

# REMA 2025

6<sup>th</sup> International Conference  
Education Across Borders

Reimagining Education in the Modern Age

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Bitola, 2026



UNIVERSITY "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"



UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN MACEDONIA



FAN S. NOLI UNIVERSITY

University St. Kliment Ohridski – Bitola,  
Faculty of Education – Bitola

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## TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL ELT CLASSROOMS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN KOSOVO AND NORTH MACEDONIA

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### **Abstract**

This paper looks at how middle school ELT teachers in Kosovo and North Macedonia view and use alternative assessment in their classrooms. The study is based on a descriptive and comparative mixed-method survey conducted with 105 in-service teachers. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire that included Likert-scale items together with open-ended questions.

The survey focused on teachers' familiarity with alternative assessment, how often they report using it, what advantages they see in it, and what kinds of difficulties they encounter in practice. Across both country groups, teachers expressed generally supportive attitudes toward alternative assessment, while reported classroom use was more moderate than overall acceptance. Qualitative responses indicate that implementation is constrained mainly by time demands, workload, and scoring uncertainty rather than conceptual resistance. The cross-context similarity of response patterns suggests shared professional development needs and highlights the importance of practice-oriented teacher support for sustainable integration of alternative assessment in ELT classrooms.

**Keywords:** alternative assessment; ELT; teacher perceptions; middle school; Kosovo; North Macedonia

### **1. Introduction**

Assessment has long been part of English Language Teaching (ELT). Still, in many classrooms it is mainly linked with tests, grades, and end-of-term exams. These formats are often treated as practical and objective, yet they rarely show how learners build language ability step by step during instruction. For this reason, assessment is now more often discussed not just as a way to measure results, but as something that also supports learning while it happens. Learner-centered approaches view assessment as working together with teaching rather than coming only after it. From this perspective, classroom practices such as projects, portfolios, peer feedback, and self-assessment become especially relevant, since they make learner progress easier to observe over time. They also draw attention to participation, effort, and real communication dimensions that traditional test formats do not capture very well.

Formative assessment is generally framed as part of a broader assessment perspective that links evaluation directly with ongoing learning. It places particular emphasis on feedback, classroom interaction, and learner awareness of progress. Rather than focusing only on final test outcomes, formative and alternative assessment practices allow teachers to track development during instruction. In classroom settings, this often shifts the function of assessment toward continuous guidance instead of one-time judgment.

A formative and alternative assessment approach is especially well suited to language teaching contexts. ELT instruction typically prioritizes communication and meaningful language use, whereas many conventional testing formats still measure skills in isolation. Alternative assessment creates more opportunities to observe language in use through activities such as group tasks, presentations, and extended writing. These task types tend to mirror classroom language performance more closely than fixed-item tests.

Actual classroom use of alternative assessment depends heavily on teachers and on the conditions in which they teach. Factors such as prior experience, professional preparation, and personal assessment beliefs play a role in how comfortable teachers feel when using these approaches. Working conditions matter as well. Time limits, class size, and curriculum demands frequently shape what can realistically be done in assessment practice. For this reason, supportive attitudes toward alternative assessment do not always lead to regular or systematic use.

In education systems where reform is still in progress, assessment practices are also shaped by institutional expectations. Policy frameworks often encourage learner-centered models, yet what happens in classrooms is closely tied to the kind of support available to teachers. When practical guidance and ongoing professional development are limited, alternative assessment is more likely to be used inconsistently from one classroom to another. For this reason, examining how teachers understand and apply alternative assessment is

especially important. Exploring teachers' perceptions helps connect theoretical assessment models with classroom reality, particularly in ELT contexts where assessment traditions continue to evolve.

Although alternative and formative assessment have been widely discussed in international ELT research, there is still limited comparative evidence from Balkan middle school contexts, particularly regarding how teachers' beliefs, perceived competence, and working conditions interact in shaping classroom assessment choices. This study addresses that gap by providing mixed-method comparative evidence from Kosovo and North Macedonia and linking teacher perceptions with reported practice and support needs.

## 2. Literature Review

Assessment has always been part of language teaching, but the way it is understood and applied in ELT classrooms has changed over time. For many years, assessment was mostly linked to written tests and final exams. These formats are still widely used because they are practical and relatively easy to administer. However, as Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) explain, traditional tests often capture only a limited portion of learners' actual language ability and classroom performance. Similar concerns appear throughout the language assessment literature, especially in discussions of narrow measurement and limited construct coverage (Fulcher, 2012).

Because of these limitations, alternative assessment has received growing attention. Rather than focusing only on final scores, it looks more closely at learning processes and performance over time. It usually includes tools such as portfolios, projects, presentations, self-assessment, and peer assessment. These approaches aim to make assessment more authentic and more closely connected to what learners actually do in class. For this reason, alternative assessment is often discussed together with formative assessment, where feedback and revision are treated as part of learning itself (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Brookhart (2013) also notes that formative assessment tools help make criteria clearer and feedback more usable, particularly in classroom-based assessment settings (Davison & Leung, 2009).

In ELT settings, the move from traditional tests toward alternative assessment is especially relevant because language learning typically happens through interaction and combined skills. Learners rarely use language in isolated forms outside test situations. Alternative assessment methods are therefore often seen as more compatible with communicative language teaching, since they allow teachers to observe performance through realistic tasks instead of only fixed test items (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996).

A large part of the literature gives particular attention to teachers. In real classrooms, assessment is shaped not only by curriculum requirements but also by what teachers see as useful, workable, and fair. Cheng et al. (2008) show that teachers' assessment decisions are closely connected to their instructional goals and the pressures of their teaching context. Across EFL and ESL settings, teachers often describe alternative assessment in positive terms and associate it with higher student engagement and broader skill development. This pattern appears repeatedly in perception studies (Cheng et al., 2008; Nasri et al., 2010). Even so, supportive beliefs do not automatically lead to regular classroom use.

Studies that look directly at teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment tools tend to show broadly similar trends, even if the details differ by context. Many teachers see clear value in these approaches, especially for capturing a wider range of student abilities. At the same time, they often express uncertainty about how to apply them under everyday classroom conditions. Frequently mentioned concerns include scoring clarity, consistency, and classroom management demands. Nasri et al. (2010), for instance, found that teachers supported alternative assessment in principle but were less certain about using it consistently because of time pressure and procedural complexity. Comparable belief–practice gaps are also described in broader teacher-based assessment research (Davison & Leung, 2009).

Some research goes further and compares teachers' stated perceptions with their reported assessment practices. These studies suggest that what teachers believe and what they actually do not always fully align. Naraghizadeh et al. (2022), for example, found that teachers who use alternative assessment more frequently tend to show higher levels of reflective practice and assessment awareness. In other words, teachers who understand assessment principles better are more likely to apply a wider range of assessment methods. Fulcher (2012) similarly emphasizes the link between assessment literacy and teacher decision-making.

Across contexts, researchers also report recurring practical constraints. Teachers often mention large classes, limited time, heavy curriculum demands, and insufficient professional training as barriers to wider use of alternative assessment. Work on classroom and teacher-based assessment further shows that when institutional expectations are unclear, teachers tend to fall back on more familiar and traditional test formats (Fulcher, 2012; Davison & Leung, 2009). In most cases, this seems to reflect workload and feasibility concerns rather than rejection of alternative assessment itself.

While most studies focus on teachers, a smaller group of studies examines how students view alternative assessment. Findings from language classroom research are generally positive. Students usually do not see these formats as harmful to their results and often find them more closely connected to everyday classroom work. Barnard Bachelor (2017) found that many learners associate alternative assessment with ongoing classroom activity and visible progress. This is consistent with key formative assessment principles.

When these studies are considered together, alternative assessment in ELT is generally described as useful and well suited to communicative, classroom-based learning. The literature consistently points to a gap between teachers' endorsement of innovative assessment principles and their regular implementation in classroom practice. This discrepancy is well documented in research on teacher cognition, which emphasizes that what teachers do in classrooms is shaped not only by theoretical knowledge, but also by their beliefs, prior experiences, sense of preparedness, and the institutional contexts in which they work (Borg, 2003, 2015). According to Ajzen (1991), teachers' assessment practices can be understood as the result of their attitudes toward alternative assessment, their perceived competence in using it, and the constraints or affordances of their working conditions. In the field of language assessment, studies have shown that limited assessment literacy, time pressure, curriculum demands, and accountability requirements often prevent teachers from translating positive beliefs about alternative assessment into sustained practice (Brown, 2004; Black & Wiliam, 2009). Therefore, examining teachers' perceptions is not merely of theoretical interest; it is essential for understanding how alternative assessment is interpreted, adapted, and enacted in everyday ELT classrooms.

### **3. Methodology**

This research is based on a descriptive, comparative mixed-method survey that explores teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment in English Language Teaching (ELT). The study looks at how middle school teachers understand alternative assessment, how often they report using it, what benefits and challenges they see, and what types of support they consider necessary. A comparison was made between teacher responses from Kosovo and North Macedonia.

The participants are in-service middle school ELT teachers working in Kosovo and North Macedonia. Participation was voluntary. The initial target was 50 teachers from each country. At the time of analysis, usable responses were obtained from 50 teachers in Kosovo and 55 teachers in North Macedonia, giving a total sample of 105 participants. Teachers were reached through a mix of professional networks and school-based communication groups where the survey link was shared. No personal identifying information was requested.

Data were gathered through an online questionnaire prepared by the researchers, drawing on earlier literature on alternative assessment and teacher perception studies. The survey was conducted in English. The questionnaire has three parts: background information items, Likert-scale statements, and open-ended questions. In total, it includes 12 Likert items and 6 open-ended questions. The Likert items use a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These items focus on familiarity with alternative assessment, reported classroom use, perceived benefits, and perceived challenges. The open-ended questions give participants space to describe their experiences and suggest needed resources or improvements.

The survey was administered online using Google Forms. The link was shared electronically with ELT teachers in both countries through mixed communication channels. Participation was anonymous and optional. Before responding, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and how the data would be used. Submitting the form indicated consent to participate.

Responses to the Likert items were summarized using descriptive statistics, mainly frequencies and percentages. Results from Kosovo and North Macedonia were then compared to see where patterns were similar and where they differed. Answers to the open-ended questions were analyzed separately using thematic coding. Responses were reviewed iteratively and grouped into recurring themes based on shared content patterns. After coding, theme frequencies were calculated and converted into descriptive qualitative statistics (counts and percentages) to make response patterns more visible. These thematic frequency results were then used to support and clarify the quantitative Likert-scale findings. The combined mixed-method analysis was intended to produce practical comparative insights for teacher development and assessment practice in the Balkan ELT context.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

A total of 105 middle school ELT teachers completed the survey, including 50 from Kosovo and 55 from North Macedonia. Descriptive response distributions across the main Likert-scale items show broadly similar

directional patterns in both country groups. The following subsections present item-level descriptive statistics and thematic frequency results to make cross-context similarities and differences visible.

#### 4.1. Familiarity and Use in Practice

Teachers' responses show high familiarity with alternative assessment but more uneven reported use. As presented in Table 1, 82% of teachers in Kosovo and 76.4% in North Macedonia agree or strongly agree that they are familiar with alternative assessment methods. Reported regular classroom use is slightly lower and more variable across contexts, with 84% of Kosovo teachers and 76.4% of North Macedonia teachers indicating that they use alternative assessment practices regularly.

Confidence in designing alternative assessment tasks is also relatively strong but shows a country gap, with 80% agreement in Kosovo compared to 70.9% in North Macedonia. Training exposure is more limited overall, reported by 70% of Kosovo teachers and 63.6% of North Macedonia teachers. At the same time, 62% of Kosovo and 67.3% of North Macedonia respondents agree that alternative assessment is time-consuming.

| Item                                             | Kosovo % | North Macedonia % |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Familiar with alternative assessment methods     | 82.0     | 76.4              |
| Regularly use alternative assessment             | 84.0     | 76.4              |
| Alternative assessment shows broader performance | 82.0     | 72.7              |
| Confident designing alternative assessment tasks | 80.0     | 70.9              |
| Received training in alternative assessment      | 70.0     | 63.6              |
| Alternative assessment is time-consuming         | 62.0     | 67.3              |

Table 1. Agreement Levels on Key Alternative Assessment Items by Country (%)

Taken together, these descriptive percentage distributions indicate that familiarity and perceived value are consistently higher than training exposure and perceived manageability, suggesting that awareness does not automatically translate into stable routine implementation.

The qualitative response set shows a parallel pattern. In the open-ended items, recurring response themes indicate supportive attitudes toward alternative assessment combined with reports of partial or occasional use. The most frequently repeated constraint categories include time demand, workload, and scoring uncertainty (see Table 2 thematic summary). This qualitative frequency pattern supports the descriptive statistical gap observed between familiarity and routine implementation levels.

#### 4.2. Perceived Value for Learning

Descriptive statistical results show predominantly positive agreement patterns on learning-value items across both country groups. As reported in Table 1, 82% of teachers in Kosovo and 72.7% in North Macedonia agree or strongly agree that alternative assessment provides a more comprehensive and broader view of student performance.

Open-ended response patterns support this distribution. A majority of qualitative responses that addressed learning impact referred to student engagement, creativity, and process-oriented evaluation. These recurring response themes appear across both national subsamples rather than being concentrated in only one context. This combined descriptive and thematic pattern indicates that alternative assessment is widely viewed as instructionally meaningful in classroom learning processes.

#### 4.3. Reported Difficulties

Descriptive statistical results show that perceived implementation difficulty is one of the most strongly endorsed constraint areas in the dataset. As presented in Table 1, 62% of teachers in Kosovo and 67.3% in North Macedonia agree or strongly agree that alternative assessment methods are time-consuming to implement. This makes time demand one of the highest agreement-level difficulty indicators across the measured items.

Training-related limitation is also visible in the descriptive distributions. Only 70% of Kosovo respondents and 63.6% of North Macedonia respondents report having received training in alternative assessment, which implies that approximately one-third of teachers in both contexts work without formal preparation support.

Qualitative response patterns reinforce these statistical results. Thematic grouping of open-ended answers (Table 2) shows that the most frequently recurring difficulty categories are time and workload burden, large class size, and scoring clarity. Descriptive theme frequencies indicate that time and workload concerns appear in 28.6% of responses, large class references in 23.8%, and scoring clarity needs in 22.9% of responses. These themes appear across both country groups rather than being isolated to one context.

Concerns about scoring reliability are also reflected in the qualitative dataset, where multiple responses request clearer rubrics and shared evaluation criteria. When the descriptive percentage results and thematic frequency patterns are interpreted together, the difficulty profile appears to be driven primarily by operational manageability constraints rather than conceptual disagreement with alternative assessment itself.

| Theme             | Typical Content                           | Frequency (n) | %     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Training need     | Requests for workshops, courses, seminars | 68            | 64.8% |
| Ready materials   | Model tasks, templates, sample tools      | 37            | 35.2% |
| Time and workload | Time burden, preparation load             | 30            | 28.6% |
| Large classes     | Too many students per class               | 25            | 23.8% |
| Scoring clarity   | Rubrics and grading criteria needed       | 24            | 22.9% |

Table 2. Main Themes from Open-Ended Teacher Responses (Descriptive Frequencies, N=105)

#### 4.4. Support and Resource Needs

Descriptive frequency results from the open-ended responses show that support needs concentrate in several clearly recurring categories (Table 2). Requests for professional training are reported by 68 out of 105 teachers (64.8%) overall. When responses are separated by country, training requests appear in both Kosovo and North Macedonia response sets at similar rates, with no dominant concentration in only one group.

Requests for ready-to-use materials and model assessment templates appear in 37 responses (35.2%), again distributed across both country groups. Scoring and rubric guidance needs appear in 24 responses (22.9%), while class-size-related support needs appear in 25 responses (23.8%). These descriptive counts show that training, ready materials, and scoring guidance represent the most frequently reported support categories across the combined sample.

#### 4.5. Cross-Context Patterns

Descriptive percentage comparisons show broadly similar response distributions between the two country groups across the main measured items (Table 1). Familiarity with alternative assessment is reported by 82% of teachers in Kosovo and 76.4% in North Macedonia. Reported regular use shows 84% agreement in Kosovo and 76.4% in North Macedonia. Confidence in designing alternative assessment tasks reaches 80% in Kosovo and 70.9% in North Macedonia.

Training exposure is reported by 70% of Kosovo respondents and 63.6% of North Macedonia respondents, while agreement that alternative assessment is time-consuming reaches 62% in Kosovo and 67.3% in North Macedonia. Across these core indicators, percentage differences remain within an approximate 5–9 percentage-point range.

These descriptive comparisons show parallel direction patterns across both country groups for familiarity, use, confidence, training exposure, and perceived workload (Table 1).

### Conclusion

This study explored how middle school ELT teachers in Kosovo and North Macedonia understand and use alternative assessment in their classrooms. Based on the responses of 105 teachers, the findings show that attitudes toward alternative assessment are generally positive, and many teachers associate these methods with stronger student engagement and broader skill development.

However, reported classroom use appears to be less consistent than overall acceptance. Both the scaled responses and the open-ended answers point to similar practical constraints, especially time pressure, large class sizes, and uncertainty about scoring procedures. In this sense, the results suggest a gap between supportive beliefs and everyday implementation.

Teachers' written comments also highlight a clear need for more practical support. The most common requests focus on training opportunities, ready-to-use materials, model tasks, and clearer rubrics, rather than additional theoretical explanation. This indicates that teachers are not resistant to alternative assessment itself, but need more structured and usable support to apply it regularly.

The comparison between Kosovo and North Macedonia shows largely similar response patterns, which suggests that teachers in both contexts are facing comparable challenges in assessment change. Practical support

measures and targeted professional development may therefore play an important role in helping alternative assessment become a more stable part of ELT classroom practice.

Since the study relies on self-reported data, it reflects teachers' perceptions rather than directly observed behavior. Future research could build on these findings by including classroom-based evidence and longer-term implementation studies.

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