

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING, ITS VALUE AND SUGGESTED WAYS OF IMPLEMENTING

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Abstract: *Assessment in education means the process of gathering, analyzing students' knowledge and gives information to further course of direction in the learning process. Assessments can take various forms depending on different purposes. This article will look into formative assessment type and suggest some approaches for its implementation.*

Key words: *assessment for learning, formative assessment, assessment strategies, feedback, teacher and learner, student engagement, self-assessment, peer-assessment.*

The concept of formative assessment has grown and changed significantly since it was first introduced. There are a few ways to look at it. One key difference lies in the view of formative assessment: as an instrument (like a test) or as a process. However, it would be more correct to look at it as a process rather than a “thing”. Imagine a situation where a test might reveal to the teacher what the students' weaknesses and strengths are, what guidance does the student further need, what areas do they need to work more on. This way the test would shape the future direction of learning by allowing a teacher make smarter decisions in lesson planning. That is why it does not make much sense to talk about formative assessment in the plural.

Ways in which evidence for formative assessment can be collected:

- Observing students during their work, asking questions, engaging in conversations, asking them to explain concepts to see if they understood (on-the-fly evidence);
- Incorporating special tasks that require students' opinion and ideas;
- Providing regular tests and quizzes.

Once evidence of student progress is gathered and analyzed, teachers and students can decide what steps to take next. This might involve additional instruction, or it could indicate that the current activity is effective and no adjustments are necessary. It is important to distinguish between the evidence itself (what students produce) and the judgment about that evidence (how well it reflects progress towards learning goals). This distinction is crucial for using assessment data for both formative and summative purposes.

In formative assessment, the "next steps" involve feedback that gets feedback into the teaching and learning process. This feedback can come from the teacher to the student, student to the teacher, or even student to student. Feedback from students helps teachers understand how students are responding to the learning activities and allows them to adjust future instruction accordingly. Effective teacher feedback provides students with information on how to improve their work and progress in their learning. Simply giving grades or scores, without any explanation, isn't helpful for formative assessment purposes. In formative assessment, teachers provide ongoing, specific feedback and instructions as students work towards learning goals. This feedback should prompt students to reflect on their learning and adjust their approach to meet standards and gain deeper understanding. Some educators argue against combining grades with feedback, believing students focus solely on the grade. It is essential to grasp the importance of two-way communication between teacher and student for effective written and oral feedback. Grades (letters and numbers) are a familiar communication tool, but may not be the most informative.

The first rule of successful implementation of formative assessment is that the quicker teachers act on evidence they received to improve instruction the better the result is going to be. The longer the periods are the less the general effects will be. Self-assessment done by students to understand what they need week-to-week is also helpful. The biggest impact happens though when assessment is carried out every single minute.

The suggested way of conducting formative assessment developed by William and his fellow colleagues is the model of five key strategies.[2; 63] The first is the clarifying what are the goals. The second strategy is for a teacher to see clearly what is student's knowledge prior to starting a learning process and it can be done by having discussions with students, giving them some pre-tests or similar tasks and then analyzing the results. The third strategy is when a teacher needs to communicate the evidence directly to students and to provide feedback on what steps students need to take to move the learning forward. The fourth strategy is peer assessment. This can be done by giving students a pair work where sessions of five to ten minutes would suffice. However, it should be noted that peer feedback is a nuanced strategy that needs to be given extra attention to at the beginning by setting rules, discussing effective and ineffective feedback and rather providing students with checklists then giving the total freedom of consideration. Finally, the fifth strategy is self-assessment which is reached by producing independent learners. This, inevitably, will need a lot of hard work of both the teacher and students as students need to learn first how to correctly assess themselves. Firstly, make the criteria for assessment clear, use self-reports such as colours (green, yellow and red) which students will use during the lesson to report to the teacher if they understand a concept very well(green), quite good(yellow) or struggle to understand(red). When using such colours a teacher should make it clear for students what these colours exactly represent. This also can be done by asking proper questions upon completion of a certain task, such as *what they found easy about the task and what they found difficult*. However, the most important thing with self-assessment is that students need to develop it to regular practice and make it as an integral part of their learning process.

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