

Classroom-Based Assessment Purposes from the Lens of Moroccan EFL High School Teachers

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Abstract: In EFL educational contexts, Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) provides valuable information that serves a variety of purposes, whether formative, summative, or a blend of both. This broad spectrum of purposes encompasses student-centered, instruction-based, and administration-based purposes. The Moroccan EFL context is marked by the extensive reliance on summative assessment techniques, such as written tests focusing on traditional items (e.g., gap-filling). However, it remains unclear how EFL teachers utilize CBA. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the purposes of using CBA. A quantitative approach utilizing an online self-report questionnaire was employed to collect survey data from 260 teacher participants. The results of this study revealed that EFL teachers use CBA for a variety of purposes, primarily serving student-centered purposes. These include motivating students to excel, providing constructive feedback, and guiding them in setting learning goals. It also fulfills instruction-based purposes, such as identifying strengths and areas for improvement in teaching practices, as well as administrative purposes, such as formally documenting student achievements. Additionally, only some students are aware of the purposes of CBA. In light of this, the study concludes with significant implications for CBA policies, training, and research, highlighting the need for a more balanced approach that integrates both formative and summative assessment practices. It also emphasizes the importance of systematically analyzing CBA and promoting greater student involvement in assessment processes.

Keywords: summative assessment, formative assessment, student-centered purposes, instruction-based purposes and administration-based purposes.

1. Introduction

CBA aims to provide authentic and meaningful assessment opportunities that are relevant to both students and teachers by considering all aspects of the learning process, including cognitive and affective dimensions (Finch, 2012). Therefore, it is governed by its purposes, uses and functions (Ghaicha, 2016). Notably, it can serve a plethora of purposes simultaneously. That said, the data gathered through CBA could serve either complementary or conflicting purposes. For this reason, it is necessary to explore how to mitigate the tension between the formative and summative functions to create high-quality education (William, 2001). Additionally, several factors influence the use of CBA for specific purposes. These encompass teachers' beliefs, assessment policies and guidelines and the perceptions and involvement of both teachers and students in CBA decisions and activities, not to mention the actual assessment practices and the prevailing assessment culture within the specific educational context. Consequently, CBA predominantly emphasizes specific purposes over others.

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CBA is characterized by its unique nature, triangulation, and broad applicability. For this reason, it must strike a balance between summative and formative purposes. Notably, integrating assessment with teaching and learning has a considerable impact on achievement (Pellegrino, 2004). This is often achieved by using CBA data to inform formative decision-making. In fulfilling this role, CBA becomes the backbone of education, playing a critical part in supporting both teaching and learning. Therefore, CBA should communicate what is important for students to know and be able to do which will, in turn, enable both students and the teacher to focus the teaching and learning processes accordingly (Herman, 2016). This could only be realized if CBA focuses on clear purposes, accurately reflects students' achievements, offers ongoing descriptive feedback, and actively involves students in the assessment process (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005). As such, students are expected to actively engage in the CBA process, possessing a clear understanding of its purposes, applications, and consequences.

In the Moroccan EFL context, limiting CBA purposes to measuring knowledge and skills for summative decision-making reflects a narrow perspective on language teaching and learning. Ouakrime (2000) argues that this approach overlooks broader objectives, such as fostering change, growth, and learning-to-learn skills. He emphasizes the need for comprehensive reform in the organization, design, and implementation of CBA. Additionally, he recommends making all assessment-related information, including course descriptions and examination scripts, accessible to the three primary stakeholders within the educational process: students, teachers, and administrators. Ghaicha (2016) further highlights the gap between the theoretical principles of effective assessment and their practical application, noting that CBA is often implemented without a clear educational framework. Despite these recommendations, CBA in the Moroccan EFL context remains primarily focused on assigning grades to summarize student achievement (Benzehaf, 2017). Based on these insights, CBA in the Moroccan EFL context tends to serve primarily summative decision-making.

Formative assessment in the Moroccan EFL context faces several challenges. A significant hurdle is cultural, as students are often unfamiliar with formative assessment, while teachers are under pressure to complete the syllabus. Additionally, the lack of systematic training further hampers the effective implementation of CBA (Ouakrime, 2000). Ghaicha and Oufela (2021) highlighted other obstacles, such as teachers' extracurricular commitments, students' difficulties in understanding assessment criteria, and limited time for preparing formative assessments. Notably, only a small number of EFL teachers reported using assessment results to adapt their teaching (Benzehaf, 2017). Given this narrow perspective of CBA practices for formative decision-making, research needs to suggest practical implications for creating a comprehensive assessment design serving diverse purposes. Hence, with emphasis on the formative role of assessment, this study explores the purposes of using CBA in Moroccan EFL high schools.

2. Literature Review

This section introduces CBA within the EFL context, provides an overview of the theoretical foundations underlining CBA purposes, highlights CBA purposes from the Moroccan EFL perspective and presents an empirical overview of CBA purposes in diverse EFL educational contexts.

2.1. CBA in EFL Context: Interpretation and Purposes

Starting with highlighting the context, EFL distinguishes students who learn English outside an English environment after their native language has been acquired (Bailey, 2017). In an EFL educational context, the concepts of assessment and evaluation are commonly used interchangeably

despite the differences each process denotes. While assessment involves collecting information for formative decision-making concerning students' progress, evaluation concerns the interpretation of assessment results to judge students' performance relative to several learner expectations or standards of performance (Cheng et al., 2004). CBA is considered a multifaceted data collection process that utilizes a plethora of formal and informal techniques. It encompasses both assessment and evaluation, with varying emphases determined by the purpose of the assessment and influenced by a host of contextual factors.

With the increasing focus on the role of CBA in improving teaching and learning processes, great attention has been placed on addressing the immediate learning needs of the students, providing context-specific feedback, supporting teachers in planning future lessons and equipping students with learning strategies for autonomous learning (Finch, 2012). To serve formative decision-making, CBA employs a range of data collection techniques, primarily through testing. For this reason, tests are predominant in many educational contexts. A test is, in simple terms, "any systematically administered set of procedures that results in some level of measurement of an attribute" (Bonner, 2013, p. 88). Notably, serving formative decision-making purposes in the EFL context, a test remains one subset among various other CBA techniques. One of the main distinctive uses of language tests along with other CBA techniques is providing information for decision-making within the context of educational programs (Bachman, 1990). This process is determined primarily by the interpretive perspective adopted, whether measurement-driven or functional-oriented.

2.2. The Underlying Framework of CBA Purposes

Recognizing the importance of understanding the purposes CBA serves across various educational contexts, it is essential to explore the theoretical approaches that underpin them. First, the measurement perspective views CBA primarily as a measurement practice and focuses on the accuracy of scores as estimates of the attribute of interest by emphasizing the psychometric properties (e.g., generalizability). Second, the functional perspective focuses on the extent to which CBA supports learning by improving the quality of instruction. That is, it emphasizes the functional use of CBA feedback through analyzing and interpreting evidence of learning to constructively influence the teaching and learning processes (Kane & Wools, 2019). By ensuring the accuracy of CBA evidence, the first perspective emphasizes the summative use of CBA evidence, while the second highlights its formative role in guiding adjustments to teaching and learning, thereby distinguishing between these two key applications of CBA data.

Aligned with the two perspectives outlined above, CBA serves summative, formative, or a combination of both purposes. Summative assessment emphasizes the evaluation of the knowledge and skills students have attained by some point in time (Alonzo, 2019). To elaborate, one purpose of summative assessment is to draw inferences from evidence systematically collected to report on student learning to external audiences, such as parents and school administrators, often for high-stakes purposes (Bonner, 2013). To elaborate, summative assessments are commonly employed for purposes such as certification, selection, and evaluation of the quality of teachers' practices and school performance. CBA in this context serves to formally document student progress, assign final grades, and report outcomes to central administrations or external funding bodies.

Underpinned by the functional perspective, it is worth highlighting that CBA promotes primarily formative assessment purposes. Formative assessment, also known as "assessment for learning", is considered the most frequent, multifaceted and complex assessment (McGatha & Bush, 2013); yet there is no tightly and widely accepted description of the construct of formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Scott, 2001). Depending on the context, it either refers to the assessment process,

which involves systematically using a range of techniques to modify the instructional process, or a specific task utilized to inform instructional decision-making (Russell, 2019). Formative assessment information typically diagnoses students' strengths and weaknesses to offer feedback on their progress, group them for instructional purposes and plan lessons accordingly. Additionally, Cheng et al. (2004) classified CBA purposes into three core constructs-student-centred, instruction, and administration-based purposes, thereby, highlighting the intricate nature of the distinction between summative and formative assessment.

It is essential to note here that the dichotomy of formative and summative assessment does not apply to the assessment itself, but to how the information obtained from it is used. The same assessment can serve both formative and summative purposes; sometimes assessment purposes may support one another (Earl, 2003); sometimes they may contradict one another especially when they are interpreted based on teachers' conceptual frameworks (e.g., teaching philosophy and beliefs). In this regard, Shepard (2000) states that a test which is "designed for one purpose may not be valid if used for a different purpose" (p. 32). Simply, the evidence collected through a test or any other instrument must be interpreted differently depending on the purpose provided that the data interpreted for one purpose cannot serve another (William, 2001). It can be inferred here that CBA involves assessing students using techniques, with formative or summative applications depending on the intended use of the assessment data.

2.3. CBA Purposes from Moroccan EFL Perspective

In the context of local policies, CBA is considered both summative and holistic. First, the summative assessment encompasses formal written procedures which focus on separate language skills and components; they generally include five mandatory short written quizzes and a comprehensive global test. Second, the formative assessment consists of informal, continuous and performance-based assessment activities, such as projects, presentations, and portfolios. (NCEEEO, 2007). These activities aim to assess students' language proficiency comprehensively, with a focus on communicative competence. To illustrate, the assessment of the four skills is carried out using a teacher-made rubric. Namely, a checklist that consists of numerical ratings with descriptions to enable teachers to determine whether students have met the target standards effectively (Ministry of National Education, 2007). In this regard, teachers are expected to systematically gather, analyze, interpret, and utilize CBA data to make informed, formative decisions that enhance teaching and learning processes.

Shifting to the empirical perspective, research from the local context suggests that CBA is still underdeveloped. To illustrate, Abderrahmane (2019) argues that Moroccan EFL teachers still conceptualize assessment as an end in itself rather than a means to support learning, relying on traditional techniques to measure learners' mastery of English solely for the purpose of assigning grades. Similarly, Mamad and Vigh (2021) found that Moroccan EFL teachers use traditional methods (e.g., gap-filling and matching) more than any alternative assessment methods. Notably, these methods require low-ability skills and target factual and recognition knowledge. These methods are also predominantly meant to assign grades (Benzehaf, 2017). Nevertheless, drawing from the above-highlighted studies, it appears that the purposes underlying the use of CBA within the Moroccan EFL context remain insufficiently understood.

2.4. CBA Purposes: An Empirical Caveat

Moving to the broader EFL educational setting, empirical evidence on CBA purposes has been gathered from various EFL educational contexts. Initially, Cheng et al. (2004) used a large-scale

comparative study to examine ESL and EFL instructors' CBA practices- including purposes- in Canada, China, and Hong Kong. The findings revealed notable differences. In Canada and Hong Kong, a significant number of teachers prioritized assessments for student-centered purposes (e.g., obtaining information on students' progress), whereas, in China, the emphasis was predominantly on assessments for instructional purposes, such as planning their instruction to prepare students for standardized tests. As for administration-based purposes, a greater number of teachers in Canada and Hong Kong, compared to those in China, reported sharing information with their central administration (e.g., schools, and universities). This highlights the supportive role of language programs in both contexts. The variations in these settings were attributed to the nature of the educational context, teachers' academic background, and the expected instructional practices of teachers and students.

Conducting a replication of this study in the Iranian EFL context, Estaji and Kardoust (2021) sought to explore Iranian EFL teachers' purposes, methods, and procedures of their CBA. This study revealed that the majority of Iranian language teachers primarily utilized CBA for student-centred purposes, namely, for tracking students' progress and providing them with feedback. CBA was also employed to motivate students to enhance their learning. For instruction-based purposes, CBA was specifically utilized to plan instruction and to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. However, it was less commonly used to provide information to school administration or fulfil formal requirements, such as assigning grades, tracking progress, or preparing students for standardized tests. Compared to other CBA purposes, grouping students was the least frequent purpose of using CBA. Contrary to the previous EFL educational contexts (e.g., Canada, Hong Kong and China). Iranian EFL teachers predominantly utilized CBA for student-centred rather than instruction- or administration-based purposes, thereby prioritizing its use for formative decision-making.

In a similar vein, the following study was conducted within the EFL educational context in Jordan. Using questionnaires and interviews, Swaie and Algazo (2023) found that the majority of Jordanian EFL teachers use CBA for various summative and formative purposes, with a primary focus on student-centred purposes. These purposes include determining final grades, tracking students' progress, and motivating them to improve. These purposes reflect Jordanian EFL teachers' awareness of the diverse purposes of CBA. Swaie and Algazo (2023) attributed this awareness to teachers' teaching experience and assessment literacy. Though Jordanian EFL teachers emphasize student-centred purposes, Jordanian students appeared to be less involved in the assessment process to the degree that empowers them to take initiative for their learning. This underscores the influence of the specific characteristics of the Jordanian EFL context, where high-stakes standardized tests play a significant role in shaping the purposes of CBA, particularly in promoting its use for determining final grades.

Based on the patterns observed across the above educational contexts, it seems reasonable to argue that EFL teachers use CBA for diverse purposes, shaped by their conceptual frameworks (e.g., literacy, philosophy and beliefs), teaching experience, institutional policies and expectations, alongside the broader assessment culture that surely encompasses a host of other factors that still need further exploration. With that in mind, examining CBA purposes from the Moroccan EFL perspective is a worthwhile endeavour.

2.5. The Present Study

Building on the previous theoretical and empirical foundations, this study aims to examine the purposes for utilizing CBA results and information in Moroccan EFL high schools, focusing on whether these purposes are student-centred, instructional or administrative. To realize this aim, the

following categorization is adopted where CBA purposes are grouped into their underlying constructs of student-centred, instruction- and administration-based purposes (Cheng et al., 2004; Estaji & Kardoust, 2021). This study promises valuable implications for EFL teachers, CBA policies, and school administrations while advocating the serving of formative assessment purposes to enhance the teaching and learning processes in EFL classrooms. Hence, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What purposes do Moroccan high school teachers aim to achieve by using assessment in their EFL classrooms?

RQ2: Does CBA in Moroccan EFL high schools primarily emphasize student-centred, instruction, or administration-based purposes?

3. Materials and Methods

This section outlines the research design of the study. It highlights the participants and the data collection instrument, as well as the measures taken to address concerns regarding reliability, validity, and ethical considerations. This section also discusses the procedures for data collection and analysis in the study.

3.1. Research Design

To explore CBA purposes in Moroccan EFL high schools, this study adopted a quantitative survey design to describe EFL teachers' purposes for using CBA by studying a sample of EFL teachers (Creswell, 2009). This approach enabled these purposes to be presented in numerical terms, facilitating comparison between these categories: student-centered, instruction or administration-based purposes.

3.2. Participants

This section revolves around the demographic information of the participants. In this study, the participants in the online self-report questionnaires were EFL high school teachers (n=260) sampled purposefully based on their availability, willingness and convenience. As Figure 1 demonstrates, 32.7% of teacher participants are females while 67.3% are males, teaching the following levels, respectively: common core classes (68.1%), first-year classes (58.5%) and second-year classes (65.4%).

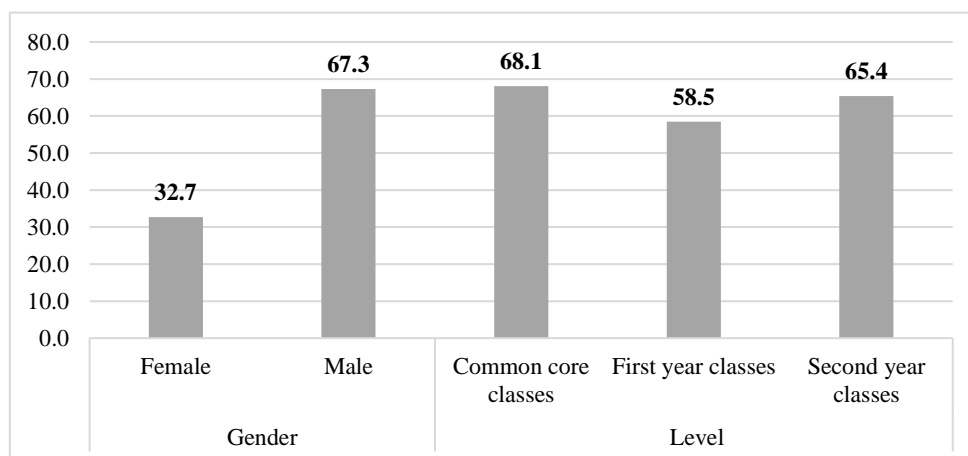


Figure 1. The demographic information of high school teacher participants

3.3. Instruments

This study employed online self-report questionnaires administered to teacher participants to collect quantitative data. A questionnaire is defined as a written set of survey questions that are relatively cost-effective and designed to be answered by a specific group of research participants, thereby, allowing data collection from a significantly larger sample (Mills & Gay, 2016).

The questionnaire used in this study comprises two main sections. The first section gathers participants' background information, including gender and the school levels taught. The second section features an eight-item, five-point frequency Likert scale that assesses EFL teachers' common CBA purposes. The questionnaire items are adapted by the author from previous research (Cheng et al., 2004; Estaji & Kardoust, 2021) while aligning with local CBA policies and the study's objectives. The purposes are systematically categorised into three groups: two items addressing administration-based purposes, three focusing on instruction-based purposes, and three related to student-centred purposes.

Moreover, the previously highlighted categorized purposes are intentionally presented in a non-sequential order to minimise bias. An open response section is also included to enable teacher participants to share additional comments on other potential CBA purposes. Additionally, a multiple-choice item with three options (Yes, To some extent, No) is utilised to collect data on CBA transparency, specifically examining the degree to which EFL teachers inform their students about how CBA information and results will be used.

Validity and Reliability Considerations

To ensure the validity of the online self-report questionnaire employed in this study, it was field-tested with a sample of twenty high school EFL teachers. Based on their feedback concerning the clarity of the questions and items, ambiguous instructions and items were rephrased as necessary before administering the final version of the questionnaire to the target participants. Additionally, the reliability of the five-point Likert scale used to measure EFL teachers' purposes for using CBA was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which demonstrated acceptable reliability with a value of 0.85, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha reliability test of the Likert scale on CBA purposes

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
CBA Purposes	.85	8

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed before, during, and after data collection. Participants' anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses were assured before completing the online self-report questionnaires. Additionally, they were informed about the objective of the study and the estimated time required to complete the questionnaire.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The online self-report questionnaire was distributed to Moroccan EFL high school teachers via Google Forms® because of its efficiency in collecting large volumes of data within a short period. The questionnaire data was subsequently downloaded and coded using Microsoft Excel (2019). Thereafter, the coded data underwent frequency distribution analysis with SPSS 26.0 (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY). A frequency table (Table 2) was utilised to illustrate the five-point frequency scale, while a graph (Figure 2) was employed to present the analysis of the multiple-choice

item with three options. The qualitative data collected from the questionnaire's open-ended items were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes within the responses.

4. Results

This section presents the results of the five-point Likert scale, featuring eight items that measure the purposes of using CBA in Moroccan EFL high schools, alongside the participants' additional comments. It also analyzes the multiple-choice item, which includes three options assessing the transparency of CBA purposes: the students' awareness of these purposes.

4.1. The Purposes of Using CBA in Moroccan EFL High Schools

The participants responded to a five-point frequency Likert scale assessing the purposes for using CBA. Beginning with student-centered purposes, the results demonstrated that 75.7% of teacher participants often or always utilize CBA to motivate students to work harder, whereas 16.9% do so occasionally and only 7.3% never or rarely do so. Aiming to provide students with feedback on their progress, 65% often or always use CBA for this purpose, with 23.8% sometimes doing so and only 11.1% never or rarely using it for this purpose. To assist students in setting learning goals, 59.3% of teacher participants often or always use CBA for this purpose. 26.5% sometimes do so and only 14.2% never or rarely do so.

When it comes to instruction-based purposes, the table also indicates that 64.7% of teacher participants often or always use CBA to diagnose strengths and weaknesses in their teaching while 23.5% sometimes do so and only 11.9% never or rarely do so. As for planning future instruction, 61.6% often or always use CBA to obtain information on students' progress to serve this purpose. 23.1% sometimes do so and only 15.4% never or rarely do so. To group students for instructional purposes, 63% of teacher participants sometimes or often use CBA for this purpose while 29.6% never or rarely do so and only 7.3% always do so.

Moving to administration-based purposes, the results revealed that 34.2% of teacher participants always use CBA to formally record students' achievements for summative and administrative purposes. 51.5% sometimes or often do so and only 14.3% never or rarely do so. To control class behavior, 52.3% of teacher participants often or always use CBA to address discipline problems in their classes. 26.2% sometimes do so and 21.6% never or rarely do so.

Table 2. The purposes of using CBA

I use CBA to	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
formally record students' achievements for summative and administrative purposes (s)	3.5	10.8	22.7	28.8	34.2
group students for instructional purposes (s)	11.9	17.7	36.5	26.5	7.3
control class behavior and discipline.	8.1	13.5	26.2	25.8	26.5
obtain information on students' progress to plan future instruction.	5.0	10.4	23.1	38.1	23.5
diagnose strengths and weaknesses in my own teaching.	3.8	8.1	23.5	28.5	36.2
provide feedback to students about their progress.	2.3	8.8	23.8	36.2	28.8
motivate students to work hard.	1.9	5.4	16.9	28.8	46.9
help students set learning goals.	5.0	9.2	26.5	25.8	33.5

Teachers' Additional Comments on the Purposes of Using CBA

Some teacher participants also highlighted additional student-centered purposes, such as supporting students in developing autonomy as learners and encouraging low achievers to put forth greater effort.

4.2. Communicating the Purposes of CBA to Students

To enquire whether teacher participants informed their students of the purposes of using CBA, they responded to a multiple-choice question with three options. Figure 2 demonstrates the percentage distribution of their responses. Specifically, it shows that 50.4% of teacher participants relatively inform students about the purposes for using their assessment results and information. About half of this proportion adequately informs their students. Similarly, half of this proportion does not do so.

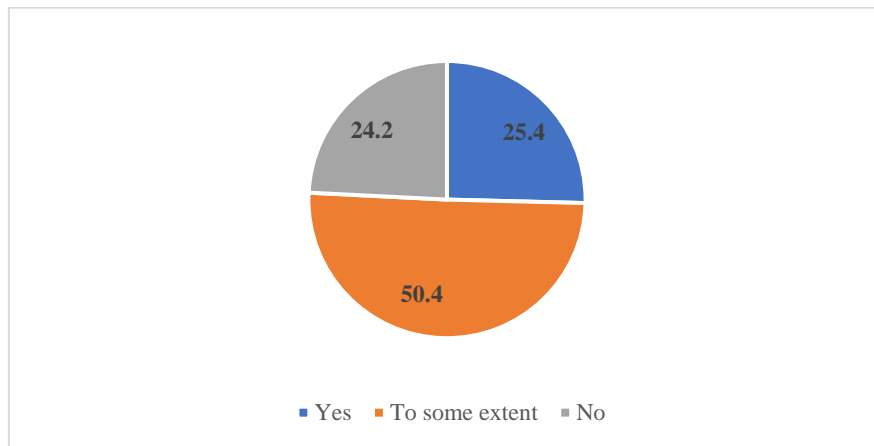


Figure 2. Informing students about CBA purposes

4.3. Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study highlight that EFL teachers employ CBA for various purposes, with a strong emphasis on student-centered objectives. This aligns with previous research conducted in Iran (Estaji & Kardoust, 2021), Canada, Hong Kong (Cheng et al., 2004), and Jordan (Swaie & Algazo, 2023), although specific applications vary across contexts. Concerning the instruction-based purposes, in China, CBA remains primarily instruction-driven (Cheng et al., 2004). Similarly, in this study, CBA serves instructional purposes, such as identifying teaching strengths and weaknesses and informing lesson planning, paralleling the Iranian EFL context. Additionally, Similar to the Iranian context, employing CBA to group students for instructional purposes remains minimal. Despite being the primary participants affected by CBA processes and outcomes, only a few teachers adequately inform students about the purposes of using their CBA results and information.

Beyond instruction, Moroccan EFL teachers also utilize CBA for administrative purposes, including documenting student achievements and managing classroom behavior. In contrast, in Canada and Hong Kong, teachers, more so than those in China, report a stronger tendency to share assessment data with central administrations (e.g., schools and universities). These variations in CBA usage likely stem from differences in teachers' conceptual frameworks, teaching experience, institutional policies, and broader assessment cultures. What remains unclear is the extent to which EFL teachers apply CBA for specific student-centred, instructional, and administrative purposes in a structured and systematic manner, as well as its impact on enhancing teaching and learning processes and shaping students' perspectives and roles in this process.

5. Discussion

In addressing the research questions regarding the purposes of using CBA in Moroccan EFL high school classrooms, including the most emphasized category, the results of this study revealed that

EFL teachers use CBA for a mixture of purposes with a primary focus on student-centered purposes, such as motivating students to excel, providing constructive feedback and guiding them in setting learning goals. It also serves instructional purposes, such as identifying strengths and areas for improvement in teaching practices, and serves administration-based purposes, including formally documenting student achievements and managing classroom behavior. Conversely, the least common purpose is grouping students for instruction.

In accordance with the current trends in CBA practices which emphasize serving students' immediate learning needs and providing context-specific feedback (Finch, 2012), the results of this study indicate that CBA is predominantly utilized to motivate students (e.g., low achievers), provide them with feedback and help them to set learning goals. This supports Cheng et al.'s (2004) finding that a large number of teachers in Canada and Hong Kong use assessments for student-centered purposes. Similarly, in other EFL contexts, CBA is frequently used for tracking students' progress, providing them with feedback and motivating them to enhance their learning (Estaji & Kardoust, 2021; Swaie & Algazo, 2023). To adequately fulfil these purposes, CBA should clearly outline not only what students know and can do but also offer valuable insights into why they perform as they do, highlighting the need to examine students' experiences with different forms of feedback.

Student centered purposes emphasized previously are essential for cultivating autonomous learning and enhancing reflective and self-assessment skills. This is especially significant given that some teacher participants also highlighted additional student-centered purposes, such as helping students develop greater independence as learners. However, there is a lack of information on whether teachers use self-made rubrics to assess students' attainment of the target standards effectively (Ministry of National Education, 2007) as a criterion-referenced interpretation of students' performance. With sufficient training, students can use this feedback to improve their learning, initially with the teacher's mediation and subsequently through their autonomous initiatives. This provides them with ongoing descriptive feedback, thereby, increasing their achievement gains and reducing score gaps (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005). Gathering both cognitive and socio-emotional data will also provide a holistic understanding of students' performance.

With regards to the instructional-based purposes, the results of this study indicate a strong emphasis on instructional self-improvement evidenced by teachers' predominant use of CBA to diagnose strengths and areas for improvement in their teaching. The results also revealed that EFL teachers use CBA to plan instruction. Similarly, in China, assessments for instructional purposes, such as lesson planning, are emphasized (Cheng et al., 2004). Likewise, in the Iranian EFL context, CBA is employed for instructional planning (Estaji & Kardoust, 2021). This is significant given that diverse EFL contexts are often marked by mixed-ability classrooms. These purposes also reflect the formative use of CBA (McGatha & Bush, 2013) in accordance with the functional perspective (Kane & Wools, 2019). That said, there is insufficient understanding regarding the systematic nature of this process and whether adequate training has been provided to support it. More specifically, it is not clear how teachers analyze and interpret CBA.

Proceeding with the instruction-based purposes, the result of this study revealed that grouping students for instructional purposes is the least common use of CBA, aligning with Estaji and Kardoust's (2021) finding in the Iranian EFL context that CBA infrequently serves this purpose. This indicates the need to investigate the contextual constraints restricting the use of CBA for this purpose. Furthermore, a significant potential barrier could be the lack of sufficient assessment literacy and administrative support. Worth highlighting here is that systematically grouping students can significantly enhance their engagement and academic progress. This is essential for facilitating differentiated instruction that addresses students' weaknesses and needs while promoting

cooperative learning, driving change and growth, and cultivating learning-to-learn skills (Ouakrime, 2000). Again, this is particularly important given the prevalence of mixed-ability classes in various EFL educational contexts, including the Moroccan EFL context.

Furthermore, the results of this study demonstrated a reliance on CBA for summative and administrative purposes, reflecting the common use of traditional assessment methods over alternative assessment techniques in Moroccan EFL classrooms (Mamad & Vigh, 2021). This aligns with the widely held conception of CBA in the Moroccan EFL context as primarily an end-of-term evaluation process for assigning grades (Abderrahmane, 2019; Benzehaf, 2017). This also suggests the need to reconsider CBA policies and guidelines, particularly the emphasis on using brief formal written techniques (e.g., quizzes) to evaluate individual language skills and components (NCEEO, 2007). In this regard, performance-based assessment deserves attention as it engages core operational knowledge and skills through meaningful alternative activities. This approach integrates multiple skills and fosters active learner participation in the assessment process. More importantly, it ensures triangulation, thereby providing a diverse range of data to inform formative decision-making about teaching and learning processes.

Drawing on these results, it is self-evident that the summative use of CBA to report students' learning to an audience outside the classroom is emphasized (Alonzo, 2019; Bonner, 2013). Additionally, these results corroborate the frequent provision of assessment data to the central administration in Canada and Hong Kong (Cheng et al., 2004), highlighting the fact that the excessive use of CBA for summative decision-making continues to prevail in various EFL educational contexts. That said, in the Iranian EFL context, the use of information for administrative or formal requirements, such as assigning grades is infrequent (Estaji & Kardoust, 2021). Notably, removing these restrictions for EFL teachers would help mitigate the tension between formative and summative functions of CBA (Wiliam, 2001), while enabling a greater focus on formative decision-making, thereby promoting more effective teaching and learning practices. Other prerequisite measures include ensuring adequate training, actively engaging in the assessment process, and overcoming resistance to change.

When it comes to informing students about the purposes of CBA, the results of this study demonstrated that some EFL teachers effectively inform their students about the purposes of CBA. Notably, this awareness constitutes a critical aspect of fostering students' involvement in CBA processes. However, in the Jordanian EFL context, research indicates that students are less involved in the assessment processes to the extent that empowers them to take initiative in their own learning (Swaie & Algazo, 2023). By the same token, in the Moroccan EFL context, there is a need to investigate students' active involvement in CBA decision-making as well as student-centered activities. In this regard, it is worth noting that involving students in CBA requires clear communication about what they need to know and be able to do. This understanding allows both students and teachers to align their focus on the teaching and learning processes effectively (Herman, 2016). Additionally, learner training constitutes a critical component to ensure students' understanding of the learning objectives and criteria to actively participate in CBA.

While this study provides valuable insights into CBA purposes in Moroccan EFL high schools, it has several limitations. Relying solely on the online self-report questionnaire as the primary data collection tool may have introduced bias. Additionally, a statistical comparison of specific CBA purposes across the three categories -student-centered, instruction-based, and administration-based- could have strengthened the reliability and validity of the findings. Although the sample size was adequate, it may not fully represent the practices of all Moroccan EFL teachers. Furthermore, incorporating interviews and classroom observations as supplementary data collection methods

would have enriched the findings by offering a more comprehensive understanding of CBA purposes and challenges. This could have provided deeper insights into how teachers analyze and interpret CBA data to make informed decisions that align with student-centered, instruction-based, and administration-based purposes. Future research could address these limitations to further contribute to the literature on CBA purposes in the EFL context.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the purposes of using CBA from the perspective of Moroccan EFL high schools. It is partially inspired by studies conducted in other EFL educational contexts (See Cheng et al., 2004; Estaji & Kardoust, 2021; Swaie & Algazo, 2023). Building on the previous studies, CBA purposes were categorized into three major constructs: student-centred, instruction-based, and administration-based. (Cheng et al., 2004; Estaji & Kardoust, 2021). Using a quantitative approach with an online self-report questionnaire, the data was collected from 260 EFL high school teachers across Morocco.

The results of this study revealed that EFL teachers use CBA for a variety of formative and summative purposes, with a strong emphasis on student-centered purposes. These include motivating students, assisting them in formulating learning objectives and providing them with feedback for learning improvement. Additionally, CBA is utilized for instruction-based purposes, namely to diagnose strengths and areas for improvement in their teaching practices. The use of CBA for summative and administrative tasks, such as formally recording students' performance to summarize their achievements, was also observed. However, the least frequent application of CBA is for grouping students for instructional purposes. These results highlight both similarities and differences with other EFL educational contexts, underscoring the impact of local policies, teachers' philosophies and beliefs, training and other potential contextual constraints.

Based on the results of this study, it is mandatory to update CBA policies and guidelines in Moroccan EFL high schools for better implementation of CBA for formative and student-centered purposes. First, it is necessary to integrate alternative and performance-based assessment activities, supported by rubrics that accurately position students' performance at specific levels. Second, ensuring that students fully understand the objectives and processes of CBA is crucial, yet this must be supplemented by training students to effectively use assessment techniques (e.g., self-assessment), criteria, and feedback to enhance their learning. Third, students' awareness of CBA purposes is insufficient. To prioritize student-centered learning, it is vital to actively involve students in assessment activities that focus on their needs and ensures their independent participation.

Shifting the focus to future research, it should delve into the factors influencing EFL teachers' use of CBA for various formative and summative purposes, with particular attention to how CBA is used for instructional purposes. It is not clear whether training adequately informs this process. Furthermore, research should explore how teachers analyze and interpret CBA for formative decision-making in EFL high school classrooms, including the challenges encountered in this process. Furthermore, there is a need to examine how EFL teachers use CBA to motivate students, guide them in setting learning objectives and assess whether these practices promote autonomous learning. Employing a mixed-methods design could provide valuable insights into these dynamics. Finally, it is worth investigating the effect of informing students about CBA purposes on their involvement in the assessment process and its role in increasing academic achievement.

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