

**REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE LITTÉRATURE
ET DE LINGUISTIQUE APPLIQUEES (RILLA)**



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Pr Julien K. GBAGUIDI



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LIGNE EDITORIALE ET DOMAINES DE RECHERCHE

1. LIGNE EDITORIALE

La Revue Internationale de Littérature et de Linguistique Appliquées (RILLA) est une revue scientifique spécialisée en lettres et langues. Les articles que nous y publions peuvent être écrits en français, en anglais, en allemand, en espagnol et en yoruba. Ces articles sont reçus au secrétariat du comité de rédaction de la revue et envoyés en évaluation. Ceux qui ont reçu des avis favorables sont sélectionnés pour une réévaluation par les membres du comité scientifique en raison de leur originalité, des intérêts qu'ils présentent aux plans africain et international et de leur rigueur scientifique. Après les travaux préliminaires du secrétariat, le spécimen du numéro à publier est envoyé au comité scientifique de lecture pour des corrections éventuelles et la vérification de la conformité des articles aux normes de publication de la revue.

Notons que les articles que notre revue publie doivent respecter les normes éditoriales suivantes :

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Volume : 12 à 15 pages ; interligne : 1,5 ; pas d'écriture (taille) : 12 ; police : Times New Roman.

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- Un TITRE en caractère d'imprimerie et en gras. Le titre ne doit pas être trop long ;
- Un Résumé fait dans la langue de publication (50 à 200 mots maximum) ;
Les mots clés (03 à 05 mots) font partie du résumé ;
- Un résumé en anglais ou en français selon la langue d'écriture de l'article. Le second résumé ou abstract est juste la traduction du premier résumé. Il est aussi fait de mots clés exactement comme dans le premier cas ;
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- Développement ;

Les articulations du développement du texte doivent être titrées et / ou sous titrées ainsi :

➤ Pour le **Titre** de la première section et sous-section

1. Pour le titre de la première section

1.1. Pour le titre de la première sous-section

1.2. Pour le titre de la deuxième sous-section de la première section etc.

- Pour le **Titre** de la deuxième section
 - 2. Pour le titre de la deuxième section
 - 2.1. Pour le titre de la première sous-section de la deuxième section
 - 2.2. Pour le titre de la deuxième sous-section de la deuxième section etc.

- **Conclusion**

Elle doit être brève et insister sur l'originalité des résultats de la recherche

- **Bibliographie**

Les sources consultées et / ou citées doivent figurer dans une rubrique, en fin de texte, intitulé :

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Les rapports et des documents inédits mais d'intérêt scientifique peuvent être cités.

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- **sujets généraux d'intérêts vitaux** pour le développement des études en lettres et langues françaises, anglaises, allemandes, espagnoles et yoruba.

Au total, la Revue Internationale de Littérature et de Linguistique Appliquées (RILLA) se veut le lieu de rencontre et de dissémination de nouvelles idées et opinions savantes dans les domaines ci-dessus cités.

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La Revue Internationale de Littérature et de Linguistique Appliquée (RILLA), publiée par l'Institut Universitaire Panafricain (IUP), est une revue ouverte aux chercheurs des institutions universitaires de recherche et enseignants-chercheurs des universités, instituts universitaires, centres universitaires et grandes écoles.

L'objectif de cette revue dont nous sommes à la douzième publication est de permettre aux collègues chercheurs et enseignants-chercheurs d'avoir une tribune pour faire connaître leurs travaux de recherche.

Le comité scientifique de lecture de la RILLA est présidé par le Pr Akanni Mamoud IGUE. Ce comité compte sept membres qui sont des Professeurs Titulaires. Aussi voudrions-nous informer les lecteurs de la RILLA, qu'elle devient multilingue avec des articles rédigés aussi bien en français, en anglais, en allemand, en espagnol qu'en yoruba.

Pr Julien Koffi GBAGUIDI
Professeur Titulaire des Universités (CAMES)

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2	Dr ZOUNHIN TOBOULA Coffi Martinien	<p style="text-align: center;">Exploring the Role of Assessment in EFL Classes: A Case Study of CEG1 Cove in Zou Region of Benin</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pages 48 - 72</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">English Department, University of Abomey Calavi (UAC), Benin Laboratoire du Groupe de Recherche sur l'Afrique et la Diaspora (GRAD), Département d'Anglais /FLLAC/ Université d'Abomey- Calavi (UAC) zounhin@gmail.com</p>
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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN EFL CLASSES: A CASE STUDY OF CEG1 COVE IN ZOU REGION OF BENIN

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ABSTRACT

Practical assessment is an indispensable element of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning, as it plays a pivotal role in enhancing students' academic performance. However, EFL learners often do not receive adequate assessment, and educators seldom conduct a diagnostic assessment to identify their students' weaknesses. Instead, assessment is frequently perceived solely as a tool for awarding marks. As such, this research delves into the importance of assessment in the EFL classroom, focusing on the Beninese context. It aims to ascertain how learners are evaluated in EFL classrooms and to explore teachers' perspectives on the quality of assessment provided to their EFL learners. The present study adopts a mixed-methods approach comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research instruments employed for data collection include questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The research sample comprises one hundred and sixty-one (161) EFL learners and seven (7) EFL teachers. Data analysis is conducted through a *topic* and *sentiment analysis* approach using *keyword extraction* techniques provided by MonkeyLearn (2021), a platform for analyzing text. The research findings suggest that effective monitoring of students' performance cannot be achieved without appropriate assessment. Furthermore, assessment facilitates improvements in learners' academic performance and enhances teachers' teaching strategies. Consequently, the study outlined several suggestions and recommendations based on these findings.

Keywords: Assessment, academic performance, EFL teaching and learning, Teaching strategies

RESUME

L'évaluation efficace est un élément indispensable de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage de l'anglais langue étrangère (ALE), car elle joue un rôle central dans l'amélioration des performances académiques des étudiants. Cependant, les apprenants d'anglais langue étrangère ne bénéficient souvent pas d'une évaluation adéquate et les éducateurs procèdent rarement à une évaluation diagnostique pour identifier les faiblesses de leurs étudiants. Au lieu de cela, l'évaluation est souvent perçue uniquement comme un outil permettant d'attribuer des notes. C'est pourquoi cette recherche se penche sur l'importance de l'évaluation dans la classe d'anglais langue étrangère, en se concentrant sur le contexte béninois. Son objectif est de déterminer comment les apprenants sont évalués dans les classes d'anglais langue étrangère et d'explorer les perspectives des enseignants sur la qualité de l'évaluation fournie à leurs apprenants d'anglais langue étrangère. La présente étude a adopté une approche mixte, comprenant à la fois des méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives. Les instruments de recherche utilisés pour la collecte des données comprennent des questionnaires, des entretiens et des séances d'inspection de classes. L'échantillon de recherche se compose de cent soixante et un (161) apprenants d'anglais langue étrangère et de sept (7) enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère. L'analyse des données est effectuée par le biais d'une approche d'analyse des *sujets* et des *sentiments* en utilisant des techniques d'*extraction de mots-clés* fournies par MonkeyLearn (2021), une plateforme d'analyse de texte. Les résultats de la recherche suggèrent qu'un suivi efficace des performances des étudiants ne peut être réalisé sans une évaluation appropriée. En outre, l'évaluation ne facilite pas seulement l'amélioration des performances académiques des apprenants, mais renforce également les stratégies d'enseignement des enseignants. Par conséquent, plusieurs suggestions et recommandations ont été élaborées à la lumière de ces résultats.

Mots-clés : Évaluation, performances académiques, enseignement et apprentissage de l'ALE, stratégies d'enseignement.

INTRODUCTION

The significance of acquiring knowledge in foreign languages, with particular emphasis on English has been acknowledged globally due to the demands of the contemporary workforce and international communication (Agboton, 2017, p.11). The history of English language teaching goes back to the 16th century and has become a crucial subject taught in schools worldwide, including Beninese educational institutions (Truchot, 2002, cited in Agboton, 2017, p.12; Agboton, 2017, p.13). Therefore, acquiring four basic language skills is crucial for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Regular assessment by teachers is essential for learners to become competent and effective in EFL. Researchers have extensively studied assessment, which is crucial for effective teaching and learning (Hindeme, Iwikotan & Hounhanou, 2021). It is a tool for measuring students' academic abilities, evaluating teachers' teaching, and significantly impacting students' prospects and opportunities, making it a critical aspect of EFL education (Alvarez, 2008; Nuffield Foundation, 2003; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021).

This study examines the importance of student assessment in EFL classrooms, the obstacles teachers face when evaluating their pupils, the different methods used to assess students in EFL classes, and the significance of student assessment. Additionally, the study explores alternative assessment techniques, such as formative and summative approaches, and their impact on student learning. Recommendations for enhancing evaluation practices to improve student performance, engagement, and learning will also be examined.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the quality of student assessment in EFL classes in Benin?
2. How important is assessment in the EFL classroom?
3. What challenges do EFL teachers face when evaluating their students?

This study holds great importance as it examines the significance of student assessment in EFL classrooms and provides valuable insights into teachers' difficulties when evaluating their EFL students. Furthermore, practical solutions are presented to address these problems, and the study's findings will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of assessment in EFL classrooms. These findings will help guide strategies to improve assessment practices and will be instrumental in initiating further research on evaluation in EFL classrooms.

The scope of this study is restricted to the CEG1 COVE secondary school in the Zou region of Benin, with participants being EFL teachers and fourth-year secondary school students. The research utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods,

including a survey of EFL teachers and students, interviews with language instructors, and an analysis of existing educational documents related to EFL assessment.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review refers to a thorough and systematic summary of prior research on a particular subject matter. It entails scrutinizing scientific resources pertinent to a given research fields, such as books, articles, and other related literature (Machi and McEvoy, 2021). This chapter is organized around the distinct research inquiries and comprehensively examines antecedent investigations concerning the assessment concept. It examines their outcomes, merits, and limitations and further synthesizes the literature, pinpointing research gaps and proposing potential means of addressing them.

1.1 Definition of Assessment

Assessment is an indispensable tool for teachers to evaluate student understanding and progress effectively. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of measures available to assess Assessment for Learning (AFL) in the classroom, which involves monitoring student progress and identifying areas for improvement (Pat-El, Tilema, Segers & Vedder, 2013, p.98). This situation underscores the urgency for further development of assessment measures that can accurately gauge AFL in the classroom.

According to the Nuffield Foundation (2003, p.5), assessment is widely used in education for various purposes. Recently, attention has been drawn towards its role in helping teaching and learning, described explicitly as Assessment for Learning (AFL) or formative assessment. However, the current emphasis is still predominantly on summative assessment, the assessment of learning, which summarizes what students know or can do at specific points to report achievement and progress.

It is noteworthy that assessment is an ongoing process that takes place in a broader context. Whenever a student answers a question, makes a comment, or attempts to express a new word, phrase, or concept, the teacher unconsciously assesses their performance (Valva & Gokaj, 2013). Whether the assessments are unintentional or deliberate, a good teacher consistently evaluates their students to provide adequate guidance and support.

1.2 Qualities of a Good Assessment and Test

Specific criteria must be considered to assess learners and evaluate teaching methods effectively. The most common form of learner assessment is through tests, which measure a

student's ability, knowledge, and performance in a given subject. However, conducting a test involves a systematic procedure, including planning the test, constructing test items properly, ensuring test reliability, administering and scoring the test objectively, and evaluating its quality (Gultom, 2016, p.190).

According to the Nuffield Foundation (2003), a good assessment should possess several qualities. **Validity** refers to the formal consistency of reasoning and how well the results of a test match specific criteria, reflecting the attribute the test intends to assess. **Reliability** describes the degree to which a test, system, or approach is likely to perform its intended function correctly over a given period. **Impact** is another essential quality, where an assessment should not only measure performance but also have positive implications for teaching, learning, and student motivation. Finally, **practicability** refers to ensuring that the resources required to provide an assessment, including teachers' time and experience, cost, and students' learning time, are related to the value of the information to its users.

As Alsalihi (as cited in Hindémé, Iwikotan & Hounhanou, 2021) suggests, an assessment should focus exclusively on relevant aspects of student performance to a particular objective, ensuring its validity. Therefore, a good assessment should meet these criteria to effectively evaluate learners and teaching methods while minimizing any negative effects on the curriculum and pedagogy.

1.3 Types of Assessment

The three primary types of assessments are *formative*, *summative*, and *diagnostic*, each serving a unique purpose in evaluating student learning.

Formative assessment involves ongoing evaluation throughout an educational program or process. This type of assessment aims to assess students' skills and abilities as they develop, providing feedback to learners and guiding their continued growth (Norris, 2000).

Summative assessment, on the other hand, evaluates what students have learned at the end of a course or program. This type of assessment typically involves a comprehensive evaluation of the process or product achieved. It draws conclusions based on the results of periodic evaluations in addition to the final evaluation. While summative assessment measures students' understanding, it does not necessarily guide future progress (Saragih, 2016).

Diagnostic assessment is a pre-assessment tool used to identify individual students' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills before instruction begins. This type of

assessment helps teachers identify students' difficulties and plan lessons and curricula accordingly (Yale and Taccone, 2021, p.1).

1.4 Importance of Assessment in EFL Teaching and Learning

Assessment plays a critical role in the EFL teaching and learning process (Lam, 2015, p. 196). When conducted effectively, assessment provides clear language teaching objectives and reveals the level of success or failure in the learning process. Hatipoglu (2015) and Ur (1996, p.36) have noted that assessment aids in:

- Providing teachers with information on students' current understanding allowing them to make informed decisions about what to teach next.
- Offering students information on their comprehension level, enabling them to identify areas where they need to learn or revise subject matter.
- Serving as a mechanism for reinforcing discipline in a noisy classroom and promoting concentration.
- Providing students with a sense of accomplishment and progress in their learning journey.

In addition, diagnostic and formative assessments are particularly important for precisely identifying students' strengths and weaknesses (Madsen, 1983). Assessments also allow teachers to enhance their effectiveness by adapting their teaching methods to better meet the needs of specific groups or individuals in the class (Heaton, as cited in Benesova, 2006). Moreover, evaluating the learning process contributes to attaining the basic competence mastery level and specific indicators (Gultom, 2016).

1.5 Challenges of Students' Assessment

Assessing students is a challenging aspect of teaching and learning. Teachers often struggle with insufficient training on assessment methods and criteria. Stiggins (2002) contends that many teachers are ill-prepared to tackle classroom assessment challenges because they have not been given learning opportunities. Anu (2022) identifies the primary challenges of student assessment as lack of training, grading, changes in examination patterns, teachers' assessment issues, technological issues, and investment costs. Meanwhile, McDonald (2020) lists the major assessment challenges as choosing between assessment for learning and assessment of learning, engaging students in the assessment process, and involving students in creating assessments.

However, in the context of Benin, the primary obstacles appear to be teachers' lack of training. Hindeme, Iwikotan, and Hounhanou (2021) assert that most teachers still rely on traditional grammar and writing tests despite new testing approaches. Additionally, their research reveals that teachers "still have [minimal] knowledge about the educational value and use of assessment in English language classes" (p.19). Another problem is Benin's exam-oriented educational system, with policies and reforms prioritizing exams over other teaching aspects. Besides, teachers often rush to complete syllabuses before the academic year ends and are burdened with school administration work.

To be effective in students' EFL learning, teachers should see assessment not just as grading or awarding students but also as a means of evaluating their teaching methods. Moreover, certain criteria must be met to assess learners properly. The following chapter discusses the methodology employed in this research.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Research methodology encompasses a deliberate and rigorous approach to tackling a particular research problem. It pertains to the systematic scientific procedures that underlie research, including the methods researchers employ in delineating, assessing, and forecasting phenomena (Haslam and McGarty, 1998). This chapter expounds on the research methodology deployed and the instruments employed for data gathering in this research endeavor.

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, utilizing qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to understand the research topic comprehensively. The qualitative component of the study involves in-depth interviews with teachers and students, which allows for a nuanced exploration of their perceptions and experiences related to assessment in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. The study's quantitative component involves using standardized tests to measure EFL learners' linguistic proficiency and academic competencies in secondary schools within the Covè township.

The research sample for this study comprises a purposive sampling of teachers and students from CEG1 Covè, a prominent secondary school within the Zou region of Benin. The researcher's firsthand experience teaching in this region provided an opportunity to identify this institution as an appropriate location for the study.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected, the researcher followed established ethical guidelines and obtained informed consent from all participants. Data collection occurred over a period of six months, during which the researcher conducted multiple site visits to the research site, established rapport with participants, and administered the necessary instruments for data collection.

The qualitative data obtained from interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The quantitative data obtained from standardized tests were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, providing a broad overview of EFL learners' linguistic proficiency and academic competencies in the study sample.

The overarching goal of this research, which underpins the ones presented above, is to identify the barriers that impede language development and to gain a complete picture of the factors underpinning the observed lack of interest among learners in this institution towards the English language. The research findings will contribute to developing effective assessment practices that can enhance EFL learning in Benin's public and private secondary schools and serve as a foundation for future research in this field.

2.2 Research Population

This research study centres on the population of EFL teachers and middle school students, with the fieldwork specifically carried out among fourth-grade students at the high school (CEG 1) of Covè. The school has seven fourth-grade classes, comprising four hundred and eighty-three (483) students, each taught by one teacher, resulting in seven (7) teachers involved in the study.

To better explore the issue being investigated, additional teachers from the school were also invited to participate in the research, with fifteen (15) English teachers initially approached. However, to ensure representativeness, only data collected from the seven (7) teachers of the seven (7) fourth-grade classes were included in the research, representing a proportion of 3.14% of EFL teachers at the school.

Furthermore, only one-third of the school's fourth-grade students were approached during the research, resulting in a sample size of one hundred and sixty-one (161) students.

2.3 Research Sampling

The research sampling of this study is composed of seven (7) EFL teachers and one hundred and sixty-one (161) EFL intermediate students, comprising a diverse mix of genders. The teacher cohort includes two (2) female and five (5) male educators. Meanwhile, the

student population comprises twenty-eight (28) girls and thirty-three (33) boys, representing a relatively equal distribution of genders.

2.4 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments utilized in this research include *questionnaires*, *interviews*, and *classroom observations*, each serving a distinct purpose. A questionnaire is a research tool consisting of a series of questions to collect data. For this study, two separate questionnaires were developed: one for EFL teachers teaching intermediate classes, comprising ten (10) semi-structured questions, and the other for intermediate students, consisting of eight (8) semi-structured questions.

Additionally, four (4) English teachers were interviewed to obtain more in-depth insights. The interviews aimed to gauge teachers' opinions on assessment's importance understand how they assess their learners and uncover difficulties encountered in student assessments.

Classroom observation was also employed, referring to the real-time observation of teaching in the classroom. It was used to observe both teachers and students during English classes, with the primary variables being classroom atmosphere, class size, student assessment, forms of assessment, and teachers' assessment-related difficulties.

2.5 Data Collection Procedures

The research methodology comprised the distribution of questionnaires to both teachers and students. The study's objectives were explicitly conveyed to the participants to establish trust and cooperation. Fortunately, all teachers approached were willing to participate, and none refused. Before commencing the administration of the questionnaires, the researcher, with his teamwork, familiarized the students with the Questionnaire's format, emphasizing the importance of answering each question accurately. Upon completion, the questionnaires were collected immediately. Classroom observations were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere without any interference or interruptions. Similarly, individual interviews with the teachers were achieved with minimal reluctance from the participants, allowing for an open exchange of ideas.

2.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were presented in figures and tables for easy analysis based on information obtained from questionnaires. In addition, classroom observations and interviews

were analyzed and explained. A topic and sentiment analysis approach was used to analyze the different data, employing keyword extraction techniques from MonkeyLearn (2021) and Basmmi et al. (2020, p.6). Kumari et al. (2021, p.940) defined sentiment analysis or opinion mining as the extraction and detailed examination of opinions and attitudes from any form of text, which is a valuable method widely used to express the opinions of a large group or mass. Sentiment analysis (SA) categorizes the content of feelings in a text as good, negative, neutral, or unrelated to the main subject. It can be made at three levels: document, sentence, and aspect. There are two SA methods: *machine learning* and *lexicon-based*, which can be dictionary or corpus-based, and the corpus can be statistical or semantic (Contreras, Wilkinson, Balan, and James, 2022, pp.83-84).

According to Mukherjee and Bhattacharyya (2012, p.5), the Sentiment Analysis approach is a Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Information Extraction task that aims to obtain a writer's feelings expressed in positive or negative comments, questions, and requests by analyzing a large number of documents. Natural language processing (NLP) enables computers to analyze human language using machine learning or artificial intelligence techniques. It translates or matches words or phrases to concepts (Chary, Parikh, Manini, Boyer, and Radeos, 2019; MonkeyLearn, 2020a).

Although the sentiment analysis approach is widely used, it also has its challenges, as presented by Mukherjee and Bhattacharyya (2012, pp.7-99). These challenges include implicit sentiment and sarcasm, domain dependence, disappointed expectations, pragmatics, world knowledge, detection of subjectivity, entity identification, and negation, which can be expressed subtly, even without the explicit use of a negative word.

This research utilized both sentiment analysis and topic analysis approaches. Topic analysis is a bottom-up approach using NLP technique that automatically extracts meaning from text by identifying recurrent themes or topics, merging comparable phrases, and structuring them to make them easy to analyze and alter (MonkeyLearn, 2020b, para.1). It has the advantage of being unsupervised, which means that it can more easily capture unknown factors since there is no need to train the algorithm or set up categories beforehand. However, it can be challenging to apply properly. An ideal strategy should be able to combine and arrange topics meaningfully, resulting in a collection of themes that is neither too broad nor too narrow (Medelyan, 2022).

Based on the suitability of these approaches, the findings on the educational value of assessment were analyzed, presented, interpreted, and discussed in the next chapter.

3. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section of the manuscript pertains to elucidating, analyzing, and discussing the findings. Initially, the data collected from the questionnaires administered to both teachers and students were presented through tabular and graphical means, followed by their thorough analysis and interpretation. Additionally, the outcomes of the interviews and classroom observations have also been presented in detail, critically analyzed, and meaningfully interpreted. Finally, this chapter culminates in a comprehensive discussion of the results obtained, highlighting the key findings and their implications in the broader context of the research area.

3.1 Presentation, analysis, and Interpretation of the Results

This subsection focuses on presenting, analyzing, and interpreting the research findings. Firstly, the data from the questionnaires administered to teachers and students are presented in tables and figures and then meticulously analyzed and interpreted. Additionally, the outcomes of the interviews and classroom observations are also presented in detail, rigorously analyzed, and thoughtfully interpreted. Finally, this chapter culminates in a comprehensive discussion of the results obtained, highlighting the key findings and their implications in the broader context of the research area.

3.1.1 Presentation, analysis, and Interpretation of the data collected from the Questionnaire

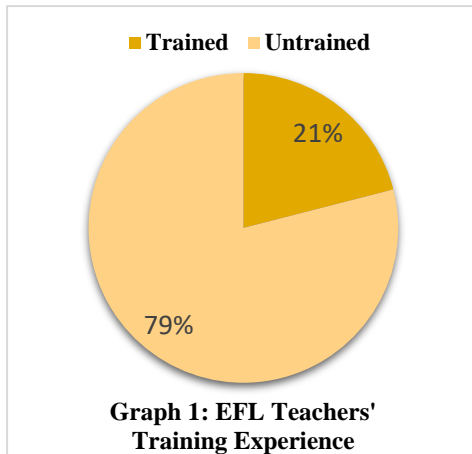
The findings resulting from the thorough analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the questionnaires are as follows:

3.1.1.1 The Teachers' Questionnaires

Table 1 reveals that most of the respondents, accounting for 57%, have a relatively limited teaching experience in English, i.e., less than five years. Only 14% reported having taught for five years, while 29% had more than five years of experience in EFL teaching. These observations suggest that many teachers lack significant experience in teaching EFL. The shortage of experienced teachers compels educational institutions to recruit novice teachers, affecting the quality of English language instruction.

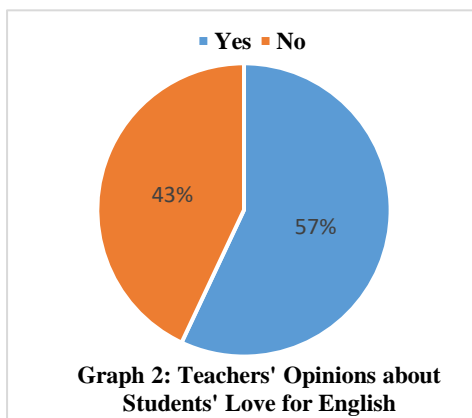
Table 1: Teachers' Teaching Experience

Teachers' Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than five years	4	57
Five years	1	14
More than five years	2	29
TOTAL	7	100



As illustrated in Graph 1, a significant majority (79%) of the respondent teachers are untrained, while only 21% have received professional training. These findings point towards the critical issue of inadequate training for teachers in Benin schools. The recruitment of untrained teachers is often due to the limited availability of trained teachers in many schools, which prompts recruiters to hire individuals based solely on their university degrees. Nevertheless, teachers must

undergo professional training to hone their skills and knowledge, as untrained teachers are more likely to have a detrimental impact on the academic performance of their students.



As depicted in Graph 2, the findings reveal that 57% of EFL teachers believe that their intermediate students love the English language. In comparison, 43% indicated that their learners are not fond of it. Although a more significant proportion of teachers reported that their students exhibit a love for English, it is still disconcerting that a considerable percentage of them observed a lack of enthusiasm towards the

language. These findings imply that students' motivation to learn English is low, potentially hindering teachers' efforts to yield positive outcomes. Consequently, these results emphasize the significance of teachers acknowledging the crucial role of motivation in enhancing students' performance.

Table 2: Frequency of Teachers' Assessment of EFL Learners

Teachers' Assessment of EFL Learners	Frequency	Percentages (%)
I do	4	57
I don't	3	43
TOTAL	7	100

Table 2 indicates that 57% of the seven (7) respondent EFL teachers claim to assess their learners regularly, while 43% of the teachers claim not to assess their students regularly, suggesting inconsistency in the assessment practices of EFL learners in Benin. Furthermore, it is notable that assessment seems to be primarily for examination purposes and may not adequately develop students' proficiency in English or promote communicative competence

in real-life situations. Therefore, there is a need to improve assessment practices to ensure that students' language skills are properly developed and assessed in a way that helps them improve their use of English in real-life situations.

Table 3: Teachers' Major Reasons for Assessing their EFL Learners

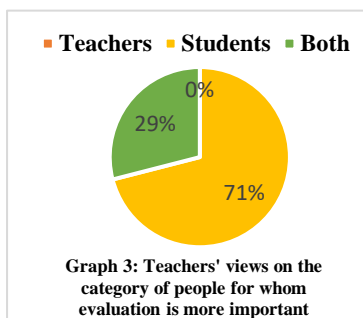
Teachers' Reasons	Frequency	Percentages (%)
To check learners' ability	7	100
To find out students' weaknesses	7	100
To give marks	7	100
To evaluate my teaching methods	00	00

Table 3 shows the major reasons why EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers assess their learners based on the frequency and percentages of responses from the surveyed teachers. The data suggest that all seven (7) teachers surveyed evaluate their learners for three main reasons: checking their ability, finding their weaknesses, and giving marks.

The fact that all teachers surveyed assess for these three reasons may indicate that they are considered fundamental and necessary for effective teaching and learning. Assessing learners' abilities can help teachers gauge their progress and identify areas where they may need additional support or guidance. Assessing weaknesses can provide insights into areas that require improvement while grading and providing feedback can motivate learners and promote their continued growth.

Notably, none of the surveyed teachers reported evaluating their teaching methods as a reason for assessing their learners. This situation may indicate a missed opportunity for teachers to reflect on and improve their teaching practices based on the outcomes of their assessments.

Overall, this table provides a snapshot of the reasons why EFL teachers assess their learners, and the results suggest that assessing for ability, weaknesses, and grading is considered a crucial aspect of teaching and learning in this context.



The data presented in Graph 3 depicts the opinions of EFL teachers regarding the category of individuals for whom evaluation holds greater significance. Notably, a majority of 71% of the respondents emphasized that assessment is more crucial for students, while 29% believed that both teachers and students require evaluation. Intriguingly, none of the

participants indicated that evaluation is more essential for teachers than for students.

The prevailing perception among educators is that assessment is primarily intended for students rather than teachers. However, it is imperative to recognize the significance of evaluation for both parties. The practice of assessment can aid teachers in gauging their instructional effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Therefore, promoting a balanced approach to evaluation is essential, which benefits both teachers and students alike.

Table 4: Most Frequent Form of Teacher Assessment

Forms	Frequency	Percentage
Assignment	1	14
Group assignment	0	0
Written Test	6	86
Oral test	0	0
All of the above	0	0
TOTAL	7	100

Table 4 presents the most frequent form of teacher assessment used by EFL teachers in Benin. The table shows that out of the seven (7) respondent teachers, 6 (86%) use written tests to assess their EFL learners, while only 1 (14%) of the teachers use assignments. None of the respondents mentioned using group assignments or oral tests for assessment.

The table suggests that written tests are the most popular assessment form among EFL teachers in Benin. This observation could be because written tests are easy to administer and grade, providing a clear and objective measure of students' knowledge and skills. However, the exclusive use of written tests may not be sufficient to assess students' language skills comprehensively, as it does not measure students' oral communication ability, critical thinking, or creativity.

Overall, the results suggest that there is a need for EFL teachers in Benin to explore alternative forms of assessment, such as group assignments and oral tests, to ensure a more well-rounded and comprehensive evaluation of their students' language skills.

Table 5 shows the difficulties that teachers face when assessing their students. The table indicates that all of the seven (7) respondent teachers face difficulties with student assessment. Specifically, they all cited lack of time, training, Pressure to complete the curriculum, and large class size as their difficulties. The results suggest that there is a need to address these difficulties to improve the quality of assessment in EFL classrooms in Benin. Addressing the issues of lack of time and pressure to finish the syllabus may require a review of the curriculum to ensure that the goals are realistic and achievable within the allocated time. The lack of training issue may be addressed through professional development

programs for teachers, while the problem of large class sizes may require additional resources and personnel to manage.

Table 5: Teachers’ Difficulties with Students’ Assessment

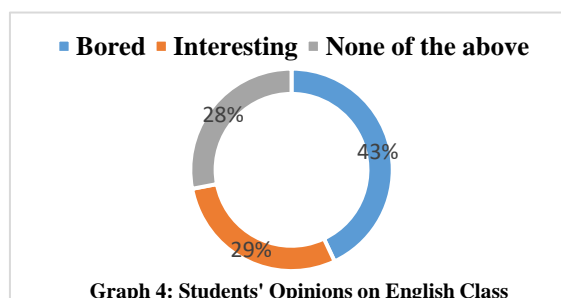
Difficulties	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Lack of time	7	100
Lack of training	7	100
Pressure to complete the curriculum	7	100
Large class size	7	100
TOTAL	7	100

Overall, the findings indicate that all of the surveyed teachers, representing 100% of the sample, view assessment as a highly significant aspect of teaching and learning EFL. However, the results also reveal that these teachers encounter challenges in implementing assessment practices in their EFL classrooms, as outlined in Table 5. Despite their positive attitude towards assessment, the identified difficulties, such as lack of time, training, and the Pressure to complete the curriculum, seem to hinder the effective use of assessment strategies. Therefore, addressing these challenges is crucial in ensuring that assessment is meaningfully integrated into EFL classrooms, thereby improving students’ language learning outcomes.

3.1.1.2 The Students’ Questionnaire

The findings arising from the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the administered student questionnaire are as follows:

According to the survey, 33% of EFL learner respondents expressed a fondness for the English language, whereas 67% stated their dislike for it. These findings are hardly unexpected, as students have frequently expressed their aversion to the language. It could be argued that their antipathy towards English stems from their perception of it as a challenging language to learn, compounded by the fact that it is neither their first nor second language. Consequently, these results underscore the need to instill motivation in students to facilitate their English language acquisition.



The findings depicted in Graph 4 reveal that 43% of the respondents express boredom during English courses, 29% find English classes engaging, and 28% refrain from giving any feedback regarding their stance on English courses. Overall, many students appear to be

disengaged during their English classes. Such a trend is not unexpected, given that 67% of students do not hold a favourable opinion towards the English language. It is common knowledge that students tend to lose interest in subjects that they are not fond of, hence the high percentage of students who find their English courses dull. Therefore, it is imperative to instil motivation in students to enhance their interest in English courses.

Table 6: Students’ Opinions on their Frequency of Participation in English Lessons

Students’ Participation in English Lessons	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Rarely	66	41
Sometimes	42	26
Most times	34	21
All the time	19	12
TOTAL	161	100

Table 6 reveals that a significant proportion of intermediate-level EFL learners (41%) rarely participate in their English classes. A smaller percentage (26%) indicate that they sometimes participate, while 21% report participating most of the time. Only 12% of the students claim to participate all the time actively. These findings highlight a lack of engagement in English classes among intermediate learners. This trend is consistent with the results presented above, suggesting that students’ low motivation and dislike of English may contribute to their reluctance to participate actively in class. It could be a cause for concern as the ability to speak English fluently is a crucial skill, especially in a globalized world. The school administration could take appropriate measures, such as organizing extracurricular activities to encourage student participation in English lessons. It could also be helpful to investigate the reasons behind students’ infrequent participation to develop targeted interventions.

Table 7: Students’ Opinions about Teachers’ Assessment

Students’ Opinions	Frequency	Percentages (%)
S/He does	156	97
S/He does not	05	03
TOTAL	161	100

The data in Table 7 shows that 97% of intermediate EFL learners believe that their teachers assess them during English classes, while only 3% believe that their teachers do not. This finding suggests that students generally expect to be assessed by their teachers during English classes. It also implies that the act of assessment is considered an essential part of the learning process by students. It is worth noting that this data is self-reported by the students

and may not necessarily reflect the actual assessment practices of the teachers. Nonetheless, the high percentage of students who believe they are being assessed underscores the importance of assessment in learners' eyes.

Table 8: Frequency of Teacher's Assessment

Teachers' Assessment	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Rarely	42	26
Sometimes	66	41
Most times	34	21
All the time	19	12
TOTAL	161	100

Table 8 shows the frequency of the teacher's assessment, as reported by the students. The results indicate that 26% of the students reported that their teacher rarely assesses them, 41% of them claim that their teacher sometimes assesses them, and 21% stated that their teacher assesses them most of the time. Only 12% of the students reported that their teacher always assesses them. These results suggest that there is a significant variation in the frequency of the teacher's assessment. It is essential to note that regular assessment is crucial in teaching and learning EFL. It helps the teacher and student identify strengths and weaknesses and adjust their teaching and learning strategies accordingly.

Overall, The data from Table 7 and Table 8 provide insights into the perception and practice of assessment in the intermediate EFL classroom. The high percentage of students who believe they are being assessed (97%) suggests that assessment is an expected and essential part of the learning process for intermediate EFL learners. These findings reinforce the importance of assessment for promoting student learning and achievement.

However, Table 8 reveals that there is a significant variation in the frequency of teacher assessment as reported by students. While some students report that their teachers assess them all the time (12%), others report that their teachers rarely assess them (26%). These results suggest that there may be inconsistencies in how teachers use assessment to promote learning in the classroom.

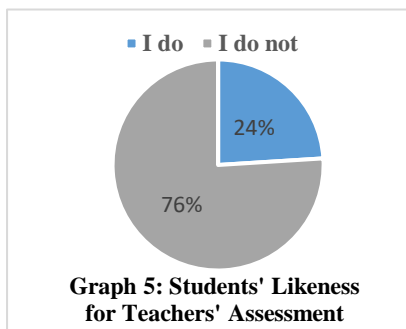
Regular and consistent assessment is crucial for effective teaching and learning in EFL. It helps teachers and students identify strengths and weaknesses, track progress, and adjust teaching and learning strategies accordingly. Thus, teachers need to develop a clear and consistent approach to assessment that aligns with student learning objectives and provides regular feedback to promote learning and growth.

Table 9: Ways Teachers Regularly Assess EFL Students

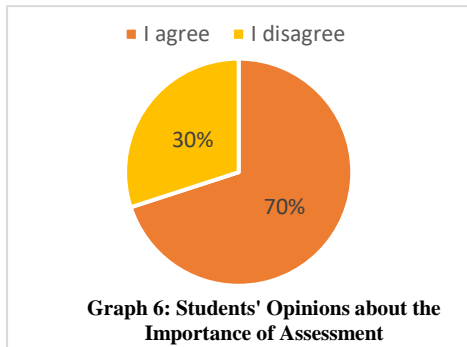
Ways	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Assignment	37	23
Group assignment	0	0
Written Test	121	75
Oral test	0	0
All of the above	3	2
TOTAL	161	100

Table 9 presents how EFL teachers regularly assess their students, as reported by the students. The results indicate that 75% of the students reported being evaluated through written tests, while 23% of the students stated that their teacher usually assessed them through homework. Only 2% of the students reported being assessed through all the means listed in the table, including homework, group work, written tests, and oral tests. Notably, no students reported group work or verbal tests as means of assessment used by their EFL teacher.

These results suggest that written tests are EFL classes' most commonly used assessment method. While written tests are a valuable tool for assessing student knowledge, it is essential to consider other assessment methods, such as group work and oral tests, to provide a more comprehensive assessment of students' language proficiency. Diversifying assessment methods can also provide students with more opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and develop different language skills.



The findings presented in Graph 5 reveal students' attitudes towards their teachers' evaluation. Only 24% of intermediate learners reported liking their teachers' evaluation, while 76% expressed their dislike towards it. These findings highlight a widespread aversion towards evaluation among students. It is worth noting that this dislike may stem from the common practice of assessing students solely through tests. To solve this issue, teachers could consider incorporating alternative assessment forms, such as group work or oral presentations. By diversifying their evaluation methods, teachers can encourage students to view assessment as a constructive process that supports their learning.



Graph 6 depicts that 70% of intermediate students recognize the significance of assessment for their EFL learning, while 30% hold a different view. Although assessment is widely considered important, some students may not fully understand how it contributes to their learning. It is contradictory for students to claim awareness of the significance of assessment and

simultaneously avoid it. Therefore, it is crucial to educate students on how assessment supports their learning and to create a positive assessment culture that values the benefits of evaluation. By doing so, students can appreciate the role of assessment in their EFL learning and approach it with a constructive mindset.

3.1.2 Results of the Classroom Observation

The classroom observation proved to be a valuable tool for uncovering the underlying nature of situations occurring during English lessons in the intermediate classes. The primary focus was placed on assessing the students' quality of work and gaining insight into the challenges faced by the teachers during the assessment process. The observation period spanned a duration of one hour and was conducted while the students were seated in pairs. Instructions were communicated solely in the English language.

The class was observed during a written test intended to grade the students and prepare their academic transcripts—the test's content comprised grammar questions. Due to the significant number of students in attendance, the teacher encountered difficulties monitoring their behavior. Despite this challenge, the teacher endeavored to maintain control of the class through the use of disciplinary measures, such as threatening to withhold grades from students who misbehaved.

Based on the classroom observation, it was evident that the primary form of assessment for the students was the written test, which predominantly comprised grammar exercises.

3.1.3 Results of the Interview

In sum, the results of the interviews revealed that assessing students can prove to be a challenging task for teachers. This difficulty is primarily due to the issue of managing large numbers of students within a single classroom, particularly within public schools. The

interviewed teachers highlighted their use of straightforward grammar exercises to facilitate the grading process for student assignments.

When asked about their preferred assessment method, the teachers indicated a reliance on summative assessments. However, they expressed that obstacles such as time constraints, large class sizes, and the format of national examinations hinder their ability to conduct effective evaluations. Despite acknowledging the importance of assessment in the EFL learning process, the interviewed teachers admitted to not regularly implementing such practices within their own EFL classrooms.

3.2 Discussion of Results

This section pertains to a detailed examination and discussion of the diverse results obtained. It aims to provide an in-depth analysis of these results.

3.2.1 The Importance of Assessment and the Quality of Students' Assessment in EFL

The data analysis gathered from the administered questionnaires to teachers and students has revealed the crucial role of assessment in teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The outcomes indicate that 70% of the students recognize the significance of assessment in improving their EFL learning. In comparison, all (100%) of the EFL teachers surveyed have confirmed that effective teaching and learning cannot be achieved without assessment (El-Dakhs, 2016). Additionally, prior studies have suggested that assessment is fundamental for students and for teachers to evaluate their teaching methods (Fisher and Bandy, 2019, para.4).

Regrettably, this is not the case in many schools in Benin. As observed from the teachers' questionnaire results, teachers assess their students to check their abilities, identify their weaknesses, and give marks (Harouna and Shrestha, 2021). None of the teachers see assessment as a means of evaluating their own teaching methods. Teachers must recognize that assessment is more than grading students. Furthermore, 65% of the teachers stated that assessment is more important for the students than for themselves (Adjanohoun, 2020), indicating a need for teachers to consider the concept of assessment as more fundamental than they currently do.

Moreover, interviews and class observations conducted with teachers and students have revealed that the quality of students' assessment in EFL classes in Benin is poor (Pat-El et al., 2013). Some researchers, such as Pat-El et al. (2013) have emphasized the need for teachers to focus more on assessment for learning (AFL) rather than learning assessment. They

suggest that AFL “*encompasses both a monitor to track student progress as well as a scaffold to show or help students recognize in what areas they need to improve*” (p.98). Unfortunately, the major form of assessment used by EFL teachers in Benin is primarily grammar-based tests that do not evaluate students’ oral proficiency or listening ability. Teachers can use other assessment forms, such as group works or oral activities, and focus more on how these assessments can improve their students’ learning in EFL.

The next section discusses the challenges teachers face with assessment in their EFL classrooms, which will account for why the quality of assessment is poor in Benin EFL classrooms.

3.2.2 EFL Teachers’ Difficulties in Students’ Assessment

Assessment represents one of the most challenging and crucial aspects of a teacher’s duties. The current research study has highlighted several difficulties that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers encounter in their assessment practices. Specifically, teachers have reported that due to the standardized nature of national exams, they often focus on grammar exercises that fail to accurately capture students’ fundamental competencies. As a result, exams may influence teachers’ teaching and assessment methods.

Moreover, a significant number of EFL teachers lack professional training. From the outcomes of the present research worth, only 21% of EFL teachers have received formal training, whereas 79% lack such training. These findings echo Hatipoglu’s (2015) research on English language testing and evaluation training in Turkey, which also revealed a “*serious lack of professional knowledge and training among language teachers [...]*” (p.125). As Brindley (2001) notes, this lack of training poses a significant challenge to the goal of using assessment to improve learning outcomes.

Additionally, the issue of class size further complicates effective assessment practices. With a large number of students, it becomes difficult for teachers to grade all papers regularly. Furthermore, the interviews conducted with EFL teachers indicate that diagnostic and formative assessments are rarely conducted. Teachers also struggle with students’ lack of motivation and disinterest in English. These findings are corroborated by the responses of both teachers and students in various questionnaires, with 57% of students reporting a dislike for English and 47% of teachers acknowledging their students’ lack of love for the language. Therefore, motivating EFL learners becomes critical to a teacher’s role. Despite the difficulties, it falls on teachers to motivate their learners and encourage their interest in the subject.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents recommendations and suggestions to improve the quality of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching for intermediate learners. The following sections and subsections outline specific recommendations for government and school authorities and suggestions for both EFL teachers and their intermediate students.

4.1 Recommendations

This section presents a set of recommendations for the government and school authorities to enhance the quality of teaching in intermediate classes.

4.1.1 Recommendations to the Government

The analysis of data collected from teachers' questionnaires indicates that only 21 percent of EFL teachers are trained professionals. Therefore, the government must provide professional training to untrained teachers to enhance the quality of teaching in intermediate classes. Additionally, the government should offer favorable working conditions to teachers to motivate them to improve their EFL classes. Large class sizes are a pressing concern that must be urgently addressed. The government must provide schools with sufficient classrooms and libraries to encourage students' interest in the English language.

4.1.2 Recommendations to School Authorities

The fundamental objective of EFL teaching is to equip learners with the ability to communicate in the language. Therefore, assessment should be meaningful and allow learners to apply their language skills in real-life situations. School authorities can create avenues for teachers and students to travel to English-speaking countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria, to interact with native speakers of the language and improve their speaking skills. Moreover, educational advisors should monitor the quality of assessment in English classes and assist teachers in effectively assessing their EFL students.

4.2 Suggestions

This section offers EFL teachers and intermediate students some suggestions to maximize their learning outcomes.

4.2.1 Suggestions to EFL Teachers

EFL teachers bear a significant responsibility in training their students; therefore, they must be equipped with the necessary training to be effective in their teaching. Furthermore, they should view assessment as more than merely marking students' work. Assessment

should be seen as a tool for evaluating teaching methods and techniques. Sharing their teaching experiences with peers or other professionals can help them impact their intermediate students better. Finally, EFL teachers are responsible for motivating their students to learn the English language.

4.2.2 Suggestions to EFL Intermediate Students

EFL intermediate students should approach their studies with a serious and committed attitude and cultivate habits enabling them to benefit from their lessons. They should be actively interested in classroom activities and participate fully in English classes. Additionally, they should believe in improving their foreign language proficiency and taking ownership of their learning. Constructive feedback from their teachers can assist them in identifying areas that require improvement. Developing confidence in self and peer assessment can be valuable in gauging progress. Finally, students should communicate their needs to their teachers and take ownership of the criteria for success.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes that assessment in EFL classes serves more than simply grading students; it is also a tool for gathering information on students' strengths and weaknesses and can play a significant role in their learning and motivation. Unfortunately, many teachers view assessment solely as a means of assigning grades rather than an essential component of effective teaching and learning. Therefore, this research aimed to explore how Beninese learners are assessed in EFL classrooms, the importance of learner assessment, and to investigate teachers' views on their EFL learners' assessment quality.

The literature review provided an overview of prior research on assessment, including types of assessment and the characteristics of good assessment. It also highlighted the significance of assessment in teaching and learning and identified the main challenges of student assessment in the EFL classroom.

This research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The results were analyzed using a sentiment and topic analysis approach and are presented in tables and figures, providing a clear overview of the participants' opinions on the importance and educational value of assessment.

The main findings of this study indicate that both teachers and students acknowledge the importance of assessment in teaching and learning EFL. Still, teachers tend to focus

mainly on grading students for exams. Diagnostic and formative assessments are infrequently conducted, leading to poor-quality student assessments. Furthermore, teachers face challenges such as a lack of training, large class sizes, and demotivated students.

This study suggests that motivating students is essential to ensure successful EFL teaching and learning, as many learners are not motivated to learn English. Teachers must rethink their assessment approach and aim to motivate their students to learn the language. Additionally, the government should organize training sessions for teachers to improve their assessment skills and provide adequate classrooms and libraries for teachers and students. School authorities could also organize field trips to English-speaking countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria, for EFL teachers and students.

Future researchers should build on these findings and consider conducting further studies on the importance of assessment among EFL learners, focusing on exploring new assessment techniques to improve student assessment quality.

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