Exploring the Use of Formative Assessment in EFL Classroom: Teaching Practices and Challenges

Fourest Prapsetyana Satmawati
Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto

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ABSTRACT

According to the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology number 21 of 2022 concerning Education Assessment Standard, which is the basis for the Merdeka curriculum, formative and summative assessments are used to evaluate students' learning outcomes. Both play an essential role in assessing and supporting students, but they serve different purposes and occur at various times. Especially, in EFL classrooms where English is primarily learned in the class rather than in everyday speech, formative assessment plays a significant role in enhancing students' learning abilities. However, English teachers face difficulties and challenges in implementing formative assessment in the class. Therefore, this study deeply explores the phenomenon of implementing formative assessment in learning practices and the challenges faced. Data were obtained from classroom observation, interviews with an English teacher, and analysis of learning documents. An experienced English teacher who has been teaching for more than fifteen years at SMK YPE Sampang Cilacap regency was involved in this study. The finding reveals that teachers still often face difficulties conducting formative assessment in the classroom. There are two main reasons for these difficulties: time constraints and a lack of student response, because they feel embarrassed and afraid of being wrong in answering. For this reason, teachers must make simple formative assessments and utilize appropriate learning media. Teachers should be able to be students' best friends and create a classroom atmosphere that is fun to learn in. This needs to be mastered by all teachers, especially English teachers.

Corresponding Author:
Fourest Prapsetyana Satmawati
Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto
Email: fourestspd02@admin.kesetaraan.belajar.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Students' learning outcomes show the success of the teaching and learning process. It can be measured by the teachers through assessments, both using tests and observation. Assessment is collecting and processing information to identify students' learning needs and developmental achievements or learning outcomes. It is an integral part of the learning process. It facilitates learning and provides holistic information as feedback for teachers, students, and parents to guide them in determining the following learning strategies. Assessment is designed to be fair, proportional, valid, and reliable to explain learning progress and determine decisions about the next steps.

Students, teachers, and parents use assessment results as material for reflection to improve the quality of learning. In the Merdeka Curriculum, based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology number 21 of 2022 concerning Education Assessment Standards, it is stated that the assessment of student learning outcomes takes the form of Formative assessment and Summative assessment. Both play an essential role in evaluating and supporting students, but they serve different purposes and occur at different times. Formative assessments are a form of evaluation conducted during the learning process to monitor and improve students' understanding.

The primary purpose of formative tests is to provide immediate feedback to both students and teachers, so they can be used to enhance the learning process and help students achieve the learning targets that have been set. The formative tests are conducted repeatedly throughout the learning process, whether through daily evaluations, short quizzes, or class discussions. Formative assessment is essential because it provides evidence to modify instruction compared to summative assessment (Andersson & Palm, 2017; Menéndez et al., 2019; Torres, 2019; Vogelzang & Admiraal, 2017). In the instructional setting, assessment procedures are formative if activities undertaken by students and instructors provide information that can be used as feedback to modify instruction and monitor student learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009, 2018).

Thus, Formative assessment strongly emphasizes evaluation for learning, enabling teachers to keep a close eye on learning and student progress in the teaching and learning process. Drawn from the above explanation, formative tests focus more on the teaching and learning process and aim to provide faster and more frequent feedback to students and teachers. In this assessment, students can assess their understanding and see their strengths and weaknesses in specific material. Formative assessment allows teachers to adjust and revise learning materials and teaching techniques to be more successful in teaching (Widiastuti, Ida, and Saukah, 2017).

Formative assessment techniques could be as simple as asking students to raise their hands to inform their understanding of learning a new concept or as challenging as asking students to complete an independent self-assessment task (Daniel, Masitah, and Siti, 2021). Formative assessments are regularly carried out informally. Depending on the curriculum's pacing and learning objectives, teachers may utilize them every day or every week. They must use various formative assessment tools such as class discussions, quizzes, homework, group work, surveys, self-assessments, or peer assessments. The teachers must get to know each student, how far their understanding is in learning, and how to improve their knowledge according to learning targets.

In traditional classrooms, formative assessment challenges teachers, as it requires them to find ways of following up with a whole class or classes of students and provide individualized feedback to everyone, either through teacher assessment, peer assessment, assessment-, assessment, or other means (Double et al., 2020). Formative assessment is essential for EFL classrooms (Jin, 2017). Wei (2010,838) defines it as a "range of formal and informal assessment procedures undertaken by instructors as an integral part of normal teaching to modify and enhance learning." Formative Assessment (FA) has the following characteristics: Multi-assessors: Teacher assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment are all involved in learning.

Multi-assessing strategies and tools available: Testing and non-testing assessments, formal and informal procedures, and numerous non-testing strategies, including classroom observations, portfolios, questionnaires, interviews, student conferences, and the like (Wei, 2010). However, although formative assessment has been widely used in education, many teachers still do not understand how to use formative assessment effectively in the English classroom. Therefore, this study aims to explore the use of formative assessment in the English classroom and its impact on students' language proficiency. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to English development by using formative assessment to improve students' language proficiency.

2. METHODS

This research used a case study approach with a qualitative design. This design was chosen because it allowed the researcher to understand the formative assessment strategies used by the teachers in English as a foreign language. Data was collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis, such as lesson plans, lesson materials, and student work.

Case studies allowed researchers to understand phenomena or problems in a specific context deeply. This qualitative research was natural. The researcher did not try to manipulate the state or condition of the research environment, but instead researched something where the situation does exist. This research deliberately sees and lets the conditions studied be in their actual state. This research focused intensively on one particular object studied as a case. Sanat (2025) revealed that, focusing on a specific subject in its natural setting, a case study can help improve understanding of the broader features and processes at work.

This research was conducted at SMK YPE Sampang, which is located at Jl. Gerilya Number 478 Sampang, Cilacap. SMK YPE Sampang is one of the private schools at the SMK level located in Sampang sub-district, Cilacap, Central Java. SMK YPE Sampang was established in 1986 under the auspices of the Ministry of

Education and Culture. The school has been accredited since 2018. Thus, SMK YPE Sampang is a superior school in Sampang and the surrounding areas.

The subject and participant of this research was an English teacher with the longest teaching experience in SMK YPE Sampang, and she was considered to have an understanding of formative assessment. In this study, students were also involved as research subjects. The researcher selected students from the 10th-grade pharmacy class, which had 38 students. The researcher chose that class as the research sample because it had conditions that aligned with the research objectives, and the teacher who was the research subject is the teacher who teaches in that class. The sampling techniques used in this study are purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is a method of sampling data sources based on specific considerations.

This study used triangulation of data sources to gather comprehensive information about formative assessment in EFL classrooms. Data were drawn from the findings of classroom observations, interviews with one of the English teachers, and learning documents. Each approach offers a different perspective, allowing for a thorough understanding of the instructional strategies and difficulties teachers face in implementing formative assessment.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part presents the findings of the conducted study. The primary aim of this study was to explore the teaching practices employed by teachers in implementing formative assessment and to identify the challenges they face in this process. This study aims to explore the use of formative assessment in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom through three classroom observations. The findings from these observations show that teachers implemented various formative assessment methods, including the use of Google Forms, in-group discussions, and peer assessment.

Teachers utilize Google Forms to collect feedback from students efficiently. This method allows students to answer questions anonymously, so they feel freer to give their opinions and reflections on the material taught. The results of these assessments provide valuable insights for teachers to customize teaching. Group discussion is one of the effective methods in formative assessment. Students collaborate and share their understanding of the material, which not only increases their engagement but also strengthens the understanding of the concepts.

Teachers observe that this interaction helps students to learn from each other and develop communication skills. The peer assessment method provides an opportunity for students to give constructive feedback to their peers. This not only increases students' sense of responsibility for their own learning, but also encourages them to be more critical in evaluating others' work. However, this study also identified some challenges teachers face in implementing formative assessment. Some students showed discomfort in giving feedback, both to the teacher and classmates.

In addition, there are also challenges in managing time during assessment activities, especially when it involves group discussions that require more supervision. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of formative assessment in improving student learning outcomes in EFL classrooms, while also underlining the need for support and training for teachers to overcome the challenges. The same is the case with the findings obtained from interviews with one of the English teachers who stated that formative assessment is very effective in measuring students' ability to master the material. Providing direct feedback can provide further direction in learning. Teachers can find out the extent of students' understanding and can determine the right learning methods to improve students' abilities.

> "*In my classroom, I implement formative assessment in several ways to enhance student learning and engagement. First, I use quizzes to determine students' understanding of the material. In addition, I usually ask them to do group discussions and peer assessments in my lessons. I also provide continuous feedback for assignments and projects*."

The informant from this study spoke in the discussion. The theory underlying formative assessment is primarily based on the work of educational theorists such as Benjamin Bloom. Bloom's principles align with formative assessment, which allows teachers to measure their students' level of understanding and adjust their teaching accordingly. Quizzes as a formative assessment method can help determine how well students understand the material and where they might need additional assistance.

> "*I often use tools like Google Forms to create quick quizzes that can be completed in class. I ask them to work directly on their phones so that I can give instant feedback and see what students understand and what needs more attention.*"

In the interview, the informant added that she used Google Forms as an effective formative assessment tool because it could provide immediate feedback.

> "*Ehmmm, when conducting formative assessment, my main goals are to improve student learning, inform my teaching practice, and foster a supportive learning environment. Another main goal is to provide timely feedback. I believe that feedback is essential for student development.*"

The above statements showed that feedback is not just an assessment, but an important tool in supporting student development. By providing appropriate feedback, students can better understand their learning process, increase motivation, and achieve better results in class. Feedback can be one of the most powerful influences on student learning (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

During the interviews, several challenges regarding applying formative assessment were highlighted. Two prominent issues emerged: time constraints and students' feelings. Students felt embarrassed when responding to the teacher's questions, and the teacher expressed concerns about the limited time required to conduct formative assessments within the curriculum.

She stated, *"Because formative assessment takes a long time, it also takes a long time to provide feedback, so the problem is related to time constraints. Besides that, sometimes we are also constrained by the curriculum, where there are targets to continue with the next material after this, we might see that not all or the majority of the students have understood the material."*

In addition to time constraints, the interviews revealed that many students experience feelings of embarrassment or anxiety when asked to answer questions in class.

"Another challenge I face during formative assessment in the classroom is that some students feel passive because they are shy to answer questions. I've noticed that some students hesitate to participate in discussions or answer questions because they fear making mistakes."

This emphasizes how important it is for teachers to foster a secure, accepting environment in the classroom where students may freely voice their opinions and participate in the learning process without feeling embarrassed. All considered, the interviews shed light on the obstacles the teachers encounter when using formative assessment successfully. It is crucial to address time limits and students' shyness in implementing formative assessment in the EFL Classroom. The insights gained would significantly enhance the solutions to these issues and contribute to developing a more effective learning environment.

The insights from the interviews provided valuable perspectives on the challenges and strategies associated with implementing formative assessment in the classroom. The responses highlighted two main themes: time management in designing assessment forms and creating a supportive classroom environment. The interviewee emphasizes the necessity of strategic planning when doing formative assessments, particularly in light of time constraints.

"I have to strategize regarding the time. How can I, within the set time, obtain the formative assessment I expect from the students? The best way is this: I will create or design a formative assessment that is brief, not too long, but from which I can gather information on whether they have understood or not. So, I have to be able to design a formative assessment that is simple, not too complicated, and doesn't take much time."

To overcome this challenge, the interviewees suggested creating short and easy assessments that could effectively measure students' understanding without consuming excessive time. This approach reflects a practical understanding of the need for efficiency in the classroom. The emphasis on designing assessments that are "not too long" and "not too complicated" suggests a focus on clarity and conciseness, which can help ensure that students are not overwhelmed and can demonstrate their knowledge effectively.

This strategy aligns with best practices in formative assessment that aim to gather actionable feedback on student learning. Teachers can quickly assess whether students have comprehended the subject matter to be able to intervene promptly if needed. This approach can maximize time and enhance the learning experience by providing immediate insight into student understanding.

"Then, regarding the problem of some students feeling shy. This is a big challenge for all teachers to create a conducive and comfortable classroom environment so students don't feel pressured. Sometimes I slip in a joke or chat, or I try to get into their world and be trustworthy so they feel comfortable with me."

On the wall, this interview demonstrates that all English teachers should recognize the value of fostering a welcoming and inclusive learning atmosphere. With an empathic approach and the use of humour, he strives to overcome the challenges that shy students face, thereby enhancing their learning experience. In this study, the documents analyzed included lesson plans, assessment tools, and student work sheets. The purpose of this analysis is to assess the extent to which the implementation of formative assessment has been carried out in accordance with the learning objectives and to measure students' ability to master the material taught.

The lesson plans analysed were sourced from an English teacher as a respondent. The analysis focused on the following aspects:

a. Clarity of Learning Objectives

Most lesson plans included clear and specific learning objectives aligned with the curriculum standards. First, the learning objectives clearly describe what students are expected to be able to achieve by the end of the lesson. For example, the learning objectives include identifying the general structure of a report text, analysing language

features, and creating a short report text. Students' interest and involvement are raised by this precision, which makes it easier for them to comprehend the lesson's goal and expectations. Furthermore, successful formative assessments are supported by learning clear objectives.

Teachers can create assessments that directly track students' progress toward learning objectives when they are specified. This alignment between objectives and assessment ensures that teaching and evaluation are focused and coherent, allowing for meaningful feedback. In conclusion, lesson plans enable students to take control of their learning process by establishing specific, quantifiable, and action-oriented goals.

b.   Teaching Methods

The teaching methods in the lesson plan demonstrate a holistic student-centered approach and direct teaching techniques. These strategies encourage student participation and enhance the overall learning process. Each learning method applied in this lesson plan has specific objectives and benefits. Project-based learning activities can improve practical skills and application of concepts, while group discussions and presentations can develop students' social and communication skills.

The learning methods applied in this lesson plan demonstrate a comprehensive and varied approach to achieving learning objectives. This lesson plan has great potential in improving student engagement and learning outcomes. However, the successful implementation of these methods is highly dependent on student readiness, availability of resources, and active involvement of the teacher. With careful planning and effective implementation, this lesson plan can be a very effective tool in achieving learning objectives.

c.   Assessment Techniques

Assessment is an important component in the learning process that measures the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved. Several assessment techniques are applied to measure student learning outcomes in this lesson plan. These techniques include:

1.   Written Test. Written tests are used to measure students' understanding of the concepts taught. This form test is multiple-choice questions, essays, or a combination of both. Written tests are used for assessing students' declarative knowledge and ability to apply concepts in given situations.

2.   Project Assessment. Project assessment is used to measure students' ability to apply the knowledge and skills learned in real projects. Through project assessment, students are assessed on the quality of their work, creativity, and their ability to solve problems.

3.   Observation. Observation is used to assess students' skills and attitudes during the learning process. Teachers can observe students' participation in discussions, teamwork, and other activities to assess their social skills and attitudes.

4.   Presentation is used to assess students' ability to communicate their ideas and work. Through presentations, students are assessed on their ability to convey information, well-structured, and with effective use of language.

5.   Self-Assessment and Peer Assessment Self-assessment and peer assessment are used to engage students in the assessment process. Students are asked to reflect on their achievements and provide feedback to their peers. This helps to raise students' awareness of their strengths and areas of improvement.

The assessment techniques in this lesson plan showed a thorough and varied approach to measuring student learning outcomes. Using various assessment techniques, this lesson plan can provide a comprehensive picture of students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The results of the triangulation of observation, interview, and document data show that formative assessment in EFL classrooms has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes.

Formative assessment can help teachers to make necessary adjustments in teaching, improve student learning outcomes, and develop a more effective curriculum. Although there are still challenges that teachers have to face, such as time constraints and students' passivity. Therefore, all English teachers must have more knowledge and the ability to design effective assessment formats according to the conditions of students in their respective classes, and be able to create a pleasant classroom atmosphere and establish intimacy with their students.

Triangulating findings from observations, interviews, and document analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of lesson plans focused on report texts in EFL contexts. A more comprehensive picture of teaching methods, student involvement, and learning results is being integrated with data from all three sources. The following are the main findings of this study:

a.   Improved Teaching Quality: Observation results show that teachers can make necessary adjustments in teaching based on the results of formative assessments. Teachers can also identify areas for improvement in teaching and make the necessary changes.

b.   Improved Student Learning Outcomes: Interview results show that students feel more confident in using English after the implementation of formative assessment. Students can also get timely and effective feedback, so that they can correct their weaknesses and improve their strengths.

c.   More Effective Curriculum Development: The document analysis results show that formative assessment can be used to develop a more effective curriculum that is relevant to students' needs.

The results of the triangulation of observation, interview, and document data show that formative assessment in EFL classrooms has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. Formative assessment can help teachers to make necessary adjustments in teaching, improve student learning outcomes, and develop a more effective curriculum. Although there are still challenges that teachers have to face, such as time constraints and students' passivity. Therefore, all English teachers must have more knowledge and the ability to design effective assessment formats according to the conditions of students in their respective classes, and be able to create a pleasant classroom atmosphere and establish intimacy with their students.

This study aims to determine the effect of formative assessment on student learning outcomes. The results showed that formative assessment has a positive influence on student learning outcomes. This finding is in line with the theory of constructivism proposed by Lev Vygotsky (1978) which states that students should be active in the learning process and build their own knowledge through experience and interaction with the surrounding environment.In addition, the results also show that formative assessment can increase students' learning motivation. This finding is in line with the theory of motivation proposed by Albert Bandura (1997) which states that students' learning motivation can be increased through the experience of success and positive feedback.

In the context of education, formative assessment can be used as a tool to improve the quality of learning. By providing timely and effective feedback, teachers can help students improve their weaknesses and enhance their strengths. This is in line with the opinion of Lorrie Shepard (2000) who states that formative assessment can be used as a tool to improve the quality of learning. Formative assessment can help students build their own knowledge by providing timely and effective feedback. This is in line with Benjamin Bloom's (1968) opinion which states that formative assessment can help students improve their weaknesses and enhance their strengths. Thus, this study shows that formative assessment has a positive influence on student learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers can use formative assessment as a tool to improve learning quality and improve student learning outcomes.

4.   CONCLUSIONS

This research has explored the use of formative assessment in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and identified the practices and challenges faced by teachers. From the analysis, it can be concluded that formative assessment has a very important role in improving the quality of learning and student engagement in the EFL classroom. First, formative assessment allows teachers to get valuable feedback on students' understanding and progress in real-time. By applying various assessment methods, such as quizzes, discussions, and group assignments, teachers can identify areas where students are having difficulty and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly.

This not only helps students in understanding the material better, but also increases their motivation to learn. When students feel that teachers pay attention to their progress and provide the necessary support, they tend to be more engaged in the learning process. However, this study also revealed some challenges faced by teachers in implementing formative assessment. One of the main challenges is that time constraints in a crowded curriculum often become an obstacle for teachers to implement formative assessment effectively. Nonetheless, the benefits of formative assessment far outweigh the challenges. This research shows that when teachers successfully integrate formative assessment into their teaching, students show improvements in language comprehension, communication skills and self-confidence.

Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to provide the necessary support, such as training and resources, for teachers to better implement formative assessment. Overall, formative assessment is an invaluable tool in EFL teaching. With better understanding and proper support, teachers can utilize formative assessment to create a more effective and enjoyable learning experience for students. Through the consistent and planned implementation of formative assessment, it is hoped that the quality of learning in the EFL classroom can be significantly improved, allowing students to reach their full potential in learning English.

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