possible for teachers to develop students' skills and help them understand their own tendencies, as well as to provide students with the skills necessary for lifelong learning through formative assessment (Elwood, 2006). Teachers' ability to carry out all these activities depends on their competence in formative assessment. Although formative assessment features such as the expression of learning objectives and feedback differ significantly from one discipline to another, these features should be embodied in the content of the discipline in question (Bennett, 2011). At this point, in light of the results obtained from the study, the critical role of making effective training and service programs more accessible to Turkish teachers and prospective Turkish teachers is quite clear. As Heritage (2007) states, a great investment should be made in teachers to make formative assessment an integral part of professional practice. In this way, teachers can become professionalized in providing effective feedback on language skills at many different points, which is also identified as a deficiency in this study, and they can put the necessary instructional changes into effect. At this point, inclusive in-service trainings that will contribute to the development of teachers' assessment literacy should be made an important element of the curriculum reform movement in Turkish language teaching. In particular, questions such as how rapid changes in technology affect assessment methodology, what specific knowledge and skills teachers need to develop to have formative assessment competence, and sample applications should be the focus of these trainings. The sustainability of the trainings will ensure that assessment competence is adopted as one of the basic professional standards of teaching over time.

The pressure of the test-oriented exam system and centralized exams on students and teachers and their negative impact on the formative assessment process is a well-known fact. It is obvious that multiple-choice tests are limited

Table 12: Integrated Results Matrix

		<i>Quantitative Results</i>		<i>Qualitative Results</i>		
Group	Type of evidence	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Summary	Sample excerpt	Summary	Meta-inference
Assessment competence	Experiencing difficulty	3.4 (0.79)	Teachers' assessment competencies are at medium level.	P-4: "No matter how theoretically adequate I am, of course I think that I have aspects that need to be improved in practice. There are some things that I know theoretically but have difficulty in applying or cannot apply."	Teachers believe that there are aspects of assessment that need to be improved.	
	Use assessment tools	3.3 (0.88)				
	Assessment at different stages at the course	3.5 (0.75)				
	Collaboration with colleagues/stakeholders	3.6 (0.96)				Teachers should be provided with language skills-based practical training to develop their formative assessment competencies.
Use assessment tools	Use tools with explicit assessment criteria to assess language skills	3.3 (0.99)	The level of teachers' assessment of language skills with tools with explicit assessment criteria is moderate.	P-7: "You ask a few questions about the text and develop alternative answers. For example, the question has a comprehensive answer. The child answered a part of it, it is not wrong. ... but it does not satisfy us. We have problems here when giving points."	Teachers are aware of the difficulty in scoring students' speaking skills in accordance with explicit assessment criteria.	

		Quantitative Results			Qualitative Results	
Group	Type of evidence	M (SD)	Summary	Sample excerpt	Summary	Meta-inference
Feedback	Learning areas (Reading)	3.0 (1.01)	Teachers' ability to give feedback from different perspectives is not sufficient.	P-1: "I think one of the biggest difficulties we will face is that our course is under a single title but it requires measuring different areas."	Teachers believe that the absence of language skills as a stand-alone subject, intensive curriculum content, crowded classrooms, and lack of technology are barriers to feedback.	Language skills should be treated as a separate subject, curriculum content should be diluted, artificial intelligence and technology-supported feedback practices should be developed, and class sizes should be reduced.
	Feedback type (Online)	2.2 (1.10)				
	Feedback tools (Written)	3.1 (1.12)				
	Homework correction technique (Group)	2.46 (1.24)				
	Additional support (Peer assistance)	3.02 (1.23)			P-4: "One course is definitely not enough to assess speaking skills."	
	Collaboration (Peer interaction)	3.3 (0.91)			"...we have seen that artificial intelligence is used in great areas in assessment and evaluation. If students love technology, why can't we give feedback in assessment and evaluation from there?"	
				P-5: "...it is very difficult because, as I said, there is a curriculum we need to train."		
				P-6: "...my class has 40 students. It is not possible to do measurement and evaluation and give proper feedback in this class anyway."		

especially in assessing language skills, whereas alternative assessment tools improve the ability to express and organize ideas. Yet, despite this, the education system in Türkiye remains test-oriented. As Kitchen et al. (2019) point out, although Türkiye's current assessment system recognizes the vital role of assessment for learning, the education system is stuck in a narrow definition of success measured by grades. Overcoming this problem depends on the adoption and embedding of a formative assessment approach. At this point, although there is a broad consensus among teachers that formative assessment improves learning, more research needs to be done on the reasons why this assessment is not currently embedded. In particular, studies using methodologies that represent a participatory approach (e.g. action research) are needed to better understand the barriers to formative assessment. In addition, future research could focus on different types of feedback and how which students' different capacities to receive and process feedback can be improved.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation of this study is the small number of participants, which does not allow generalization of the results. In addition, the fact that the questionnaire administration and interviews with the participants were conducted online is also considered as a limitation. There is always a risk that not all participants who responded to the questionnaire items perceive the items in the same way. In addition, although the study reports the demographic characteristics of Turkish teachers such as age, gender, graduation status, and geographical region, it does not examine the impact of these characteristics on formative assessment practices. Future research with a larger sample and including different demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds in the focus of the research would contribute to a better understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of formative assessment.

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