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Indonesian EFL Teachers' Perceptions on Formative Assessment in Writing

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Abstract

Traditionally, the previous writing learning enterprise strictly focused its concern on gaining the fixed results from EFL educators in the form of scores or judgments. However, nowadays writing learning venture gradually abandons this old method to be replaced by formative assessment approach. It is strongly believed by worldwide researchers that the suitable implementation of formative assessment can enable learners to yield better writing qualities, gain more satisfying writing achievements, and foster their writing learning motivation. This present small-scale study was planned to further investigate Indonesian EFL teachers' perceptions on the use of formative assessment in EFL writing. The data gathering processes relied on 5 open-ended written narrative inquiry questions in order to provide more rejuvenating insights for ELT experts and practitioners. These inquiries were distributed to 2 experienced Indonesian EFL teachers holding English Education Master Degree. 2 major specific themes were scientifically obtained namely: (1) Formative assessment can intensively guide learners to improve the quality of their writing and (2) Formative assessment can promote more holistic writing learning venture for all learners. Suggestively, these 2 themes aimed to suggest worldwide ELT parties to exhaustively preparing more authentic formative writing assessment activities for the betterment of future writing learning dynamics.

Keywords:

formative assessment, EFL teachers, writing

INTRODUCTION

Creating more qualified L2 writing products has always been one of the taxing matters for globalized EFL learners since they are required to activate more proper cognitive, affective, and linguistic aspects concurrently. Fareed et al., (2016) theorized that the majority of EFL learners encounter serious learning impediments while discovering the most suitable writing topics due to the complex nature of writing tasks comprising of linguistics, affective, and cognitive streams. Another underpinning reason why EFL learners have more tendency to avoid writing learning enterprises they have no aspiration regarding the exact efficient writing strategies they are going to apply. This conception is well-confirmed by the theory of second language writing processes postulated by Prastikawati and Huda (2018) strongly suggesting EFL educators integrating both process and product writing-oriented learning approaches to enable all learners to be more proactive, confident, and optimistic writers.

One of the worth-implementing L2 writing learning approaches is through the use of formative assessment. It is cogently believed that in the light of formative assessment, EFL learners will be more capable of navigating their ongoing writing learning dynamics for a better purpose due to the ongoing nature of this assessment. It can also be phrased that formative assessment can allow both EFL teachers and learners to begin discerning the extent writing skills as well as achievements they have obtained resulted in more meaningful future writing learning processes. This belief is in harmony with the theory of L2 formative writing assessment postulated by Lee and Coniam (2013) averring that with the presence of formative assessment, EFL teachers along with learners are more liable to direct their ongoing writing learning venture in a more organized way since they evaluate all writing further progression interactively. On top of that, the utilization of formative assessment can also accurately locate EFL learners' writing learning trajectories in terms of the particular writing strength together with weaknesses, writing interests, and general writing obstructions they confront. These aforementioned advantageous values are in tandem with the formative writing assessment theory adduced by Widiastuti et al., (2020) mentioning that the inculcation of formative assessment in multiple writing classroom contexts fundamentally aim to supportively help all EFL learners to improve their targeted writing competencies, as well as overall learning qualities, resulted in the striking advancement of their writing endeavor. In another interconnected premise, Pantiwati and Husamah (2017) highly advocated worldwide EFL educators to internalize formative assessment in their diverse-wide ranging writing classroom circumstances to psychologically, mentally, and cognitively corroborate learners' writing learning motivation amid adverse laborious obstacles. Furthermore, it is also worth underscoring here that the incorporation of formative assessment in second language writing learning enterprises has never been an easy mission for every language teacher to carry out. To terrifically maximize this student-centered learning approach, language teachers are commissioned to specifically identify their learners' existent target language competencies, ongoing writing skills, and writing learning needs to promote more meaningful writing learning activities whereby learners can continuously foster their desirable writing competencies to reach more fruitful target language learning outcomes. This indispensable action seems to concur with the finding of Rivai, Ridwan, Supriyati, and Rahmawati (2019) unpacking that the soundness and compatibility of formative writing assessment are tightly interwoven with the teachers' profound analysis of the continual writing learning processes undergone by their learners since the outcomes

of those formative judgments will thoroughly determine the qualities of future writing learning activities.

Anchored on these aforesaid conceptions, it is vitally essential for EFL teachers to instill a higher degree of a positive perspective on the further utilization of formative assessment in their diverse writing classrooms. When they are capable of valuing the critical importance of formative writing assessment, teachers can stipulate more informed writing learning objectives, decisions, and trajectories holistically benefitting all learners eventually resulted in more gratifying writing learning results. These above-explicated conceptions are paralleled with the theory of EFL teachers' perspective on formative writing assessment theory devised by Karim (2015) critically highlighted that one of the major cornerstones of formative writing assessment is to allow all learners to profoundly conceive their specific writing proficiency, interest, preferences, and goals which are attributable to teachers' particular perspectives on this constant evaluative learning approach. Karimi and Shafiee (2014) discovered that the majority of EFL teachers capable of running more enjoyable, contextual, and supportive writing learning vicinities are those having strongly instilled a higher level of positive perceptions toward the painstaking dynamics in applying formative assessment. Through more sustainable formative writing assessment, EFL learners will be strongly encouraged to develop their desired writing competencies to the utmost potentials since a wide range of corrective, constructive, and enlightening feedback are continuously addressed to them. This contention is inextricably associated with the finding of Lee (2017) unearthing that most university EFL learners having been introduced to formative writing assessment were more willing to sustainably engage with varied challenging writing learning situations due to the positive feedback imparted by their teachers. In another identical investigation, Lee (2011) unfolded that the majority of EFL learners having been exposed to continual formative assessment progressively transfigured into more competent writers possessing a higher level of writing learning motivation.

Four prior studies in this archipelago have been conducted to exhaustively spotlight the paramount importance of formative writing assessment. The first study was conducted by Widiastuti et al., (2020) finding out that Indonesian EFL educators should be welltrained regarding the suitable approaches in utilizing formative writing assessment to better promote more conducive, contextual, and meaning-making writing learning dynamics for all learners. Nurhayati (2020) uncovered that the accurate implementation of formative writing assessment permitted EFL learners to increasingly elevate their writing skills, motivation, and achievements due to the mutual collaborative networking taking place between the learning community members. Furthermore, Prastikawati, Wiyaka, and Adi (2020) highly encouraged Indonesian EFL educationalists to consistently nurture their learners' writing learning volition, confidence, and skills with the apparent support of formative writing assessment. In the last study, Widiastuti and Saukah (2017) revealed that the more intensive EFL teachers' pedagogical development on formative writing assessment needs to be exhaustively deemed by all educational stakeholders to jointly correlate their specific teaching premise with the particular classroom circumstances potentially bring about more positive writing learning nuance in the future events.

Based on the researcher's knowledge, none of the previous studies in this nation have been conducted to specifically investigate Indonesian EFL teachers' perspectives toward the role of peer assessment in writing processes. In the light of this aforesaid gap,

this study attempted to further investigate more in-depth Indonesian EFL teachers' perspectives on formative writing assessment potentially yielding more enlightening research results strongly motivating our educational stakeholders to maximally harness this teaching-learning approach in future events. To fulfill this major research objectivity, this present study was framed by the following research question: (1) to what extent do Indonesian EFL teachers value the use of formative assessment in their writing classes?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part aimed to profoundly expound 2 major theoretical frameworks mutually associated with the proposed research topic namely: (1) Formative EFL writing assessment and (2) The advantageous values promoted by formative EFL writing assessment.

Formative EFL Writing Assessment

Looking more conscientiously on our ELT writing practices, it is very common for EFL teachers to utilize a more traditional writing learning approach named summative assessment. In the light of this fixed evaluative writing approach, EFL learners will have no wider opportunities to greatly increase their targeted writing learning competencies, achievements, and strategies since they solely obtained the final results of their writing products addressed by their teachers. This conception sits well with the theory of summative writing assessment put forward by Ratminingsih et al., (2018) asserting that the incorporation of summative EFL writing assessment does not provide ample chances for learners to intensively forge their ongoing writing skills resulted in lower writing learning achievements and motivation. To overcome this above-mentioned shortcoming, formative EFL writing assessment emerged to begin superseding the predominant role of previous traditional assessment by highly emphasizing the critical importance of processoriented writing learning activities undergone by learners. Through this long-lengthy process, learners can progressively elevate their writing skills, interest, and volition since they experience a more positive as well as encouraging writing learning atmosphere. Concerning this line of perspective, Burner (2015) highly recommended EFL educators all around the globe start internalizing formative EFL writing assessment to bring about more pleasurable, engaging, and lively writing learning ventures for all learners in which they can significantly gain more gratifying writing learning outcomes. Anchored on these theoretical baselines, Bennett (2011) clustered 5 efficient strategies for EFL teachers in incorporating formative writing assessment throughout variegated writing classroom surroundings. The first strategy is teachers need to share more realistic writing learning goals to be fully attained by learners. After forming these specific writing learning objectives in mind, teachers are prompted to promote more interactive and mutual classroom learning discussions wherein all learners can scaffold each other's existing understanding of their writing topics. After experiencing a higher degree of writing learning enjoyment, it is also pivotal for EFL teachers to address more constructive writing feedback navigating their learners' future writing learning journeys in a better direction. Moving forward to the next stage, EFL teachers are also encouraged to specifically model the collaborative writing sharing for their learners to transfigure them into more supportive writing learning companions for other learning community members. In the last cycle, EFL teachers ought to stress the essentialism on infusing writing ownership for their learners to enable them to become more transformative target

language academicians highly desirous of impacting positive influences to others' learning progression. By carrying out these 5 consecutive steps, it can be plausibly assumed that the more meaning-making, qualified, and efficient EFL writing learning venture will await ELT educators as well as practitioners.

The Advantageous Values Promoted by Formative EFL Writing Assessment

The suitable usage of formative EFL writing assessment can work as one of the propelling forces for both teachers and learners to alter their ongoing writing learning dynamics in a more conducive, meaningful, and well-organized manner. Bennett (2011) articulates that the major advantageous value of internalizing formative assessment in EFL writing learning dynamics is to navigate the future writing learning processes for a better purpose. Hence, to divest a more robust formative EFL writing assessment, it is worth underscoring for language teachers to sustainably address a wider range of constructive feedback, suggestions, and actions appropriately fitting with the existent learners' writing learning contexts. This suggestive advice is closely interlinked with the theory of formative EFL writing assessment invented by Naghdipour (2017) arguing that various supportive feedback, inputs, and learning behaviors are indispensably pivotal for EFL teachers attempting to augment the rewarding benefits of formative EFL writing assessment. Further to that, language teachers are also simultaneously commissioned to conduct more hands-on, favorable, and engaging writing learning activities in the presence of variegated learners to bring them to get closer to more advanced writing levels progressively. This conceptualization appeared to be quite pertinent to the theory of writing scaffolding theory postulated by Shrestha and Coffin (2012) believing that in the light of supportive, collaborative, and favorable writing learning activities, the fruitful formative assessment advantageous benefits can be extensively attained by all learners since they are more motivated to scaffold other learning counterparts' writing skills growth without feeling suppressed by the predominant roles of teachers. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all writing approach ought to be eluded by EFL teachers by significantly rejuvenating their current teaching roles as supportive learning facilitators highly desirous of supervising all learners' writing learning development. By adjusting to this new contextual pedagogical role, EFL learners can exceptionally foster their writing learning volition, skills, and achievements due to the authentic presence of holistic writing learning activities where they can prolifically thrive on their autonomous as well as collaborative writing behaviors. This perspective hinged upon the finding of McDowell, Wakelin, Montgomery, and King (2011) accentuating the crucial importance of promoting more transformative, enjoyable, and positive writing learning environments for all learners to allow them to activate their proactive learning behavior leading them to successfully attain more fruitful writing learning outcomes. Similarly, Cauley and McMillan (2010) strongly affirming that more enjoyable writing learning circumstances should be one of the inseparable components in maximizing formative EFL writing assessment benefits tangibly manifested in the significant enhancement of learners' writing learning motivation and resilient.

METHOD

In the light of narrative inquiry, the researcher felt assured that more trustworthy data could potentially be attained since the overarching portrayals of one particular phenomenon would be disseminated forthrightly by research participants. Clandinin and

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Caine (2013) articulate that the main purpose of narrative inquiry is to enable the researchers to obtain more robust research results based on the tangible stories shared by research participants. Two invited Indonesian EFL teachers were participating in this current small-scale qualitative study. These participants graduated from English Education Master Study Program, Sanata Dharma University. The first teacher had experienced quite long-range teaching experiences since she was a bachelor student. At this present moment, she is working at Montessori Elementary School, Yogyakarta. The second teacher had also possessed similar teaching-length experiences as the abovementioned teacher. At this current moment, he is managing his online private English course institution. The major aim why the researcher decided to invite these two research participants was they had undergone quite rich teaching-learning experiences impacting their general perspectives on the further utilization of formative assessment in various writing enterprises. To fulfill this research objectivity, the invited 2 research participants would be given 5 open-ended written narrative inquiry questions concerning their specific perspectives toward the use of formative in writing learning venture. To generate more robust research results, the researcher planned to categorize each data into some specific themes and integrate these categorizations with some correlated prior findings as well as theories. By doing so, the obtained research findings could potentially inspire Indonesian ELT practitioners to conduct more meaningful formative writing assessments in the upcoming teaching-learning events.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this subsection, the researcher attempted to delineate 2 major obtained findings derived from the invited interviewees. Those findings are categorized into 2 specific themes namely: (1) Formative assessment can intensively guide learners to improve the quality of their writing and (2) Formative assessment can promote a more holistic writing learning venture for all learners. More overarching depictions can be discerned in the following lines.

Teacher 1: Formative Assessment Can Intensively Guide Learners to Improve the Quality of Their Writing

As stated by the first teacher, she forthrightly acknowledged the crucial importance of implementing formative assessment in teaching writing to her learners since they have progressively fostered their overall writing qualities. This significant enhancement of writing qualities is determined by several positive impacts such as the establishment of writing enthusiasm, persistent writing learning spirit, and mutual writing learning cooperation imparted by their teachers. All these above-mentioned conceptions are closely interlinked with the finding of Mohamadi (2018) finding out that the majority of university EFL learners having received a continual formative assessment from teachers are better at improving their writing products due to the clearer writing instructions as well as the enhancement of writing learning processes. In another finding, Guadu and Boersma (2018) revealed that most EFL learners attaining a substantial number of formative assessment practices were capable of becoming more proactive and positive writers resulted in striking writing qualities improvement. Mak and Lee (2014) uncovered that in the virtue of formative assessment practices, EFL learners would have a vast range of chances to fully undergo a more supportive writing learning atmosphere, promote more striking writing skills progression, and positive writing learning attitudes reciprocally

affecting their overarching writing qualities. All these positive writing learning outcomes had simultaneously been approved by the first teacher's interview excerpts as follows.

[Teacher 1: Yes, because the students are able to receive feedback gradually and they can use it as their guidelines to perform better.]

[Teacher 1: In students' writing, I ask them to proofread gradually, so they can give me more effective feedback to their friends.]

In the same line of argument, one of the cogent impetuses underlying the first teacher's motivation in incorporating formative assessment in her writing classroom contexts is the inculcation of writing learning autonomy. This rewarding writing learning outcome is heavily induced by the nature of formative writing assessment dynamics in which all learners can freely share their thoughts toward their learning companions to bring about more significant writing enhancement in the long-term processes. This finding is echoed by identical findings in Sherstha and Coffin (2012) unfolding that EFL university EFL learners had more tendency to become more proactive, optimistic, and energized writers after being exposed to various positive formative writing assessment activities where they experienced more relaxing and unrestricted writing learning environments. In another investigation, Naghdipour (2017) highly recommended globalized EFL teachers internalize the appropriate use of formative assessment in diverse wide-ranging writing classes to allow all learners to harmoniously scaffold each other's writing skills, motivation, and qualities development through mutual collaborative networkings. Lee and Coniam (2013) scientifically proved that the suitable implementations of formative assessment would direct EFL learners to be more competent, tenacious, and highly motivated writers. The next interview excerpt which is taken from the first teacher also shared similar conformity.

[Teacher 1: Actually, I see that formative assessment can improve my students' writing skills because they can share more mutual understanding with friends.]

Furthermore, the effective deployment of formative assessment throughout variegated writing learning circumstances can also transfigure learners into more critical evaluators toward their writing products. This advantageous writing learning reward is induced by their capabilities in locating their particular writing strengths as well as weaknesses leading them to a wider array of precious opportunities to undergo more qualified writing learning enterprises in the upcoming future events. The first teacher frankly confessed that this transformative writing learning value is predominantly obtained by her learners since she constantly suggested teachers repeatedly and critically examining their learning counterparts' writing products. By anchoring on this practice, EFL learners do not merely advance their targeted writing competencies but also their positive interdependence while working with other learning counterparts possessing differing perspectives. A similar finding was also elicited in a study by Andersson and Palm (2018) strongly prompted EFL teachers around the globe to bring about more supportive writing learning dynamics wherein all learners could fully experience more authentic, stress-free, and liberal ideas dissemination with trusted learning peers, which finally directing them to accurately unearth their particular writing strengths along with

weaknesses. Box, Skoog, and Dabbs (2015) in the profound investigation of formative writing assessment impacts toward EFL learners' writing achievements posited that it is highly necessary for all EFL writing teachers and instructors to purposefully enact more contextual formative assessment enterprises compatible with learners' writing learning conditions to precisely addressing more constructive feedback based on their existing writing knowledge, skills, and experiences. In conjunction with these above-explicated contentions, Widiastuti et al., (2020) overtly repudiated that if taken with great care, the implementation of formative assessment can potentially yield a wider range of writing learning benefits such as the significant betterment of ongoing writing learning processes, the precise identification of learners' specific writing strengths along with weaknesses, and the embodiment of more supportive writing learning supports intensively sustaining learners' writing skills growth. Again, the researchers strongly argued that all these above-mentioned writing learning benefits can be fully experienced by their learners when teachers are committed to impart more obvious formative assessment guidelines, examples, practices, and evaluations. Congruent with these beneficial values, the first teacher also disseminated identical perceptions in the following lines.

[Teacher 1: To better locate the students' writing strengths and weaknesses, I tell them to check their spelling, grammar and punctuation. We do it gradually and I can see the improvement after several reminders and feedbacks occurred among the students.]

[Teacher 1: Mostly, in my opinion, it is the least of self-reflection. I try to tell my students to overcome some writing difficulties by listing and classifying the feedbacks and find out the weaknesses so that they can understand which part that they should improve.]

Teacher 2: Formative Assessment Can Promote More Holistic Writing Learning Venture for All Learners

In line with this second theme, the second teacher strongly accorded that the appropriate usage of formative assessment can promote a more holistic writing learning venture for all learners. This positive learning benefit is predominantly caused by the flexible nature of formative assessment where all learners can maximize their learning potentials in concord with their existing skills, preferences, and interest. Concerning this conception, the second teacher frankly confessed that he always played his major roles as a supportive writing learning facilitator for diverse learners since he holds a strong conviction that fruitful writing learning outcomes can be potentially attained by all learners when the teacher properly creates formative assessment activities fit their learners' writing learning needs. Clark (2011) theorized that when EFL teachers potently inculcate more humanistic, interactive, and student-centered formative assessment enterprises in their writing classes, there would be a higher degree of probability for all learners to elevate their targeted writing competencies in a better direction. By the same token, Chen and Zhang (2017) unfolded that a considerable number of university EFL learners were capable of fostering their writing volition, engagement, and products after being endowed with supportive formative assessment supports imparted by their language teachers resulted in a gratifying writing achievements attainment. All these above-explained contentions also hover in the perspective of the second teacher as follows.

[Teacher 2: Yeah I think so. When I use formative assessment, it means that I teach them based on their learning phase. I assign them the assignment that fits their current capability during the process.]

It is also worthwhile to be expounded here that the second teacher had continuously capitalized on particular efficient pedagogical strategies while introducing his learners to EFL writing learning dynamics in the light of formative assessment. The first step carried out by the second teacher to effectively maximize formative assessment implementations in L2 writing learning processes is to provide clearer guidance for learners regarding how to write qualified writing products. After going through this first step, the second teacher also assisted learners to frame their bigger pictures on the specific writing topics they are going to choose. In the last step, the second teacher acted his role as an attentive listener and loyal writing learning counterpart for learners. By realizing all these 3 supportive writing learning supports, it can be ascertained that learners will not solely produce more high-quality writing products but also infuse long-lasting writing learning spirit throughout their academic journeys. These above-explicated strategies have a close linkage with the finding of Xie and Lei (2019) highly advocating all EFL teachers to implant more thoughtful thoughts while applying certain writing learning strategies in the presence of formative assessment activities by gradually immersing their learners into friendly, pleasurable, and well-structured writing learning cycles to better promote more life-long writing learning spirit within themselves. Similarly, Panadero, Brown, and Courtney (2014) overtly revealed that a great number of university EFL learners were able to cultivate a higher level of writing learning endeavor after being exposed to more supportive and safer formative assessment dynamics. These aforesaid frameworks also shared common ground with the interview excerpt taken from the second teacher in the following lines.

[Teacher 2: I utilize the formative assessment in my writing class by giving them the introduction first. Then, I teach them how to write an essay step-by-step. First of all, I give them the example on of essays. Then, I teach them how to develop a framework from a topic. After that, I ask them to write an essay about a topic. By teaching them step by step, I can motivate them to study based on their learning pace.]

The second teacher had also ingrained a higher level of standpoint that to fine-tune the internalization of formative assessment with learners' writing learning contexts, professional EFL teachers are strongly encouraged to cast more robust compassionate heart in intensively assisting their learners to endure more conducive, enlightening, and enjoyable writing learning enterprises. Thus, the second teacher was fully aware of these aforementioned matters by becoming well-prepared before teaching in one particular writing class. For him, the successful incorporation of the formative writing assessment approach is not happening by chance, yet it is a tangible result of the mutual joint work well-grounded by all learning community members. In consonance with this finding, Ahmed and Troudi (2018) truly recommended all EFL teachers to address a higher degree of extensive personal caring, design more authentic writing learning materials, and nurture the positive writing learning atmosphere consistently to concurrently increase their learners' learning accountability as well as resilience while confronting adverse writing situations. In the same vein, Nhu and Tin (2019) unveiled that university EFL

teachers having ingrained more robust pedagogical and professional commitment in promoting a higher degree of reverence, appreciative feedback, and insistent personal encouragement amid formative writing assessment activities would have more probability to discern more satisfying writing achievements as well as proactive writing engagement from their learners. Lyaskovets and Horner (2021) unearthed that a substantial number of university EFL learners having insistently received more empowering moral as well as motivational supports from their teachers tended to transfigure into more confident, highly motivated, and independent writers compared to those minimally obtaining all these types of supports in the light of formative writing assessment. Keeping in mind these above-said points, the second teacher also argued in such an identical way as follows.

[Teacher 2: Formative assessment is used to make get the best students' attainment. The strategies that I apply are to understand what the students feel in their position. For example, I have ever struggled to learn English academic writing. Therefore, if I put my feet in their shoes, I can feel the challenges they face and try to help them to overcome.]

[Teacher 2: If we do not know how the students feel in learning writing, it will be difficult to guide them. I usually overcome this challenge by understand them more. I try to ask them which one is the difficult thing for them and try to help them to overcome it.]

[Teacher 2: The lack of material preparation can bother the learning process. Teachers need to be ready to give the right formative assessment to be able to help the students to meet the learning goals.]

CONCLUSION

As based on the present findings, it is worthwhile to be underscored repetitively here that the appropriate utilization of formative assessment is indispensably important for the continuity of more meaning-making, transformative, and inspiring EFL writing learning enterprises. These impactful major big-takeaways are strongly influenced by the strong ownership of writing learning progression, supportive writing learning supports addressed by language teachers and a higher sense of transfiguring into more life-long writers throughout the academic life. Again, language teachers should critically ascertain that more authentic, contextual, and engaging formative assessment writing dynamics have been widely experienced by all learners unless the frustrating writing learning experiences will potentially demotivate them to depart earlier from this pain-staking academic learning journey. Reversely, there were some particular shortcomings discovered in this present small-scale qualitative study. Firstly, since there was only a small number of research participants taking part to share their perspectives toward the role of formative assessment in varied writing classroom learning contexts, a larger sample of research participants graduating from variegated educational institutions should be deemed more profoundly by the future researchers to provide broader insights on the effective utilization of formative writing assessment. Secondly, since the obtained findings merely focused on 2 experienced EFL teachers holding English Education Master Degree, it is worth reminding that all ELT parties all around the globe to interpret these possible results with a higher degree of caution to not blindly implement all these probable suggestions into their multivariate language fields.

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