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Building a Sustainable Learning Cycle: The Role of 'the Formative Use of Summative Tests' (FUST) in Promoting Students' Developments

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The study employed a descriptive mixed-methods qualitative case study approach. Material and interview-based data were collected from two EFL classes in a private international school in central China. Findings from RQ1 suggest that teacher-made summative tests were largely dependable to the extent that the tests reflect the syllabus-based construct and address students' affective factors. Findings from RQ2 suggest that facilitating factors including in-school continuous professional development (CPD) and teacher collegiality practices may enhance FUST's prospective role.

1. Literature Review

1.1 The Emergence of FUST

FUST is emerged from King's Medway Oxford Formative Assessment Project (KMOFAP) [1]. In their seminal work, they realise that in classroom settings, it is unrealistic to separate SA and FA because teachers' reality is that FA has to work alongside with SA since doing marking or grading is part of their responsibility. FUST seems also meet teachers' another reality because it is more of a natural strategy that most teachers have probably used summative tests to help students improve intentionally or unintentionally [2].

1.2 FUST Development: Theoretical Underpinnings

As a key concept emerged from empirical studies, FUST in classroom pedagogy, has a number of important

characteristics:

l It allows SA to be seen as a positive part of the learning process.

l It allows FA to perform actively because it keeps the learners engaged with both pre-test (i.e. reflection-based review, generating and answering their own questions) and post-test stages through effective formative strategies (i.e. test analysis, feedback, peer-and self-assessment).

l It helps raise teachers' awareness that learning potential can be derived from test.

l It has the potential to shift responsibility from teachers to students to aid learning to a more self-regulatory direction so that students can become the owners of their own learning.

1.3 The Emergence of Research Questions

RQ1: Whether teacher-made summative tests are dependable in promoting a positive effect on teaching and

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learning?

RQ2: Whether FUST can play a prospective role in promoting students' development in the feed forward summative tests?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

Table 1. Participant profiles (9 participants in total)

Participating classes	1	2	3
Teacher participants	Tracy_C_1	Tim_A_1	
Teachers' experiences	10 Years	10 years	
Teachers' position	Head EFL teacher CE	Language teacher OE	
Students focus group interviewees (Group 1, students' age: 13)	Sally_1	Samuel_2	Simon_3
Students focus group interviewees (Group 2, students' age: 11)	Sara_1	Scott_2	Shane_3
School leader participant	Tessa_C_1		

Notes: Pseudonymised names with 'T' indicate teachers; with 'S' indicate students; 'C' indicates Chinese and 'A' indicates Australian; 'CE' represents Comprehensive English and 'OE' represents Oral English.

2.2 Data Collection

Two phases of paper-based material data were collected to address RQ1 and RQ2 electronically. This involved ELT syllabus, mid-term and final-term test paper, students' test results and teachers' post-test analysis report from both Grade 5 and Grade 7. Three sets of semi-structured and structured Wechat-based (similar to Skype) teacher interview data were collected. Each set of interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was audiotaped with participants' consent.

2.3 Data Analysis

Codes were analysed three times by the researcher in order to categorise data into different themes. Codes related to FUST were firstly developed to identify whether they confirm or disconfirm with theoretical underpinnings and empirical study findings exemplified in the literature review. Codes then were also categorised in order to compare or integrate with material data. Codes were developed at the final stage to address the broader discussion related to various learning theories and approaches, with reference to the 'restricted' or 'extended' FA model in an ELT context.

All teacher, student participants and parents to student

participants read a full disclosure documents, introducing the purpose and the procedures for participating the research for meeting ethical considerations.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 RQ1 Findings and Discussions

RQ1 was whether the teacher-made summative tests were effective in promoting a positive teaching and learning. The findings suggest that the dependability lies in its syllabus-based construct validity to the extent that it enables teachers to use accumulated information to guide student learning. These findings are consistent with literature similarly including components such as the validity of teacher-made tests [3,4] in general education context. However, empirical studies, including ELT studies, have raised their concerns on the dependability of teacher-made tests to the extent whether they are primarily designed to make orientation on students' performance or learning.

In a general education context, more recent studies conducted by [5] suggesting that teacher-made tests tend to assess students' lower-level recall of declarative knowledge rather than critical thinking or ability skills. Similarly in an ELT context, McMillan [6] suggests that English teachers used objective tests much more frequently than subjective tests. The associated washback include reducing the opportunity for a broad range of learning outcomes to be included [7] and using of lower-level questions in evaluation that hinge learners to develop higher-order knowledge such as metacognitive knowledge [8]. Subsequently, this may lead to a focus on performance goals rather than learning or mastery goals [9].

3.2 RQ2 Discussion

RQ2 was about on whether FUST can play a role in promoting students learning test follow-up stages. Three main facilitating factors are outlined: active engagement, reflective review and responsibility shifting, which are consistently applied from teachers to students. Findings also suggest facilitating indicators, namely, in-school teacher continuous professional development practices and teacher collegiality could extend FUST's potential to promote students' development as an extended FA in the given context.

In ELT literature, when linking with literature in assessment, many pedagogical studies suggest that feedback should be less focused on correcting errors than on raising questions that enable students to understand standards or criteria and develop their own ways forward in collaboration with the teacher and more able peers [10]. Therefore, it seems to suggest that feedback can only become exten-

sively formative when students have the capacity to internalise teacher feedback, thus building their own self-feed-back autonomy [11].

One area of development is that the school provides continuous professional development opportunities through CELTA-S[1], which includes trainings on assessment. When being asked about the effectiveness of the training program, one teacher noted:

'it is good although has a lot of homework. It is mainly online. We have 4-day off-line face-to-face training. For module two, we learn how to ask questions and the homework is how do we use questions to teach vocabulary.'

The aforementioned training programme seems like a development to enhance teachers' general assessment knowledge. But it is also important to note that foundational changes in teachers' working theories can only occur over time and with collaboration, commitment, and support. Therefore, the introduction of an external training programme does not necessarily guarantee a sustainable improvement.

4. Conclusions

Key findings are outlined in addressing the role of

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1   CELT-S is an online teaching qualification with teaching practice, for secondary school EFL teachers working with learners aged 11-18 years (Cambridge Assessment English).

FUST related to the two research questions. Firstly, the findings reinforce those reported positively in previous studies [12-14] such as active engagement, reflective review and responsibility shifting from both teachers and students. The findings also enrich the previous studies of FUST by looking into its prospective role. Positive indicators such as the role of CPD and teacher collegiality may bring FUST more potential to play a prospective role in promoting students' development.

The present study is expected to have substantial implications for research of FUST, in a Mainland Chinese context. To begin with, the study to my knowledge most likely marks the beginning at exploring the role FUST can play in schools at the private sectors in a Chinese context. The present study employed opinions from all the four prerequisite factors: teacher, student, assessment and context, as a contextual-bound theoretical concept suggested. Therefore, the main findings may provide valuable references to future studies in a similar context.

In view of these limitations, future research studies are suggested to look into the role of FUST by employing possible quantitative data. Future studies are also suggested to employ a longitudinal approach to allow the potential prospective role of FUST to be understood from a long-term perspective. Future study could also explore effectiveness of teacher feedback in an intercultural context.

Table 2. pedagogical suggestions on teacher feedback [12]

Comprehensive English Class (Written feedback)				
Task level	Effective feedback	Details (s)	Present study	FUST
1. **Task level** How well task are understood/performed	**1.Feed Up** Where am I going Provision	**Provision (teacher)** The provision of challenge assignments: i.e. test	**Mid-term test** (Diagnose purpose)	**Restricted FA**
2. **Process level** The main process needed to understand	**2. Feed Back** How am I going	**FUST (teacher, peer, task, self)** (Providing information relative to a task or performance goal, in relation to expected standard)	**Written CF Exemplar** (Close discrepancy to expected standard)	**Restricted FA** **Extended FA**
3. **Self-regulation level** Self-monitoring directing, and regulating of actions	**3. Feed Forward** What to next	**FUST follow-up strategies (teacher, peer, Task, self)** (Reflection-based planning, correcting mistakes, and peer- and self-assessment)	Teacher on-going scaffolding Peer-assessment Self-assessment	**Extended FA**

Table 3. Pedagogical suggestions on teacher professional development

Factors	Area				
Inhibiting factors 'Restricted' Factors	**Teachers' understanding of SA and FA**		**Teachers' Pedagogical content knowledge**		
	Misconception	Concerns on FA	Language Testing design Score inflation	Lack knowledge in EFL Learning theory	FA pedagogy (feedback, peer-assessment)
Facilitating factors	**School In-service CPD**		**Teacher collegiality**		
Extended FA **CONTEXT**	1. School leadership and culture		2. Supporting teacher professional development		
	For Students		2.1 Teacher knowledge and skill		
			2.2 Teacher attitude and belief		

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