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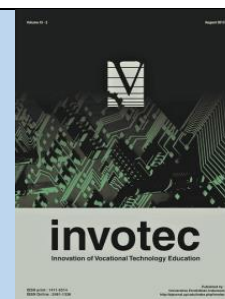
EFL Teachers Perception of Formative Assessment – A Study of Vocational School (SMK) in Indonesia

Mahmuda Akter[1,3] and Muhammad Lookman Hossain Khan[2,4]
[1] National University of Bangladesh, Gazipur, Bangladesh
[2] Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, West Java, Indonesia
[3] Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia
[4] University of Information Technology and Sciences, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The formative assessment has become a core component in teaching. The educator uses it to measure the effectiveness of learning in the classroom, and it provides information on the competencies of the students in addition to enhancing learning outcomes for the students. This study aims to investigate the vocational school teachers' perception and practices of formative assessment in the EFL classroom. This study used a qualitative research design approach. Two experienced teachers from vocational schools in central java, Indonesia participated in this study. The author collected the data from the participants using a semi-structured interview and analysed the data using descriptive qualitative method. The study result revealed that the participants have a very good understanding of formative assessment. They believed that it allows them to become more professional and the classroom assessment help students to focus more on learning materials. The teachers implement formative assessment practices regularly in their classroom.

1. Introduction

In a classroom, a teacher generally conducts an assessment to collect information regarding students performance. There are two types of assessment in the learning process which are formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment is getting crucial in language assessment (Lee, 2017). It is the best assessment way to monitor the learning and teaching process and it helps a teacher to understand students' progress. Usually, teachers use it to collect information about students understanding about the materials and the concepts. Besides, it also helps the teachers to understand the learning needs so that teachers prepare better materials for their students (Karimi & Dowlatabadi, 2014). It will facilitate academics to recognize the students' difficulties in learning classroom materials and build the mandatory skills (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2007). It conjointly

permits academics to form changes and revision on learning materials and teaching techniques to be additional triple-crown in teaching. Heritage (2008: 2) states that formative assessment is meant to convey feedback to the academics and therefore the students associated with educational methods and to superintend the gaps between the training process and therefore the desired learning outcomes (Elliott & Yu, 2013; Good, 2011).

In the 21st century, EFL teachers should have a well understanding of formative assessment. A better understanding of it surely affects their teaching practices. According to a study, school teachers have a clear concrete perception of formative assessment. However, sometimes they do not practice it rightly in the classroom (Widiastuti, 2020; Estaji & Mirzaii, 2018; Önalan, 2018). Formative assessment practice in EFL class, especially in the writing class is not promising in Ethiopia. Ethiopian teachers have a positive belief toward the importance of formative assessment, and they often practice FA strategies in the classroom (Guadu & Boersma, 2018). Indonesian EFL teachers hesitate to use task-based language teaching even though they believe that it has some advantages in developing the teachers and learners' communication skills (Pohan et al., 2018). However, university teachers are incorporating several elements of formative assessment successfully (Johnson, Sondergeld, & Walton, 2019).

The education background of a teacher and their duration of teaching experiences in EFL teaching practice have no impact on the assessment selections (Önalan, 2018). The teaching experience of teachers can influence the implementation of formative assessment. Teachers play a vital role in the implementation of formative assessment, and they have a different perception of FA. In the USA, the high school's teachers have various levels of understanding and comfort with the formative assessment. A study conducted by Johson revealed that teacher's perception and experience do not influence the use of formative assessment in the English classroom. They also found that new teachers do not view FA substantially than experienced teachers (Johnson, Sondergeld, & Walton, 2019). In Turkey, teachers have a positive perception of FA and there is no impact on their assessment preferences whereas their education qualification and the number of experience in the classroom (Önalan, 2018) which similar compared to study in China (Gan, Liu, & Yang, 2017).

The teacher's experience and strategies are crucial for the implementation of formative assessment in the learning process. That is why the continuous teachers training program has a significant influence on the implementation of formative assessment (Widiastuti, 2020). Furthermore, Kong found the principal barrier to implementing formative assessment is the student's understanding of tasks (Xie & Lei, 2019). The teachers seem not to concern to take appropriate follow-up actions due to teachers confusion regarding formative assessment practice (Widiastuti, 2020). Moreover, the teachers do not take responsibility for the implementation of it (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). Nevertheless, the Indonesian school teachers claim the lack of time for a meeting in the classroom is the main barrier in the implementation of formative assessment practices. Further

study can be conducted, such as classroom observation, and interview to understand the lack of teacher's concern (Pohan et al., 2018).

A combination of formative and summative assessments in the classroom is more effective than the use of only FA (Mahshanian, Shoghi, & Bahrami, 2019). However, Indonesian students favour summative assessment rather than formative assessment. They consider this is the most efficient way to assess them, and it demonstrates their actual language potential (Widiastuti, 2020). A Chinese study exposes that the surface approach in learning process associated negatively with the FA experience, the more formative feedback elements integrated into the instruction and appraisal processes in the classroom, the less willing learners would be to follow a surface approach (Gan, Liu, & Yang, 2017).

The researchers are inspired to conduct this study on formative assessment in EFL classroom activities given the formative assessment phenomenon and the significance of teachers perceptions and strategies of formative assessment in the context of EFL. The study aims to investigate the teachers' understanding, effectiveness and purpose of implementing formative assessment and their strategies to make sure effective learning in the classroom at Vocational school (SMK) in Indonesia.

2.   Literature Review

Formative assessment or assessment for learning is rapidly recognized as essential by experts to language assessment (Lee & Coniam, 2013). Formative assessment is usually oriented to develop students' language skills, and help to recognize academic developments, outcomes, and expectations of the students. It is incorporated in the teaching and learning framework to adjust instruction methodologies or approaches to meet educational needs and standards (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Rivai et al., 2019). It is a tool which allows educators to evaluate students learning in the classroom with the mere purpose of accountability. It acts as a mechanism to better represent, and set the stage for productive learning where the teachers provide constructive feedback for the students. These practices enhance teachers teaching approaches (Black & Wiliam, 2005).

Teachers play a key role in the implementation of FA in the English classroom. Sometimes they could face difficulties in implementing FA since their lack of experience in assessment practice. Some studies have identified, the primary difficulties faced by teachers in the implementation of formative assessment are rules and regulations, class size, and class duration (Burner, 2016; Guadu & Boersma, 2018; Johnson, Sondergeld, & Walton, 2019; Noori et al., 2017). Besides that, the teacher's workload added extra concern (Ayu & Sri, 2020). Teacher's intention of class size is clear. They demand a small class to ensure the quality of teaching, and it also assists students to learn in a more comfortable and enjoyable environment (Tajeddin, Alemi, & Yasaei, 2018). Furthermore, the teachers can give extra focus to their students, feedbacks and can engage students in the learning process. Teachers lose their interest in the implementation of the FA due to a large class (Nasr, Bagheri, & Sadighi, 2020). On the other hand, a research study in Indonesia has shown that the

school teachers claim the lack of time for a meeting in the classroom is the main barrier in the implementation of formative assessment practices. Further study can be conducted, such as classroom observation, and interview to understand the lack of teacher's concern (Pohan et al., 2018).

Formative assessment is an essential component of the learning process which ensures student's success, but sometimes the implementation strategies of FA can be tricky. A recent study in Hong Kong shows that teachers are more concern about students' performance in the classroom rather than preparing students for their future tasks. The study identified that elementary school teacher has implemented several strategies to prepare students for writing assessment by applying brainstorming and mind-maps activities. Besides, they also use asking guiding questions to help the students writing. This study revealed that younger teachers prefer to write positive feedbacks instead of writing negative feedbacks on students writing task to build a better relationship with students (Xie & Lei, 2019). Developing a good relationship with their teacher makes students feel more confident and comfortable in their classroom. Previous studies prove that the students who make a positive relationship with their teachers can achieve a full grade higher than other students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

3. Methods

This study used a qualitative research approach since the aims of this study is to investigate the vocational school EFL teachers' use of formative assessment practices in the vocational school in Indonesia. The author collected research data using a semi-structured interview technique from two different vocational school teachers in central java, Indonesia. The author selected the participants from the same educational background and they were selected according to their professional training, qualification and teaching experience to meet the study aims. The participants having short training and attended many workshops on learning assessment. The two vocational schools are selected since they practice formative assessment thorough classroom even administrators arranged workshops on before each semester begin to motivate teachers to conduct proper assessment practice. The author used the pseudo name for the teachers. Teacher A having 26 years experience of teaching English in the field of vocational education whereas teachers B having 3 years of teaching experience in the same field which enabled the researchers to obtain a great amount of data related to teachers' understanding and implementation strategies of formative assessment their practices in EFL classroom. Table 1 illustrated the teacher's profile.

Table 1. Teacher's profile

Pseudo Name	Education Qualification	Experience	School
Teacher A	Bachelor in English Education	26 years	SMK Negri 1 Banyumas
Teacher B	Bachelor in English Education	3 Years	SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Purwokerto

The author collected the study data through a semi-structured in-depth interview of the two EFL teachers from vocational schools using WhatsApp call. The interview conducted concerning the teachers understanding of formative assessment and their implementation strategies in their teaching process. The author contacted the teachers using Whatsapp and the teachers were told about the study aims and they were agreed to have an interview using Whatsapp call. The author ensures data validity the teachers were not informed the questions on before interview and the teachers were also told to feel free and relaxed during the interview. The author asked some open-ended questions to the teachers and they were asked answers the question according to their experiences in formative assessment. The questions were to their perceptions of formative assessment, what strategies and practices they use to conduct the formative assessment in their classes.

The author analysed the collected data descriptively using an in-depth qualitative analysis technique. The author also added detailed explanations and argumentation of the interviewed data. Some extracts from the interview are given below.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Teachers perceptions

> "Assessment is a part of teaching. We cannot separate it to our teaching-learning process. It is an ongoing process during a learning activity. In my opinion, formative assessment is a method that the teacher uses to conduct to process evaluation of students compensation and academic progress during lesson or course. So a teacher can assist the students while they are learning such as ask questions, offer a comment, or ask them to perform what they have learned. I prefer this sort of assessment as daily tests." (Teacher A)

From this above statement, it is clear that Teacher A had a decent concept of understanding about formative assessment. Teacher A believes that it is an essential part of the teaching-learning process. He implements it to evaluate students' academic improvement during the class and tends to favour a regular test.

> "I think, it is used to identify students understanding about the lesson. Usually, at the end of every unit of learning material, I implement this assessment. I evaluate at the end of every lesson. My goal is to make sure that the students understand the materials rather than getting a high score." (Teacher B)

Teacher B also has a very good understanding of the concept and he implements it at the end of every lesson and his purpose implementing it is make his students of a better understanding of the materials which is the basic principle of classroom assessment.

The teachers' interview revealed that they have very good and a positive understanding of formative assessment. Teachers have a positive belief toward the importance of formative assessment, and they often practice FA strategies in the classroom. Teachers have a positive, moderate and significant correlation between instructors' beliefs and their practices. The teachers' beliefs and their actual practices are in-congruent (Guadu & Boersma, 2018). The teachers' understanding of formative assessment in a certain way affected their teaching styles. teachers and students can engage in a healthy dialogue and a process of information gathering to find ways to enhance teaching and learning (Lee & Coniam, 2013). This study shows that both teachers have a good understanding of formative assessment although they have a very big difference in teaching experience.

4.2   Teachers objectives of use FA

> "My objective to use formative assessment is to know how deep the students comprehend or internalize the topic, to measure whether their response meet the learning goals or not. I think this assessment aims to enhance the learning of the students and also to develop my teaching skills. I believe it will benefit my students as well as benefit me to become more competent in teaching." (Teacher A)

The above statement indicates that Teacher A uses it to know how intensely the students understand or integrate the topic and measure whether or not their responses reach the learning goals. By using this assessment tool he can develop his teaching skills and it also encourages students to improve their learning process. He believes that it will support his students and motivate him to become more professional.

> "The formative assessment aims to improve the learning of the students. I believe that if the assessment is properly conducted, it will help students to achieve the goal of learning. In my teaching-learning process, I usually do self-assessment that ask students to think about their learning process to reflect on what they do well or struggle with and to articulate what they have learned. As a result, my students are becoming more focused on learning. I also think formative assessment can help me to be more professional in teaching." (Teacher B)

It is revealed that Teacher B conducts it for the betterment of students. It helped his students to develop their skills to achieve learning goals and find out the strengths and weaknesses of the students. He believes that it makes his students more focused on their learning and the outcomes of the assessment help him to find out a suitable teaching approach or change his teaching style to match the learning needs of his students. This study revealed that main both the teachers use formative assessment to justify the understanding of students. The teachers' feedback on formative assessment enables the students more focused on learning. Finally, the teachers use formative

assessment in their classroom to engaging their students in the learning process and it also helps the teachers to develop their career.

4.3   Benefits of formative assessment

> "For me, it helps me to have an initial idea about my student's progress. I assist in preparing the formative assessment to the best possible way and then practice it properly in my classroom to improve the quality of teaching and the ability of the students to improve their English skills. Formative assessment helps the students much to motivate to continue learning the other or further topic. From the feedback and the scores, they will understand whether they master the topic have been learned or not." (Teacher A)

According to Teacher A, formative assessment helps him measure the student's skill development and daily progress. It also helps him to become more confident in teaching. The students can reach their goal by improving their English skills. It encourages students to learn more about their lesson. They can easily find out their mistakes which help them to take a further step. So formative assessment not only gives motivation to the students but also helps the teacher to improve their teaching strategy.

> "It can help the student become more aware of their learning needs then strength. So they can take greater responsibility for their educational growth. It can increase student to build their strength on what they receive and it can raise or exhilarate the educational achievement of all student while also reducing learning gaps and achievement gaps. I believed that formative assessment could improve my teaching and also make my students more focus on their learning" (Teacher B)

It is clear from the above statement that formative assessment help students to become more aware of their learning needs and helps them become stronger. It helps them to make their way to achieve their goal. Moreover, by reducing the learning gaps they can fulfil their needs on the learning process. Besides, it increases student's motivation and helps them to build their confidence. It helps a teacher to enhance his teaching approach and it helps students to become more focused on their academic courses.

Formative assessment is crucial in language assessment (Lee, 2017). The language academics are using this tool build to form higher selections on totally different tutorial activities and that they can make a positive higher understanding of students on materials in EFL classroom practices (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). Formative assessment is the best tool to monitor the learning and teaching process which help a teacher to understand students' progress. Usually, teachers use this tool to collect information about students understanding about the materials and the concepts. Besides, it also helps the teachers to understand the learning needs so that teachers prepare better materials for their students (Karimi & Dowlatabadi, 2014). It will facilitate academics to recognize the

students' difficulties in learning classroom materials and build the mandatory skills (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2007). It conjointly permits academics to form changes and revision on learning materials and teaching techniques to be additional triple-crown in teaching. Heritage (2008: 2) states that formative assessment is meant to convey feedback to the academics and therefore the students associated with educational methods and to superintend the gaps between the training process and therefore the desired learning outcomes (Elliott & Yu, 2013; Good, 2011).

4.4 Effectiveness of formative assessment

"In my opinion, the effectiveness depends on the needs of the students. For my vocational students, productive skill assessment and respective skill assessment are proper. And for the daily test, I think the authentic assessment is better (knowledge, skill and affective assessment)" (Teacher A)

Teacher A gives more focus on students needs. As a vocation school teacher, his thoughts productive skill is more appropriate for his students. He teaches the students based on their needs. For daily assessment, he prefers an authentic assessment. So basically he decided to focus students need.

"I think we can see the students' progress in the learning process and also we can build students confidence and we can know the student's weaknesses and also strengths. My students take English more seriously after knowing the outcome of their test result. I don't think my students perform better after getting the test results. The assessment is just useful for seeing my students' skills." (Teacher B)

According to his experience, Teacher B claimed that in his teaching-learning process, he wanted to define student's weaknesses and their strength. With defining that he can understand their needs and take the necessary step to make his student more confident. In his opinion, the assessment is important to observed students skill on their respective topic. There is no impact on students' performance.

4.5 Implementation strategies of formative assessment

"At the end of every subject of the lesson I usually give a formative assessment. Since offering the exam, I recognize the achievement of the students. I usually give a formative assessment after competence ends to be learned. Two kinds of task individually cognitive and skill. In the middle of my teaching, I always ask them to do the exercises and involve them in question and answer orally refers to the exercise." (Teacher A)

Teacher A implements the formative assessment in every session to identify the student's improvement and their understanding of the topic. During the lesson, he prefers to discuss students understanding about the relative topic and give exercises to involve them with the topic.

> "I usually conduct classroom discussion in the learning process. I also use group and peer discussion to get the students to interact easily in English. My students like to speak to each other after they have been to a party. I go around watching the students and providing feedback when it is required." (Teacher B)

According to Teacher B, he tends to use group discussion in his teaching strategy. He also conducts peer assessment to evaluate his students. To give more opportunities for the students to discuss the lesson he usually makes group discussion and focus to do the exercises. During the class, he observes students activity and gives feedback on the students progress.

It can be seen that both teacher's use interview session after a class is done or during a class. According to a study, interview and role-play is the most favourite speaking assessment technique (Mardiningrum, 2018). A teacher can conduct an interview or dialogues or problem-solving activities in the EFL classroom. A checklist can be used for assessing student speaking performance after a conversation is done. Besides, teachers can conduct debate and peer-assessment techniques in the classroom which enhance students' speaking skill (Boas, 2018). A study in Indonesia found that the Indonesian EFL teachers hesitate to use task-based language teaching even though they believe that it has some advantages in developing the teachers and learners' communication skills (Pohan et al., 2018).

5. Conclusions

The research outcome indicates that the teachers have a very clear understanding of formative assessment. The teachers believe that formative assessment is a very essential aspect of the teaching-learning process to determine the academic progress of the students during the course. Teacher's aim of formative assessment is at recognizing students weakness and strengths in learning to improve their skill. Formative assessment influenced teacher's ability to become more professional. It can inspire students to focus more on their study and helps teachers develop their teaching strategies as well. The teachers can make their teaching plan dependent on students basic needs. The teachers conduct a formative assessment at the end of every session to identify the comprehension of the respective subject and provide feedback which is very important in the teaching-learning process.

Understanding the goal of formative assessment in the learning process properly will motivate the teachers to take appropriate actions which leads to improving students progress. The teachers need to be updated with the proper training since the formative assessment skills are continuously improved. The data collected only from two teachers from two different school, more researched can

be conducted in a wide range of vocational schools due to know the vocational school's teachers perceptions of formative assessment which can able the government to take actions to develop the teacher's skills.

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