

## EFL TEACHERS' CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN GHANAIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates EFL teachers' classroom assessment practices in Ghanaian secondary schools, focusing on the types of assessment used, the challenges teachers encounter, and the pedagogical implications of their practices. Employing a qualitative case study design, the study involved 8 to 12 English teachers selected through purposive sampling from selected secondary schools in Ghana. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, including lesson plans, quizzes, worksheets, marking schemes, and samples of students' written work. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns across teachers' reported and observed assessment practices. The findings indicate that teachers regularly used classroom assessment to monitor students' learning; however, their practices were largely dominated by written tests, quizzes, grammar exercises, reading comprehension tasks, homework, and end-of-unit tests. The use of formative, alternative, communicative, and performance-based assessment remained limited. Major challenges included large class sizes, limited instructional time, examination pressure, heavy workload, insufficient assessment training, limited resources, and students' varied English proficiency levels. The study concludes that classroom assessment in Ghanaian secondary EFL classrooms needs to move toward a more learning-oriented and communicative approach. Strengthening teachers' assessment literacy is recommended to support more valid, balanced, and pedagogically meaningful EFL assessment practices.*

**Keywords:** *Classroom Assessment; EFL Teachers; Ghanaian Secondary Schools; Assessment Literacy; Pedagogical Implications*

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### INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a central component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction because it connects teaching decisions, learning evidence, feedback, and students' language development. In contemporary language education, assessment is no longer viewed merely as a mechanism for assigning grades or ranking learners, but as a pedagogical process that helps teachers identify students' strengths, diagnose learning difficulties, and adjust classroom instruction. This shift is particularly important in EFL classrooms, where learners need continuous support to develop grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, speaking, and communicative competence. Recent studies on language assessment literacy and classroom-based assessment emphasize that teachers' assessment knowledge strongly influences the quality of their instructional decisions, the validity of classroom evaluation, and the usefulness of feedback for student learning (Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020; Yan et al., 2022; Maruf & Halyna, 2023). Therefore,

investigating teachers' classroom assessment practices is essential for understanding how assessment functions in real EFL teaching contexts.

In EFL education, classroom assessment is expected to serve both formative and summative purposes. Formative assessment allows teachers to monitor learning during instruction, provide feedback, and support students before final evaluation, while summative assessment is commonly used to judge achievement at the end of a lesson, unit, semester, or academic year. However, recent studies have shown that many EFL teachers still experience difficulty balancing assessment for learning and assessment of learning, especially when institutional expectations, curriculum demands, and examination pressures shape their classroom practices (Zulaiha et al., 2020; Gan & Lam, 2023; Ulyah et al., 2021). In this regard, effective assessment requires not only technical knowledge of test construction but also teachers' ability to interpret assessment results, communicate feedback, and use assessment evidence to improve teaching. Thus, classroom assessment practices need to be examined as part of teachers' professional competence rather than as isolated testing activities.

The importance of assessment is closely related to the concept of language assessment literacy. Language assessment literacy refers to teachers' knowledge, skills, and principles in designing, administering, interpreting, and using language assessment appropriately. Teachers with adequate assessment literacy are more likely to design valid tasks, align assessment with learning objectives, apply clear criteria, and provide feedback that supports learners' progress. In contrast, limited assessment literacy may lead to inappropriate assessment methods, unclear scoring procedures, overdependence on traditional tests, and weak feedback practices. Empirical evidence from EFL contexts indicates that teachers often require further professional development in selecting assessment methods, constructing test specifications, developing assessment tasks, and using assessment results for pedagogical improvement (Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020; Vogt et al., 2020; Zuhri et al., 2021). These findings suggest that assessment literacy remains a continuing professional need among EFL teachers.

Recent studies have also shown that teachers' assessment beliefs do not always correspond with their classroom practices. Some teachers may conceptually support formative, communicative, or learner-centered assessment, but their actual practices may remain dominated by written tests, grammar-based exercises, and summative examinations. This mismatch often occurs because classroom assessment is shaped by multiple factors, including teacher training, school culture, class size, available resources, curriculum policy, and high-stakes examinations. Zulaiha et al. (2020) found that Indonesian EFL teachers' perceptions of classroom-based assessment were not always fully reflected in their classroom practices. Similarly, studies on language assessment literacy have emphasized that teachers' assessment decisions are influenced by both individual competence and contextual constraints (Yan et al., 2022; Gan & Lam, 2023). Therefore, classroom assessment should be studied contextually because teachers' practices cannot be separated from the educational environments in which they work.

In the Ghanaian context, the issue of classroom assessment deserves particular scholarly attention. English has an important role in Ghanaian education because it functions as the official language and the medium of instruction across major levels of

schooling. For secondary school students, English proficiency is closely connected to academic achievement, access to further education, and participation in wider social and professional domains. As a result, assessment practices in English language classrooms carry significant consequences for students' learning opportunities and educational progression. However, recent Ghana-based studies suggest that classroom assessment remains unevenly implemented and that teachers' assessment conceptions, literacy, and practices vary across school contexts. Quainoo et al. (2025) reported different profiles of classroom assessment literacy among Ghanaian basic school teachers, while Quainoo et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of understanding teachers' conceptions of assessment in Ghanaian senior high schools. These studies indicate that assessment in Ghana is not merely a technical issue but also a pedagogical and contextual one.

Despite growing attention to classroom assessment in Ghana, research focusing specifically on EFL teachers' classroom assessment practices in Ghanaian secondary schools remains limited. Much of the existing research has examined general classroom assessment literacy, teachers' conceptions of assessment, or assessment practices in broader educational contexts. While such studies provide valuable insights, they do not fully explain how EFL teachers assess language learning in secondary schools, what assessment methods they commonly use, how they provide feedback, and what challenges they encounter in assessing students' English language competence. This gap is important because EFL assessment involves particular demands, including the assessment of communicative competence, productive and receptive skills, accuracy, fluency, interaction, and language use in context. Therefore, a more focused investigation is needed to understand the realities of classroom assessment in Ghanaian EFL secondary education.

Another research gap concerns the pedagogical implications of teachers' assessment practices. Many studies on assessment literacy identify teachers' knowledge levels or training needs, but fewer studies examine how classroom assessment practices influence teaching decisions, student engagement, feedback culture, and the development of communicative competence. In EFL classrooms, assessment should ideally encourage students to use English meaningfully, reflect on their progress, and improve through feedback. However, when assessment is dominated by summative testing and examination preparation, it may narrow the curriculum and reduce opportunities for authentic language use. Studies in EFL assessment contexts have repeatedly emphasized the need to connect assessment with learning-oriented pedagogy, feedback, and classroom decision-making (Vogt et al., 2020; Gan & Lam, 2023). Hence, examining the pedagogical implications of assessment practices is essential for improving both teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

The present study is therefore situated at the intersection of classroom assessment, language assessment literacy, and EFL pedagogy in Ghanaian secondary schools. Its novelty lies in its specific focus on EFL teachers' classroom assessment practices in the Ghanaian secondary school context, with attention to the methods teachers use, the challenges they encounter, and the pedagogical implications that emerge from their practices. This focus is significant because assessment practices in EFL classrooms are shaped not only by teachers' professional knowledge but also by local curriculum expectations, examination culture, institutional conditions, and learners' language needs.

By examining these issues, the study is expected to contribute to the growing literature on language assessment literacy and classroom-based assessment in underrepresented EFL contexts.

Based on the background and gaps discussed above, this study aims to investigate EFL teachers' classroom assessment practices in Ghanaian secondary schools. Specifically, the study seeks to explore the types of classroom assessment practices used by EFL teachers, identify the challenges teachers face in implementing classroom assessment, and analyze the pedagogical implications of these practices for English language teaching and learning. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to research on EFL assessment and practical insights for teachers, school leaders, curriculum developers, and teacher education institutions. In particular, this study may support the development of more valid, learner-centered, and pedagogically meaningful assessment practices in Ghanaian secondary EFL classrooms.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate EFL teachers' classroom assessment practices in Ghanaian secondary schools. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of how teachers design, implement, interpret, and use classroom assessment in their English language teaching practices. Qualitative research is particularly useful for exploring complex educational phenomena, especially when the researcher seeks to understand participants' experiences, classroom realities, and contextual factors that shape pedagogical practices (Busetto et al., 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, classroom assessment was examined not only as a technical process of measuring student achievement, but also as a pedagogical practice influenced by teachers' assessment literacy, institutional expectations, curriculum demands, and classroom conditions.

The case study design was selected because the study focused on a specific educational context, namely EFL assessment practices in selected Ghanaian secondary schools. This design enabled the researcher to explore assessment practices within their natural setting and to generate a contextualized understanding of teachers' practices and challenges. The study specifically examined three main aspects: the types of classroom assessment practices used by EFL teachers, the challenges teachers encountered in implementing classroom assessment, and the pedagogical implications of these practices for English language teaching and learning.

### **Participants and Context**

The study was conducted in selected secondary schools in Ghana where English is taught as a core subject and used as a medium of instruction. Ghana was selected as the research context because English plays a significant role in students' academic achievement, national examinations, and access to higher education. In secondary schools, English language assessment is therefore highly consequential because it influences both classroom learning and students' educational progression.

The participants of this study were EFL teachers who taught English at the secondary school level. They were selected using purposive sampling because the study

required participants who had direct experience in planning, implementing, and evaluating classroom assessment in English language classrooms. The selection criteria included: having experience teaching English at a Ghanaian secondary school, being actively involved in classroom assessment, having at least two years of teaching experience, and being willing to participate in interviews, classroom observations, and document collection.

Approximately 8 to 12 EFL teachers were involved in the study. This number was considered suitable for a qualitative case study because it allowed the researcher to collect rich and detailed data while maintaining depth in the analysis. The participating teachers were expected to represent different teaching experiences, school conditions, and classroom assessment practices. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used for both teachers and schools throughout the research report.

### **Instruments**

The study used four main research instruments: a semi-structured interview guide, a classroom observation checklist, field notes, and a document analysis guide. The semi-structured interview guide was designed to explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to classroom assessment. The interview questions focused on assessment purposes, types of assessment used in the classroom, feedback practices, scoring procedures, use of assessment results, and constraints in implementing assessment.

The classroom observation checklist was used to record assessment-related activities during English language instruction. The checklist included indicators such as teachers' questioning techniques, use of oral and written feedback, classroom tasks, quizzes, peer assessment, self-assessment, performance-based activities, and interaction between teachers and students during assessment activities. Field notes were used to capture contextual information that could not be fully recorded in the checklist, including classroom atmosphere, student responses, teacher instructions, and assessment-related interactions.

The document analysis guide was used to examine assessment-related materials collected from the participating teachers. These documents included lesson plans, assessment tasks, quizzes, worksheets, marking schemes, scoring rubrics, and samples of students' written work. The document analysis focused on the types of assessment tasks used, the language skills assessed, the clarity of assessment criteria, the alignment between assessment and learning objectives, and the extent to which assessment materials supported students' language learning.

### **Research Procedures**

The research procedures were carried out in several stages. First, the researcher obtained permission from relevant school authorities to conduct the study. After permission was granted, the researcher contacted potential participants and explained the purpose, scope, procedures, and ethical considerations of the study. Teachers who agreed to participate were asked to complete an informed consent form. Second, the researcher arranged a schedule for classroom observations and interviews based on the availability of the participants. Classroom observations were conducted before the interviews so that the researcher could gain direct insight into teachers' actual assessment practices. This

sequence also allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions during interviews based on observed classroom events. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant after the observation sessions. The interviews provided opportunities for teachers to explain the reasons behind their assessment practices, describe challenges that might not be visible during observation, and reflect on the pedagogical implications of their assessment decisions. Finally, assessment-related documents were collected from the teachers to support and triangulate the data obtained from observations and interviews.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain detailed information about teachers' classroom assessment practices, beliefs, challenges, and pedagogical considerations. Each interview was conducted individually and lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. When audio recording was not permitted, detailed notes were taken during and immediately after the interview.

Classroom observations were conducted to examine how assessment practices were implemented during English language lessons. Each teacher was observed during regular classroom instruction. The observation focused on assessment-related practices such as questioning, classroom exercises, oral feedback, written feedback, quizzes, group tasks, peer interaction, and teacher responses to students' learning difficulties. Observation data were recorded using the observation checklist and expanded through field notes.

Document analysis was conducted to provide additional evidence of teachers' assessment practices. The documents collected from teachers were examined to identify the forms, purposes, and quality of classroom assessment materials. The use of multiple data sources enabled the researcher to compare teachers' stated practices with their observed practices and written assessment materials. This triangulation strengthened the interpretation of the data and provided a more comprehensive understanding of assessment practices in Ghanaian EFL secondary classrooms.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to identify, organize, and interpret patterns of meaning across qualitative data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Busetto et al., 2020). The analysis began with data familiarization, in which the researcher repeatedly read the interview transcripts, observation notes, and assessment documents to gain an overall understanding of the data.

After familiarization, initial codes were generated based on recurring ideas related to classroom assessment practices, assessment purposes, feedback strategies, scoring procedures, challenges, contextual constraints, and pedagogical implications. The codes were then grouped into broader categories and potential themes. The emerging themes were reviewed and refined by comparing them across the three data sources. For example, teachers' interview statements about formative assessment were compared with classroom observation notes and assessment documents to determine whether their reported practices were reflected in actual classroom activities.

The final themes were interpreted in relation to the research objectives. The analysis focused on explaining what types of assessment practices were used by EFL teachers, why certain practices were preferred, what challenges influenced assessment implementation, and how these practices affected English language teaching and learning. The findings were then presented narratively using selected data extracts from interviews, observations, and documents to support the interpretation.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed, including triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trail. In qualitative research, the terms credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability are commonly used to evaluate research quality rather than validity and reliability in the quantitative sense (Busetto et al., 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, this study applied procedures that strengthened the credibility and consistency of the research process.

Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. This strategy helped the researcher verify whether teachers' reported assessment practices were consistent with their observed practices and assessment materials. Member checking was conducted by allowing selected participants to review summaries of their interview responses and the researcher's interpretations. This process helped confirm whether the participants' views were accurately represented.

Peer debriefing was also employed by discussing the coding process, theme development, and interpretation of findings with academic peers or supervisors. This procedure helped reduce researcher bias and improve the clarity of data interpretation. In addition, an audit trail was maintained by documenting the research procedures, interview transcripts, observation notes, coding decisions, and theme development. These procedures were used to ensure that the findings were grounded in the data and that the research process was transparent and systematic.

Ethical considerations were also addressed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. The names of participants and schools were replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. All data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents were used only for research purposes.

## **RESULTS**

The results of this study are presented based on the data obtained from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The analysis generated four main themes: teachers' dominant classroom assessment practices, the use of feedback in assessment, challenges in implementing classroom assessment, and the pedagogical implications emerging from teachers' assessment practices. These themes were identified through repeated coding of interview transcripts, observation notes, and assessment-related documents, including lesson plans, quizzes, worksheets, marking schemes, and samples of students' written work.

### **Teachers' Dominant Classroom Assessment Practices**

The findings revealed that EFL teachers in Ghanaian secondary schools used various classroom assessment practices to monitor students' English learning. However, the most dominant forms of assessment were written tests, quizzes, class exercises, oral questioning, homework, and end-of-unit tests. These practices were commonly used to assess students' understanding of grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, essay writing, and general English usage.

Most teachers reported that they used classroom assessment to determine whether students had understood the lesson content. In the interviews, teachers explained that assessment helped them identify students who needed additional explanation or remedial instruction. For instance, one teacher stated:

Excerpt 1: *"I usually give them short exercises after teaching a topic. It helps me know whether they have understood the lesson or whether I need to explain again."*

Classroom observations confirmed that short written exercises and oral questions were frequently used at the end of lessons. Teachers often asked students to answer grammar questions, identify correct sentence structures, complete comprehension tasks, or write short responses based on a reading passage. These assessment activities were usually conducted individually, although some teachers occasionally used pair or group tasks. Document analysis also showed that most assessment materials were teacher-made and closely related to topics covered in class. The documents included grammar exercises, reading comprehension questions, vocabulary tasks, essay prompts, and short quizzes. However, most of these assessment tasks emphasized written accuracy and content recall rather than communicative language use. Assessment of speaking, listening, interactional competence, and performance-based language use appeared less frequently in the collected documents.

The data further indicated that summative-oriented assessment was more dominant than formative-oriented assessment. Although teachers used questioning and class exercises during lessons, these practices were often treated as routine checking activities rather than systematic formative assessment. Teachers rarely documented students' progress over time or used structured formative assessment tools such as rubrics, learning portfolios, self-assessment checklists, or peer assessment forms.

### **Use of Feedback in Classroom Assessment**

The second major finding relates to teachers' feedback practices. The interviews revealed that teachers recognized feedback as an important part of classroom assessment. They believed that feedback helped students understand their mistakes and improve their English performance. Most teachers reported that they provided feedback after written exercises, quizzes, essays, and oral classroom responses.

The observation data showed that feedback was commonly delivered orally during classroom interaction. Teachers usually corrected students' answers immediately after they responded to questions. For example, when students made grammatical mistakes, teachers often provided the correct form and asked the class to repeat it. In writing tasks,

teachers typically marked errors and wrote brief comments such as “good,” “improve your grammar,” “check your spelling,” or “write more clearly.”

Although feedback was frequently provided, the depth and quality of feedback varied. Some teachers gave explanatory feedback by showing students why an answer was incorrect and how it could be improved. However, in many cases, feedback focused mainly on identifying mistakes rather than guiding students toward revision and independent improvement. Written feedback on students’ work was often brief and correction-based. One teacher explained:

Excerpt 2: *“Because of the number of students, sometimes I only mark the errors and give general comments. It is difficult to write detailed feedback for every student.”*

This statement was consistent with classroom observation and document analysis. In large classes, teachers had limited time to provide individualized feedback. As a result, feedback was often general and addressed to the whole class rather than tailored to individual students’ learning needs. The findings suggest that although teachers understood the pedagogical value of feedback, contextual constraints limited their ability to provide detailed, continuous, and formative feedback.

### **Challenges in Implementing Classroom Assessment**

The study identified several challenges that affected the implementation of classroom assessment in Ghanaian secondary EFL classrooms. These challenges included large class size, limited instructional time, heavy workload, examination pressure, insufficient assessment training, limited teaching and learning resources, and students’ varied English proficiency levels. Large class size emerged as one of the most significant challenges. Many teachers reported that the number of students in their classes made it difficult to monitor individual progress, conduct performance-based assessment, and provide detailed feedback. During observations, some classrooms had many students, which limited opportunities for individual participation. Teachers tended to rely on whole-class questioning and written exercises because these methods were easier to manage in large classrooms.

Time limitation was another major challenge. Teachers explained that they had to cover the syllabus within a limited period while also preparing students for examinations. As a result, assessment activities that required more time, such as oral presentations, portfolios, peer assessment, and project-based tasks, were rarely implemented. One participant stated:

Excerpt 3: *“We would like to assess speaking and presentation more often, but the time is not enough. We have to finish the syllabus and prepare them for exams.”*

Examination pressure also influenced teachers’ assessment choices. The findings showed that teachers often aligned their classroom assessments with the format of school-based and external examinations. This practice encouraged the use of written tests, comprehension questions, grammar exercises, and essay writing tasks. While these assessment forms were useful for preparing students for examinations, they limited the use of communicative and alternative assessment methods.

Another challenge was limited assessment literacy and professional development. Some teachers expressed uncertainty about how to design rubrics, implement peer assessment, assess speaking skills, and use assessment results systematically for instructional planning. Although teachers had experience in preparing classroom tests, not all of them had received sufficient training in contemporary classroom-based assessment practices.

Document analysis supported this finding. Few teachers used detailed scoring rubrics or assessment criteria, particularly for writing and speaking tasks. Marking schemes were mostly answer-based and focused on correct responses. In writing assessment, teachers often considered grammar, spelling, and content, but the criteria were not always explicitly stated. This suggests that assessment criteria were sometimes implicit and teacher-dependent.

Students' varied English proficiency levels also created challenges for assessment. Teachers reported that some students struggled with basic grammar and vocabulary, while others were more capable of completing advanced tasks. This variation made it difficult for teachers to design assessment activities that were suitable for all learners. In some observed lessons, teachers simplified tasks to accommodate lower-proficiency students, but this sometimes reduced opportunities for higher-performing students to demonstrate more complex language use.

#### **Limited Use of Alternative and Communicative Assessment**

The results also showed that alternative and communicative assessment practices were not widely implemented. Although some teachers occasionally used group work, oral questioning, role-play, and class presentations, these practices were not consistently used as formal assessment strategies. In most cases, such activities were treated as classroom learning activities rather than structured assessment tasks with clear criteria.

Assessment of speaking and listening skills was particularly limited. Teachers acknowledged that communicative competence was important in English language learning, but they also reported that assessing speaking and listening was difficult due to large classes, time constraints, lack of equipment, and absence of standardized scoring rubrics. As a result, students' English proficiency was more frequently assessed through written tasks than oral or interactive tasks. The collected documents reflected this pattern. Most assessment materials focused on reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and writing. Very few documents contained speaking rubrics, listening tasks, self-assessment forms, peer assessment sheets, or project-based assessment guidelines. This indicates that classroom assessment was more strongly oriented toward written language performance than communicative language use.

#### **Pedagogical Implications Emerging from Assessment Practices**

The findings revealed several pedagogical implications. First, the dominance of written and examination-oriented assessment may limit students' opportunities to develop communicative competence. Since most classroom assessment tasks focused on grammar, reading comprehension, and written accuracy, students had fewer opportunities to demonstrate oral communication, interaction, fluency, and real-life language use. Second, the limited use of detailed feedback may reduce the formative value of classroom

assessment. Although teachers provided feedback, it was often brief, general, and correction-focused. This type of feedback may help students identify mistakes, but it may not be sufficient to guide deeper learning, revision, and long-term improvement. More descriptive and learning-oriented feedback is needed to help students understand how to improve their English performance. Third, the findings suggest that teachers need more professional support in classroom assessment literacy. Teachers demonstrated practical knowledge of traditional assessment methods, but some had difficulty implementing alternative assessment, developing rubrics, assessing communicative skills, and using assessment data systematically. Professional development programs focusing on formative assessment, feedback strategies, performance assessment, and rubric design would be beneficial for improving classroom assessment quality.

Fourth, the study found that classroom conditions strongly shaped teachers' assessment practices. Large class size, examination pressure, limited time, and resource constraints affected what teachers could realistically implement. Therefore, improving assessment practices requires not only teacher training but also institutional and policy support. Schools need to provide teachers with manageable assessment guidelines, resources, and time to implement more learner-centered assessment practices.

Overall, the results indicate that EFL teachers in Ghanaian secondary schools used classroom assessment regularly, but their practices were largely dominated by traditional written assessment and examination-oriented tasks. While teachers recognized the importance of assessment and feedback, several contextual and professional challenges limited the implementation of formative, alternative, and communicative assessment practices. These findings highlight the need for stronger assessment literacy, better feedback practices, and more context-sensitive assessment support in Ghanaian secondary EFL classrooms.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that EFL teachers in Ghanaian secondary schools regularly used classroom assessment as part of their instructional routines, but their practices were still largely dominated by written tests, quizzes, grammar exercises, reading comprehension questions, homework, and end-of-unit tests. This pattern suggests that classroom assessment was commonly understood as a means of checking students' mastery of lesson content rather than as a systematic process for supporting continuous language development. Such a finding is consistent with previous research showing that EFL teachers often recognize the importance of classroom-based assessment but continue to rely on conventional testing practices because these practices are familiar, manageable, and closely aligned with examination requirements (Zulaiha et al., 2020; Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020). It also supports broader language assessment literacy studies which argue that teachers' assessment practices are shaped not only by professional knowledge but also by institutional culture, policy demands, and classroom realities (Yan et al., 2022; Gan & Lam, 2023).

The dominance of written and summative-oriented assessment in this study reflects the strong influence of examination culture on EFL teaching. Although teachers used oral questioning and short class exercises during lessons, these activities were not

always developed into systematic formative assessment practices. In many cases, they functioned as immediate checks of understanding rather than as evidence for planning differentiated instruction, tracking student progress, or designing follow-up learning activities. This finding is in line with studies indicating that teachers may use assessment activities frequently but may not always use assessment information formatively to improve learning (Zulaiha et al., 2020; Vogt et al., 2020). In the Ghanaian context, this issue is also relevant to recent findings that classroom assessment literacy among teachers varies across profiles and is influenced by how teachers conceptualize the purposes and uses of assessment (Quainoo et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2022).

One important interpretation of this finding is that the participating teachers appeared to possess practical assessment knowledge, but this knowledge was more strongly associated with traditional assessment procedures than with learning-oriented assessment. Teachers were able to prepare exercises, administer quizzes, mark students' responses, and provide classroom corrections. However, they showed more limited use of assessment tools that require explicit criteria, learner reflection, and long-term monitoring, such as rubrics, portfolios, self-assessment sheets, peer assessment forms, and performance-based tasks. This pattern reflects a gap between assessment as measurement and assessment as pedagogy. Recent research on language assessment literacy emphasizes that effective assessment literacy requires teachers not only to construct tests but also to interpret evidence, communicate feedback, and use assessment information to enhance learning (Yan et al., 2022; Gan & Lam, 2023). Therefore, the findings suggest that professional development for EFL teachers should move beyond test preparation and include practical training in formative, alternative, and communicative assessment.

The limited implementation of alternative and communicative assessment is pedagogically significant because EFL learning requires more than grammatical accuracy and written comprehension. Students also need opportunities to demonstrate oral communication, fluency, interactional competence, listening comprehension, and meaningful language use. The results showed that speaking and listening were less frequently assessed than grammar, reading, and writing. This finding is consistent with studies that report a mismatch between communicative language teaching goals and actual classroom assessment practices in EFL contexts (Zulaiha et al., 2020; Vogt et al., 2020). It also aligns with recent discussions of language assessment literacy which argue that language teachers need context-sensitive competence in assessing multiple language skills, including productive and interactive skills (Yan et al., 2022; Gan & Lam, 2023). In this study, the limited assessment of speaking and listening may reduce students' opportunities to develop communicative competence, especially if students mainly associate English success with written examination performance.

The findings also revealed that feedback was a common component of classroom assessment, but its formative value was constrained by the nature and depth of the feedback provided. Teachers frequently corrected students' mistakes orally and marked written work, but feedback was often brief, general, and correction-focused. While such feedback may help students identify errors, it may not provide sufficient guidance for revision, self-regulation, or independent improvement. This finding supports recent research on feedback literacy, which emphasizes that effective feedback should be understood as a process that helps students make sense of information and use it to

improve learning, rather than as one-way correction from teacher to student (Carless & Winstone, 2020; Winstone et al., 2022). It is also consistent with EFL assessment studies showing that feedback practices are often limited by teachers' workload, time constraints, and class size (Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020; Vogt et al., 2020).

The feedback practices found in this study suggest that teachers need stronger support in developing feedback literacy. Feedback literacy involves teachers' capacity to design feedback opportunities, provide actionable information, engage students in dialogue, and help learners use feedback for improvement. In large EFL classrooms, teachers may find it difficult to provide individualized comments for every student. Nevertheless, feedback can still be made more pedagogically meaningful through strategies such as whole-class feedback, coded written feedback, peer feedback, rubric-based comments, revision tasks, and student reflection logs. These strategies are consistent with contemporary views that effective feedback is not merely about the amount of comments given, but about whether learners can understand, process, and act upon the feedback (Carless & Winstone, 2020; Winstone et al., 2022). Therefore, improving feedback practices should become a central part of classroom assessment reform in Ghanaian secondary EFL classrooms.

The challenges identified in this study—large class size, limited instructional time, examination pressure, heavy workload, insufficient assessment training, limited resources, and students' diverse proficiency levels—show that classroom assessment practices are shaped by contextual realities. These challenges help explain why teachers preferred assessment methods that were easier to administer and score, such as written exercises and quizzes. This interpretation is supported by comparative studies on language assessment literacy, which show that teachers' assessment practices and training needs are context-dependent and influenced by educational systems, available resources, and institutional expectations (Vogt et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2022). The Ghana-based evidence from Quainoo et al. (2025) also indicates that teachers do not hold uniform assessment literacy profiles, meaning that professional development should not assume that all teachers have the same needs or face the same classroom conditions.

A further implication of these challenges is that improving classroom assessment cannot be achieved only by asking teachers to adopt new methods. Assessment reform also requires institutional and policy-level support. For example, teachers may understand the value of oral presentation, peer assessment, or portfolio assessment, but these practices are difficult to implement when class sizes are large, the syllabus is overloaded, and examinations remain the primary measure of success. This finding is consistent with studies arguing that language assessment literacy should be viewed as socially and institutionally situated, not merely as an individual teacher competence (Yan et al., 2022; Gan & Lam, 2023). In practical terms, schools and curriculum authorities need to provide assessment guidelines, manageable rubrics, training workshops, and assessment resources that help teachers implement formative and communicative assessment within realistic classroom conditions.

The findings also contribute to the literature by extending discussions of EFL classroom assessment to the Ghanaian secondary school context. Previous studies have examined EFL teachers' assessment literacy and training needs in other contexts, such as Indonesia and Europe, and have shown that teachers often need further support in test

development, assessment criteria, formative assessment, and classroom-based decision-making (Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020; Vogt et al., 2020). The present study adds contextual evidence from Ghana by showing that EFL teachers' classroom assessment practices are influenced by both professional and structural factors. This contribution is important because much of the existing research on language assessment literacy has been conducted outside African EFL contexts, while Ghanaian secondary schools present distinctive realities related to English as a medium of instruction, examination demands, and multilingual learner backgrounds (Quainoo et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2022).

The pedagogical implications of the findings are threefold. First, EFL teachers need sustained professional development in classroom assessment literacy, particularly in designing valid assessment tasks, developing rubrics, assessing speaking and listening, and using assessment evidence for instructional planning. This recommendation is supported by studies showing that teachers require ongoing and practical assessment training rather than one-time theoretical workshops (Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020; Vogt et al., 2020). Second, feedback practices should be strengthened so that feedback becomes more descriptive, dialogic, and action-oriented. This is important because feedback has limited impact when students only receive corrections but are not guided to revise, reflect, or improve their learning strategies (Carless & Winstone, 2020; Winstone et al., 2022). Third, assessment tasks should be diversified to include more communicative and performance-based activities, such as oral presentations, role plays, peer assessment, project work, and portfolio tasks, so that students' English competence is assessed more comprehensively (Yan et al., 2022; Gan & Lam, 2023).

Overall, this study shows that classroom assessment in Ghanaian secondary EFL classrooms is active but not yet fully learning-oriented. Teachers regularly assess students, but their practices are still constrained by examination culture, limited time, large classes, and uneven assessment literacy. The findings confirm that classroom assessment should be understood as a pedagogical practice embedded in context rather than a neutral technical activity. Therefore, improving EFL assessment in Ghanaian secondary schools requires an integrated approach that combines teacher professional development, institutional support, feedback reform, and more balanced assessment of linguistic and communicative competence. Such an approach may help transform classroom assessment from a primarily evaluative activity into a more meaningful process for supporting English language learning.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that EFL teachers in Ghanaian secondary schools actively employ classroom assessment as part of their English language teaching practices. However, the assessment practices identified in this study remain largely dominated by conventional and written forms of assessment, including quizzes, grammar exercises, reading comprehension tasks, homework, class exercises, and end-of-unit tests. These forms of assessment are useful for checking students' understanding of lesson content and preparing them for examinations, but they do not fully capture the broader communicative dimensions of English language learning. The limited use of speaking assessment, listening assessment, peer assessment, self-assessment, portfolio assessment, and performance-based assessment indicates that classroom assessment in this context

has not yet been optimally aligned with communicative and learner-centered EFL pedagogy.

The study also concludes that teachers' classroom assessment practices are shaped by both professional and contextual factors. Although teachers recognize the importance of assessment and feedback in supporting students' learning, their ability to implement more formative, alternative, and communicative assessment practices is constrained by large class sizes, limited instructional time, heavy workload, examination pressure, limited resources, and insufficient professional training in classroom assessment literacy. These challenges suggest that assessment practices cannot be improved only through individual teacher effort. Rather, improvement requires systematic support from schools, curriculum authorities, and teacher education institutions.

The pedagogical implication of this study is that classroom assessment in Ghanaian secondary EFL classrooms needs to move from a predominantly evaluative orientation toward a more learning-oriented and communicative approach. Teachers should be supported in designing assessment tasks that evaluate not only grammatical accuracy and written performance but also students' ability to use English meaningfully in oral, interactive, and authentic contexts. In addition, feedback practices should be strengthened so that students receive clearer, more constructive, and more actionable guidance for improving their English language performance. Such improvement may help transform assessment into a process that promotes learning rather than merely records achievement.

This study contributes to the field of EFL assessment by providing contextual evidence on how classroom assessment is practiced in Ghanaian secondary schools and by highlighting the need for stronger teacher assessment literacy in underrepresented EFL contexts. The findings may inform English teachers, school leaders, curriculum developers, and teacher education programs in developing more valid, balanced, and pedagogically meaningful assessment practices. Future research is recommended to involve larger samples across different regions of Ghana, include students' perspectives on classroom assessment and feedback, and employ mixed-method or longitudinal designs to examine how assessment practices influence students' English language development over time.

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