

Participatory formative assessment in FLE in Algeria: A conceptual equation for writing instruction

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ABSTRACT

In a school context where the continuous improvement of pedagogical practices is a central objective, this study explores the role of participatory formative assessment as a catalyst for active learning in French as a Foreign Language (FLE) classrooms in Algeria. Focusing on eighth-grade students (4th year of middle school), the approach aims not only to enhance their writing skills but also to develop meta-cognitive abilities such as self-assessment, self-correction, and co-construction of personal progress. This collaborative field-based inquiry involves teachers and students jointly reflecting on teaching and learning practices, adjusting strategies, and observing outcomes, aligned with the action-learning philosophy emphasizing learning through action and collective reflection. The participatory formative assessment continuously engages learners throughout the writing process with personalized feedback, self-evaluation, and peer assessment, fostering awareness of strengths and weaknesses while stimulating motivation and learner autonomy. The study's results show significant improvements in the quality of written productions. A conceptual equation models the core relationships of this educational dynamic: $I_p = f(A_c, P_f, T_s, S_e, R_f)$

where I_p denotes the impact on instructional writing improvement, A_c the collaborative activity between teachers and students, P_f the participatory formative assessment process, T_s the teaching strategies implemented, S_e student engagement, and R_f the regular, constructive feedback derived from the formative assessment. This model highlights that enhancing writing instruction depends on the dynamic interaction of these factors, providing an adaptable framework for effective pedagogy in FLE contexts in Algeria.

Key words: action learning, formative assessment, self-assessment, constructive feedback, writing instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Formative assessment appears as an essential tool to support students' progress. Conceived as a continuous process, it allows for the regulation of teaching practices and the adaptation of interventions according to learners' needs. Through regular and constructive feedback, it encourages active engagement, fosters autonomy, and promotes meta-cognitive skills such as self-assessment and self-correction.

However, in many educational contexts, formative assessment remains underutilized. It is often reduced to occasional checks, disconnected from any participatory logic. Summative assessment, considered more "official", still dominates. This is the perspective in which our research is situated. It aims to analyze the effects of formative assessment when implemented in a participatory and continuous manner that is, engaging students in a reflective, interactive, and ongoing process.

This study addresses a key pedagogical issue: improving written production in French among 8th-grade students (4th year of middle school), in a context where most learners are Arabic-speaking. These students face specific challenges: spelling errors, syntactic issues, poor text structure, and misunderstandings of instructions. In response to these difficulties, a formative, participatory, and continuous assessment approach could enhance text quality and strengthen students' reflective learning posture. This participatory approach involves not only the teacher but also the learner, who becomes an active agent in their assessment through self-assessment and peer evaluation. This process encourages greater awareness of strengths and weaknesses, promotes autonomy, motivation, and active engagement in the development of writing skills. Within this framework, our study aims to explore the conceptual equation underlying this educational dynamic, where the improvement of writing instruction results from the interaction of several key factors: collaborative activity between teachers and students, the participatory formative assessment process, specific teaching strategies applied, student engagement, and regular constructive feedback. By examining this concrete experience in Algerian schools, this work seeks to demonstrate how this innovative pedagogical equation enables teaching to be adapted to the real needs of learners, significantly improves written production, and lays the foundation for a more inclusive, dynamic, and effective pedagogy.

We propose the following general hypothesis: when applied in a participatory and continuous manner, formative assessment can significantly improve the quality of written production among 8th-grade students. This central hypothesis is broken down into three specific assumptions:

- The use of self-assessment and peer-assessment rubrics, along with continuous feedback, helps students better structure their writing, correct their errors, and produce more coherent texts;
- The active involvement of students in their own evaluation process increases their motivation, self-confidence, and engagement in writing tasks;
- Ongoing teacher guidance fosters constructive interactions and supports learning.

From this, our main research question emerges:

To what extent can formative assessment, applied in a participatory and continuous way, improve 8th-grade students' writing skills — particularly their ability to self-assess, self-correct, and produce coherent written texts?

To address this question, we adopted an approach that combines theoretical frameworks with field-based inquiry. We rely on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory, which emphasizes the

importance of guided learning, the socio-constructivist approach centered on social interaction, and the research of Black & Wiliam (1998) and Allal (2007), which highlight the positive impact of formative assessment coupled with regular and tailored feedback.

The study was conducted with 8th-grade students in five middle schools in the Batna 6 district over the course of one trimester. The methodology combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, based on the analysis of successive written productions evaluated using specific rubrics (self-assessment, peer-assessment, and formative grids), as well as student questionnaires and classroom observations. The goal is to identify changes in writing practices and evaluate students' engagement in the assessment process.

2. Methodology Inspired by Action Learning

To address this research question, we adopted an investigation-intervention approach grounded in a continual back-and-forth between theoretical reflection and practical experimentation. This approach is based on:

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, which highlights the role of scaffolding in learning;

The **socio-constructivist approach**, which emphasizes social interaction as the foundation for building knowledge;

The work of **Black & Wiliam (1998)** and **Allal (2007)**, which demonstrates that formative assessment, when integrated into the learning process with appropriate feedback, can significantly impact student progress.

The experiment took place in schools within the Batna 6 district in Algeria, in close collaboration with teachers, following Action Learning principles:

Pedagogical sequences were collectively designed and implemented in classrooms;

There were cycles of observation, reflection, and adjustment after each sequence;

Co-assessment of effects on student written productions was conducted, focusing on clarity, coherence, and self-correction abilities

This work explores, in real conditions, the effects of formative assessment systems on the writing skills of 8th-grade students (4th year of middle school), particularly their ability to self-evaluate, peer-evaluate, and progressively improve their written work. The main objective is to determine how a formative and participative approach embedded in a writing sequence centered on a macro-communicative task can enhance text quality, foster autonomy, and increase student engagement.

Following a description of the field, the student groups, and the methodological tools (questionnaires, observation rubrics), this section details the implementation of the assessment devices and offers a comprehensive analysis of collected data: questionnaire responses, student writing outputs, and classroom observations. Finally, a cross-analysis of results extracts relevant insights for language classroom assessment practice.

2.1. Experimental Context

This study was carried out in the specific context of teaching French as a foreign language within public schools in the Batna 6 district, Algeria. Like many regions, this area faces multiple challenges in teaching French, particularly concerning written production. Teachers frequently report low student performance in writing, characterized by difficulty structuring texts, expressing coherent ideas, adhering to linguistic norms, and self-correcting.

The experiment was conducted in five schools selected for their diverse profiles (urban, semi-urban, heterogeneous classes, and average student level), involving 8th-grade students at a critical stage where writing expectations become more complex within the middle school curriculum. This choice also allowed for a structured writing routine over a full trimester, with regular learning tracking and gradual implementation of formative assessment tools.

Thus, the study places evaluation at the heart of teaching and learning not as an endpoint but as a lever for pedagogical transformation aimed at developing students' writing skills. It was conducted among 8th-grade students in five schools in Batna 6, chosen based on representativeness, pedagogical relevance, and feasibility, to ensure rigorous and continuous observation of formative assessment practices in varied educational contexts.

The five selected public middle schools represent:

Urban (Batna city): CEM Les Frères Chattouh

Semi-rural (Aïn Touta district): CEM Ben Krama Ahmed and CEM Mechetti Salah

Rural (N'Gaous district): CEM Hadevani Omar Ben Slimane and CEM Hadira Moussa

This mix provides a rich analytical framework linking educational context, formative assessment practices, and students' writing development.

The study spanned one school trimester (about three months), chosen to allow comprehensive, continuous observation of students' writing over time, while enabling the phased implementation of formative assessment strategies. This duration facilitated structured data collection and testing the impact of different feedback, self-assessment, and peer-assessment strategies on student engagement and performance.

Key achievements during this period included:

Observation of students' writing progress via multiple writing samples;

Gradual rollout of formative assessment methods, letting students adapt to each phase and receive ongoing support;

Measurement of impact on writing skills, such as idea structuring, logical connectors, clarity of argument, and effective conclusions. This enabled both quantitative and qualitative tracking of scriptural improvements.

2.2. The Sample (Student Groups)

The sample comprised five 8th-grade classes, each from a different school in Batna 6. A total of **50 students** were monitored closely (6–10 students per class), selected for in-depth tracking. They were categorized into three proficiency levels based on initial writing skill:

Struggling students: facing notable issues in idea structuring, vocabulary use, or grammar;

Average students: with solid writing skills but needing refinement;

Advanced students: proficient in writing yet working on enriching argumentation techniques.

This breakdown allowed a detailed analysis of formative assessment's effects by student profile, providing insights into individual and collective progress.

2.3. Research Design

The experiment was conducted across five schools with five classes of 8th-grade students. A subset of 50 students was closely monitored, stratified by initial skill level to analyse differential effects of formative assessment.

Data collection tools included:

a) Questionnaires

Two surveys gathered quantitative and qualitative data from students and teachers:

Student questionnaire: explored their relationship with French writing, self-assessment habits, correction strategies, perceptions of formative assessment, and evolving engagement. It combined closed (Likert scales, multiple choice) and open questions.

Teacher questionnaire: captured their evaluation practices (formative, summative, participatory), perceptions of student writing difficulties, and openness to formative and continuous assessment.

b) Observation and analysis rubric

A single structured rubric was used throughout the sessions to document student behaviour and writing evolution. It captured:

level of involvement in writing tasks,

autonomy and collaborative work,

interaction during peer assessments.

It also served to analyse written productions, the central study material.

c) Student written productions

Three types of samples were collected per student:

Initial diagnostic writing sample, without guidance or feedback.

Intermediate drafts produced throughout the sequence, incorporating teacher and peer feedback and followed by guided revision.

A final sample at the end of the sequence, reflecting the level achieved after formative guidance.

Analysis focused on text coherence, structure, cohesion (connectors, idea progression), vocabulary and style richness, and grammatical and orthographic accuracy.

Comparisons between versions revealed the individual evolution of writing skills and the concrete effects of participatory formative assessment.

d) Student learning logs

Each student kept a personal log throughout the writing sequence, serving pedagogical and methodological purposes in tracking autonomy development. Their logs recorded:

writing steps (drafts, self-assessment, revisions),

remarks and tips from peers and teachers,

reflections on progress, difficulties, and strategies used.

The logs were analysed qualitatively to identify indicators of assessment tool appropriation, metacognitive awareness, and evolving writing practices.

3. Results

Formative assessment was implemented progressively over the course of the trimester, following a structured, multi-step process:

Preparation Phase: Before introducing formative assessment tools, a sensitization phase was conducted with students. This phase involved explaining the purpose of formative assessment and how students would be evaluated and supported throughout the study period.

Implementation of Formative Assessment Strategies: From the second week onward, formative assessment strategies were gradually introduced. These included regular moments of self-assessment, peer assessment, and individualized feedback from teachers. These tools helped students become aware of their mistakes, make improvements, and better structure their written work.

Feedback and Remediation: Ongoing monitoring of student writing allowed for targeted feedback based on individual needs. Remediation sessions were organized to address the specific difficulties identified in student work. These sessions included both collective and individualized error reviews, with practical exercises and detailed explanations.

Self-Assessment and Correction: Students were encouraged to assess themselves throughout the process using evaluation grids. This allowed them to reflect on their writing skills, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and revise their texts accordingly based on peer and teacher feedback.

Final Assessment: At the end of the study, a final evaluation was conducted to measure the progress made throughout the trimester. This evaluation helped assess the impact of formative assessment

practices on the quality of student writing and determine the degree to which the initial learning objectives had been achieved.

Cross-Analysis of Questionnaire Results

The analysis of the questionnaires administered to students and teachers revealed several key areas for improvement to make formative, participatory, and continuous assessment more effective and better aligned with classroom realities.

Student Feedback

Students repeatedly emphasized the need to:

Adapt evaluation criteria, particularly by reducing the weight of the final integrated task to offer a fairer chance to struggling students;

Clarify instructions, requesting explanations in Arabic to better understand tasks;

Include at-home learning activities to reinforce learning outside class time;

Strengthen writing skills, especially in structuring texts;

Implement regular reviews and reinforcement to help assimilate key concepts.

Teacher Feedback

Teachers suggested several measures to improve the implementation of formative assessment:

Reduce class sizes to allow for more personalized support;

Adjust curriculum content and schedules to make room for participatory evaluation;

Integrate digital tools to boost student engagement;

Provide ongoing teacher training in managing group dynamics and participatory teaching methods;

Diversify pedagogical activities (projects, debates, role-playing) to address different learner profiles;

Involve students in planning activities, and **Create a positive and motivating classroom environment**, grounded in constructive feedback and regular self-assessment.

Table 1: Comparison of Student and Teacher Perspectives

Improvement Areas	Students		Teachers
Evaluation	Reduce the weight of the final integration task		Clarify criteria, integrate self- and peer-assessment, give feedback
Language and Understanding	Request instructions in Arabic		—

Activities	At-home assignments for reinforcement		Diversify formats (projects, videos, role-play...)
Writing Skills	Better text structure		Strengthen writing mastery
Review and Reinforcement	Regular review sessions		—
Class Size	—		Reduce class sizes for personalized follow-up
Content and Planning	—		Adapt programs, adjust class schedules
Technology	—		Use digital tools to energize lessons
Training and Support	—		Train teachers in participatory and active methods
Class Climate and Engagement	—		Build a positive and motivational classroom environment
Student Involvement	—		Involve students in designing learning activities

Diagram 1: Mobilizing the Right Tools

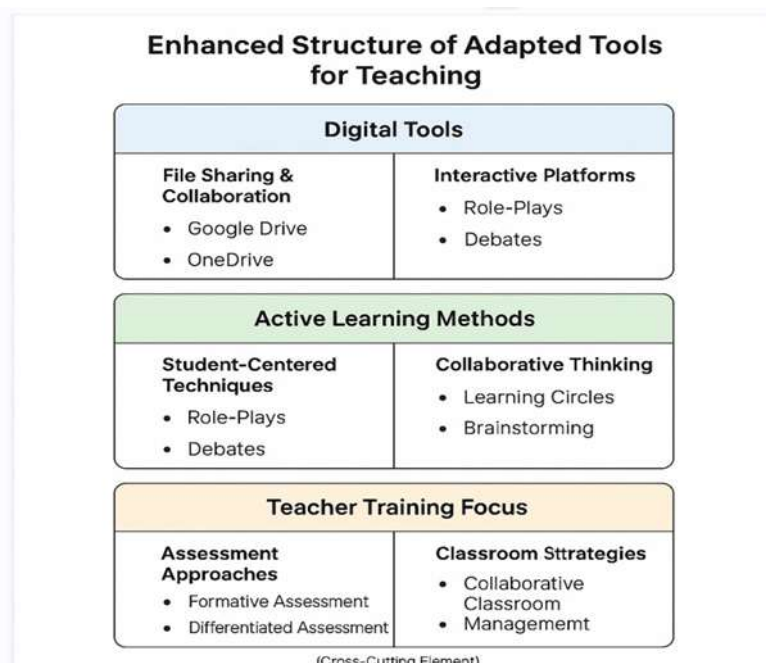


Diagram 1: Mobilization of Adapted Tools showing the key categories and strategies used by teachers.

To effectively integrate formative, participatory, and continuous assessment into classroom practices, teachers highlighted the importance of using **digital tools**, **active learning strategies**, and **targeted teacher training**.

Digital tools such as Google Drive, OneDrive, or Seesaw allow students to build digital portfolios or learning journals, supporting progress tracking and feedback.

Participatory learning strategies, such as role-playing, debates, learning circles, collaborative brainstorming, and group projects (e.g., model-building or co-writing tasks), encourage active engagement, autonomy, and social skills development.

Teacher training should focus on formative and differentiated assessment, collaborative classroom management, co-construction methods, and technology integration. These trainings are essential to help educators create interactive, inclusive, and motivating learning environments tailored to classroom realities.

3.1. Analysis of Student Written Productions

The written texts produced by students were descriptive and argumentative in nature. These were created as part of a **guided writing process** and analyzed using a **rubric with twelve criteria** related to written production and **participatory, continuous formative assessment**. These criteria evaluated not only language accuracy and coherence, but also the students' ability to apply self-assessment, integrate feedback, and progressively revise their writing.

Observation Grid – Monitoring of Writing and Formative, Participatory and Continuous Assessment

Criteria	Comments	Observation (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent)
Active involvement in writing	The student actively participates in writing their text, takes initiative, and works independently.	
Text organization and structure	The text is well structured with an introduction, logically developed ideas, and a clear conclusion. The student maintains coherence across paragraphs.	
Relevance to the task	The content is aligned with the given instructions. The student understands the topic and addresses the required elements appropriately.	

Vocabulary richness and variety	The student uses rich and varied vocabulary, appropriate to the context, and makes efforts to enrich expressions.	
Revision based on feedback	The student integrates feedback from the teacher and peers into revisions and makes improvements to enhance quality.	
Peer evaluation involvement	The student constructively evaluates peer work, offering precise and helpful feedback to assist their classmates.	
Responsiveness to peer feedback	The student considers peer feedback and uses it to revise and improve their text, showing openness to constructive criticism.	
Engagement in formative assessment	The student actively participates in the different stages of formative assessment (questionnaires, discussions, self-/peer-assessment), showing interest in the process.	
Self-correction ability	The student corrects their own errors (grammar, syntax, vocabulary) independently after receiving feedback.	
Use of assessment criteria	The student uses assessment criteria (clarity, structure, relevance) to adjust and improve their work.	
Development of learner autonomy	The student makes informed decisions about their learning process and proactively seeks to improve their work without constant teacher intervention.	

Legend for scores:

- Very Poor: The student shows major difficulties in this area.
- Poor: The student meets expectations only partially and still has significant gaps.
- Average: The student generally meets expectations but still has room for improvement.
- Good: The student demonstrates a good and independent mastery of this area with strong engagement.
- Excellent: The student excels in this area, fully applying criteria and feedback to continuously improve.

3.2 Analysis and Interpretation of Student Written Productions

3.2.1 Analysis of Written Production 1: Algeria

The written piece produced by the student reflects careful, structured, and personal work. The student follows the instructions by writing a descriptive and argumentative text about Algeria, highlighting the country's natural, historical, and cultural assets. The text has a clear structure: an introduction that situates Algeria geographically and introduces its richness; a development section exploring various aspects (landscapes, historical sites, culture); and a conclusion that expresses personal pride as well as a desire for openness to the world.

The writing demonstrates logical progression, well-delineated paragraphs, and coherent idea transitions. Linguistically, the vocabulary is generally rich and contextually appropriate, though some expressions remain simple and there are occasional repetitions. Nevertheless, the use of valorizing phrases ("treasure of nature", "I am proud", "discover its true beauty") shows lexical effort and personal investment.

There are minor errors in punctuation, syntax, and grammar (e.g., agreement, capitalization), but these do not affect overall comprehension. Notably, the student engaged in the entire writing process: drafting, self-assessment using a grid, peer and teacher feedback, and revision. This reflects full ownership of the participatory, formative, and continuous assessment process. The student integrated success criteria and feedback to improve self-correction, structure, and content. Overall, the work reveals a serious approach, a positive learning attitude, and genuine development in writing and reflective skills. Despite formal imperfections, the content is relevant, well organized, and demonstrates an ability to use both internal and external resources to enhance the text. This production illustrates the concrete benefits of participatory formative assessment on writing quality.

3.2.2 Analysis of Written Production 2: Annaba, the Pearl of the Northeast

This written piece about the city of Annaba is overall of good quality. The student shows active involvement by producing a well-structured and coherent text that respects the task. The content is enriched with specific details about the city (beaches, cuisine, history), suggesting thoughtful research.

The organization is clear, although the conclusion could be expanded for greater impact. Vocabulary is appropriate and varied, but the student should be more attentive to grammar, such as correcting 'ce caractérise par' to 'se caractérise par'. Some simple errors remain uncorrected, such as 'une mer bleu' instead of 'une mer bleue'. A more careful re-reading could have caught these issues.

Self- and peer-evaluations are present but could be better documented to trace the student's reflection and revision. It would be helpful to include explicit justifications for revisions. While the intention is evident, the student would benefit from making their revision process more visible and justified.

Overall, this is a neat piece that meets the task requirements. The student demonstrates good autonomy, though improvements in error revision and reflective documentation are needed. The work

shows real potential for progress, especially in fine-tuning self-correction and the evaluation process.

3.2.3 Analysis of Written Production 3: Tipaza – Jewel of the North

The production titled 'Tipaza: Jewel of the North' reveals serious and thoughtful student engagement in the writing process. The task is clearly understood, and the text is coherently structured with relevant and logically organized ideas. The student clearly participated in all stages planning, drafting, revising, and rewriting resulting in a coherent, culturally grounded message.

Despite this commitment, recurring lexical, grammatical, and orthographic errors persist, suggesting a still-developing command of language tools. Vocabulary is appropriate but could benefit from more variety and precision.

This work fully aligns with the principles of participatory formative assessment. The student applied feedback, used self-correction strategies, and actively engaged in peer evaluation. The result is a high-quality piece that reflects strong progression, rigor in following pedagogical steps, and a clear intent to produce structured, meaningful writing.

The student also demonstrates collaborative openness and responsiveness to suggestions signs of growing reflective and autonomous learning. To reinforce this progress, further efforts could include reading texts aloud to catch awkward phrasing, reviewing agreement rules, expanding lexical choices, using the assessment grid as a final checklist, and continuing peer exchanges.

In short, this production shows a solid and promising learning path. With continued attention to language refinement, the student is well positioned to reach a new level of writing quality and maturity.

3.2.4 Analysis of Written Production 4: Constantine – The Capital of Hanging Bridges

This analysis refers to the written production titled “*Constantine: The Capital of Hanging Bridges*”, assessed using the observation grid designed for tracking participatory and continuous formative assessment.

The writing sample displays several strengths. The student demonstrated outstanding engagement in the task, producing a rich, carefully composed, and personal text. The structure is clear and coherent, with an engaging introduction, a well-organized body, and an effective conclusion. The content is relevant and substantial: the student accurately and interestingly describes Constantine’s iconic landmarks, historical background, notable figures, and tourist attractions. The vocabulary used is rich and varied, although there are a few minor lexical inaccuracies. The student fully adhered to the task instructions and evaluation criteria, and their autonomy in both research and writing is especially commendable.

However, some areas for improvement should be noted. The readability of the text could be enhanced by improving the formatting such as adding line breaks between sections. Certain expressions could be refined to avoid redundancy or imprecise wording. A more thorough revision reading the text aloud, for example would help simplify some sentences and improve flow.

Although both self-assessment and peer assessment were included, these processes should be more explicitly reflected in the final version, for example by indicating which criteria were used or which adjustments were made based on the feedback received. Lastly, while the student took some feedback into account, a deeper linguistic revision would help elevate the writing quality even further.

To make greater progress, the student is encouraged to:

read their text aloud systematically to identify awkward phrasing,
improve visual clarity by better structuring paragraphs,
further diversify vocabulary while avoiding repetition,
make formative assessment steps more visible,
and fully utilize feedback to refine the content.

In conclusion, this is an excellent piece of work both complete and engaging. Constantine is portrayed in a vivid and appealing manner. The student demonstrated strong autonomy, a genuine ability to self-correct, and solid organizational skills. This production marks a significant step forward in the student's writing development. With focused support on stylistic revision and deepening of reflective practices, the student is well on their way to achieving an advanced level of mastery.

3.2.5 Analysis of Written Production #5: *Batna – Capital of the Aurès*

This analysis refers to the written production titled “*Batna, Capital of the Aurès*”, evaluated using the observation grid developed for tracking participatory and continuous formative assessment.

This production demonstrates remarkable personal investment on the part of the student, who succeeded in showcasing the cultural and historical richness of their region through a well-structured, relevant, and well-argued text. The student fully adhered to the instructions, accurately highlighting key features of Batna such as the archaeological site of Timgad and the characteristics of the traditional Chaoui dress within a clearly organized development. The introduction, body, and conclusion follow a logical order, resulting in a smooth and coherent reading experience.

The content is not only descriptive but also conveys a strong argumentative intention. The vocabulary is generally rich and appropriate, although it could benefit from more expressive adjectives, and some repetition is still present. The overall quality of the text suggests that the student engaged in a meaningful revision process, even if the physical traces of that process (annotated drafts, corrections) are not visible.

The self-assessment appears to have been taken seriously, and while direct evidence of peer feedback is missing, the final text's alignment with task expectations suggests that peer suggestions were taken into account. The student demonstrates the ability to self-correct, although some standard phrasing could be refined to enhance originality.

The student also showed notable autonomy throughout the writing process, strictly following all stages of the participatory formative assessment approach from the first draft to the final version. This is reflected in the logical progression and overall quality of the work.

Still, certain aspects could be improved:

using a wider variety of logical connectors to better signal argumentative structure,
adopting a more persuasive tone through suggestions, imperatives, or direct reader engagement,
and enriching the text through greater lexical diversity, especially in the choice of adjectives.

In conclusion, this is a successful piece of writing that combines personal engagement, structural clarity, and a solid grasp of the task objectives. The student clearly internalized the principles of participatory formative assessment and applied them to produce a coherent and convincing text. With a few stylistic refinements, this work has the potential to reach an even higher level of writing mastery.

4. Discussion of Results

The analysis of student written productions provides valuable insights into the effects of implementing a **formative, participatory, and continuous assessment system** on the development of students' writing skills.

1. Active Engagement and Student Responsibility

Overall, students demonstrated strong engagement in the writing task. This was evident in the care given to their work, their motivation in selecting topics (often linked to their region or culture), and their willingness to revise their texts through multiple drafts. This dynamic indicates a reappropriation of the writing process, fostered by a pedagogical environment that encourages participation and co-construction of knowledge.

2. Increasing Mastery of the Writing Process

Thanks to structured guidance and the use of tools (grids, learning journals, regular feedback), students progressively internalized the steps of the writing process: planning, drafting, self-assessment, peer-assessment, revision, and final copy. The presence of clear introductions and conclusions in most texts confirms this evolution. The progress observed suggests that the **repetition of these steps**, supported by explicit teacher guidance, helps develop student autonomy.

3. Relevant but Unevenly Developed Content

Most students produced content that was relevant and in line with the instructions describing tourist locations and emphasizing historical, cultural, natural, or culinary elements. This variety demonstrates the students' ability to **contextualize their writing in authentic frameworks**. However, the depth of development varied: some produced rich, descriptive, and emotionally engaging texts, signaling a more advanced grasp of the task.

4. Persistent Linguistic Gaps

Language mastery remains a key area for improvement. Despite clear progress in organization and clarity, many texts still contained recurring **grammatical, lexical, and syntactic errors**, especially in subject-verb agreement, verb conjugation, prepositions, and sentence structure. These observations underscore the need for **targeted language remediation activities** to be integrated into the assessment process.

5. Gradual Development of Self-Assessment Skills

The use of self- and peer-assessment grids enabled students to sharpen their critical thinking about their own writing. Many were able to identify their errors and revise meaningfully. Peer-assessment, in turn, provided **constructive external perspectives**, encouraging students to adjust their texts based on feedback. This collaborative work supports the development of reflective habits and fosters greater autonomy.

6. Toward Conscious and Thoughtful Writing

Across the board, students began shifting away from impulsive or purely mechanical writing toward more **deliberate, structured, and contextualized expression**. Writing gradually became a conscious act, with students taking ownership of their learning. Drafting, feedback integration, and rewriting all contributed to a deeper appropriation of the writing process.

These findings validate the relevance of a **formative, participatory assessment model** rooted in active student involvement. Placing learners at the center of the process not only improves writing quality, but also builds key transversal competencies: autonomy, revision skills, collaboration, and critical reflection. The experience shows that **even struggling students can make real progress when supported within a clear, supportive, and participatory framework**.

General Cross-Analysis of Results: Questionnaires and Written Productions

The cross-analysis of data collected through questionnaires administered to teachers and students, along with the study of students' written productions, offers a **holistic view** of the role and impact of **formative, participatory, and continuous assessment** on the teaching and learning of French in 8th grade .

These results are examined through the lens of key theoretical frameworks, particularly **Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development**, the **socioconstructivist approach**, and the research of **Black & Wiliam (1998)** on **assessment for learning**.

1. A Clear Pedagogical Intention Constrained by Contextual Challenges

Teachers' responses reveal a strong awareness of the value of formative assessment within a student-centered approach. The vast majority report:

Adapting their teaching based on students' successes and errors (nearly 100%);

Involving students in the evaluation process, helping them understand success criteria, engage in self-assessment, and participate in peer assessment;

Implementing remediation and differentiated instruction when student needs are identified through formative tools.

However, despite these intentions, teachers face several structural and institutional barriers that hinder consistent application of these practices:

Overloaded curricula and fast-paced schedules that do not allow for individualized follow-up;

Overcrowded and heterogeneous classrooms, making differentiated support difficult;

Lack of ongoing professional development, especially in formative and participatory assessment methods.

These findings show that while teachers are pedagogically committed, they are often caught between their beliefs and the limitations of their work environments, which reduces the potential impact of these innovative approaches.

2. Students' Positive Perception and Gradual Engagement

Student questionnaire results reveal a **generally positive perception** of their involvement in the assessment process:

They **better understand expectations** thanks to clear instructions, criteria, and evaluation grids;

They **appreciate self- and peer-assessment activities**, which help them improve, position themselves in their learning, and take responsibility;

They **welcome opportunities to participate** in correction, feedback, and discussion activities.

However, engagement levels vary by student profile. Some encounter difficulties with:

Understanding abstract criteria, due to a lack of practice or clear modeling;

Effectively self-correcting, often because of linguistic gaps or low self-confidence;

Collaborating constructively during peer-assessment, particularly in groups with imbalanced social dynamics.

This indicates that adopting participatory evaluation practices takes time. It requires **gradual scaffolding, clear instructions, explicit models, and metacognitive training**.

3. Written Productions Show Real Progress—but Also Limitations

The analysis of student writing revealed **concrete improvements** in the work of those involved in the participatory formative assessment system. Notable observations include:

Students followed the full **writing process**: topic selection, drafting, self-assessment, revision, peer-assessment, correction, and final production;

Texts were **better structured**, with clear introductions, coherent multi-paragraph development, and conclusions;

Themes were **relevant and locally grounded** (highlighting their region, heritage, or Algerian culture), reflecting personal engagement.

However, some weaknesses persist:

Linguistic issues: grammar and vocabulary errors remain frequent, despite revisions;

Coherence: some texts still contain juxtaposed ideas without smooth transitions;

Autonomy: not all students use feedback and assessment grids independently—some only make surface-level corrections.

These results suggest that while the approach is effective, it needs to be **sustained over time**, accompanied by regular language work and **explicit support for revision** strategies.

4. Self- and Peer-Assessment: Drivers of Autonomy and Responsibility

One of the major strengths of this approach lies in the **reflective practices** introduced to students:

Self-assessment fosters awareness of errors, as well as the ability to plan, revise, and improve their work;

Peer-assessment offers new perspectives, promotes dialogue, and facilitates social learning.

These two methods helped transform students from **passive executors to conscious authors**. They also contributed to the development of **intellectual and methodological autonomy**.

However, the success of these practices depends on several conditions:

Gradual learning of metacognitive skills;

A trusting and respectful classroom climate;

Explicit training in critically reading and responding to texts.

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of a **formative, participatory, and continuous assessment** approach on the quality of students' written productions in French as a second language. It was based on an experimental program conducted with 8th-grade students in the Batna 6 district of Algeria.

The approach was grounded in a **socioconstructivist framework**, drawing on **Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development**, the contributions of **Black & Wiliam (1998)** on formative assessment, and critical and participatory perspectives in evaluation (e.g., **Guba & Lincoln, Patton, Brousselle**).

Findings confirmed that **active student involvement in their own assessment** significantly contributes to improving writing skills, autonomy, and engagement. Students learned to revise, self-assess, use peer feedback effectively, and organize their texts more coherently and expressively, reflecting a shift in student identity from passive executors to conscious, reflective authors capable of metacognitive learning.

Despite its promise, this approach requires **regular teacher support**, a **trusting and collaborative classroom climate**, and time for adaptation. Resistance to departing from traditional assessment methods remains a challenge for broader implementation.

This research highlights the need to **redefine the role of assessment** in language education—not

merely as a measurement tool but as a **pedagogical driver** and **catalyst for linguistic development**.

To conceptualize this dynamic, the following equation encapsulates the key relationships underlying writing improvement:

$$I_p = f(A_c, P_f, T_s, S_e, R_f)$$

where:

- I_p = Impact on instructional writing improvement
- A_c = Collaborative activity between teachers and students
- P_f = Participatory formative assessment process
- T_s = Teaching strategies implemented
- S_e = Student engagement and perception
- R_f = Regular, constructive feedback

This model underscores that enhancement in writing instruction depends on the interactive synergy of these factors, offering an adaptable framework for effective pedagogy in FLE contexts.

Future directions include extending the analysis over a full school year, applying collaborative assessment to other language competencies, providing teacher training, and creating networks to foster a shared culture of assessment, recognizing each student as an active agent in their learning journey.

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