THE INFLUENCE OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ON IMPROVING STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

Septia Mardella[1], Zuhri Efendi[2]

[1,2]STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya

[1]Email: sptiamrdella@gmail.com
[2]Email: zuhrisps@gmail.com

Abstract
In this study, the effects of formative assessment on students' English language proficiency—specifically, EFL/ESL learners—are examined. Formative assessment is a crucial component of the classroom learning process and has been shown to improve students' academic performance and engagement. The impact of formative assessment on raising students' English competence at MTsN 1 Susoh was examined using a descriptive qualitative research methodology. The English teachers at MTsN 1 Susoh are the study's participants. Additionally, the researcher chooses two teachers who employ formative assessment to gauge their pupils' speaking proficiency using a purposive selection technique. Data were acquired through observation and interview procedures. This study highlights how crucial it is to establish an engaging classroom where students can freely express their ideas and work together with their peers. Students are more motivated to learn English thanks to this method, which also promotes participation. According to the results, formative assessment can greatly enhance students' speaking abilities if it is used properly. This is because it encourages students to actively participate in their evaluation process by establishing criteria and doing self-evaluation. Despite its advantages, formative evaluation is still difficult to apply successfully due to problems including packed classrooms and time management. In the end, this study promotes the use of formative assessment methods in English language instruction to enhance students' speaking proficiency and overall educational experience.
Keywords: formative; assessment; improving

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is an important element that cannot be separated from all learning processes. This is because the assessment can provide information about the development of students' understanding of the material that has been taught. According to Brown (2003), assessment is a continuous and extensive process. Every time a student answers a question, makes a comment, or tries a new word or structure, the teacher unconsciously assesses the student. Meanwhile, based on Permendikbud No. 23 of 2016, assessment is the process of collecting and processing information to measure the achievement of student learning outcomes. That is why we will always find the assessment stage in a learning curriculum. The 2013 curriculum is also one of them. The assessment itself can vary depending on its characteristics. One form of assessment that we know is formative assessment.

Formative assessment (FA) is considered to have enormous pedagogical potential to strengthen student learning (Black & William, 1998). The Formative Process actually explains that, "when a program is in the planning and development stages, it can still be changed, and the information gathered from the evaluation can contribute to changes in the program" (Greenstein, 2010). Douglass Fisher and

Nancy (2014), in their book, explore some common formative assessment techniques and their practical application in the classroom. They establish the importance of these techniques to improve student learning. They argue that a large portion of classroom teachers assess students' understanding of knowledge with questions such as, "do you understand?" or "does it make sense?" (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

There is a lot of strong evidence that formative assessment is an important component of classroom work and its development can raise the standard of achievement. We do not know of any other way to improve the standard by which a strong prima facie argument can be used as a basis (Black & Williams, 1998). It was concluded that students assisted with the use of dynamic formative assessments scored higher on "measures of academic achievement" than students who were never given the opportunity to use formative assessments. A systematic review of these studies clearly establishes that "on average across all studies, formative assessments have a positive effect on students' academic achievement" (Klute et al., 2017). Meanwhile, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020), formative assessment techniques are closely related to the learning methods carried out. Learning methods that can measure the achievement of competencies expected in 21st century skills include learning with scientific methods, inquiry/discovery learning, project-based learning, and problem-based learning. The development of assessment techniques that can be used in formative assessment related to some of the learning methods above can be grouped into forms of activities, including: questions, discussions, activities, conferences, interviews and self-assessments.

An alternate kind of evaluation called formative assessment can improve communication between students and between students as well as between students and professors. It can also help students better grasp the thoughts of other students while they are studying (Butler, 2001). Speaking assessments can be used effectively if students actively participate in their evaluation, whether it be by establishing criteria, rating peers, or doing self-evaluation, claim O'Malley and Pierce (2002). Students are able to observe how much they have improved, and their performances are more appropriate. Many English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) learners choose to learn how to speak the language. Speaking is crucial when learning a second language. Speaking has been neglected in schools and colleges despite its significance for a variety of reasons, such as the focus on grammar and the unfavorable teacher-student ratio. Furthermore, the importance of becoming proficient in the target language's speech emerges when language learners recognize how it will affect their future professional achievement. Students understand that in order to overcome their shyness and hesitancy, they must practice the target language on a regular basis in the classroom (Leong, L. M., & Ahmadi, S. M, 2017).

In the Emancited Learning Curriculum that applies in Indonesia, there are several basic models used, one of which is formative assessment. Formative principles have a role in monitoring the learning process, with the main purpose of providing an assessment of the learning progress of each student and to improve the quality of the learning process. The discussion of the role of formative assessment is very important in today's learning because 1) formative assessment is an assessment model that is able to provide complete information related to student learning development, 2) formative assessment is an assessment model that is able

to be the basis for educators to provide feedback to students, so that students are able to accurately know what skills need to be developed by them and 3) formative assessment is able to motivating students to instill a lifelong learning awareness, instead of just studying for exam preparation (Rodrigues and Oliveira, 2014).

This formative evaluation is essential for educators to evaluate students' skills or the outcomes of their achievements throughout the learning journey. Formative assessment seeks to track and enhance the learning process, in addition to assessing the attainment of learning goals. Depending on the objective, formative evaluations can be conducted at the start and during the learning journey. By means of this evaluation, educators can pinpoint students' educational needs, challenges or issues they encounter, while also gathering insights into student progress. This data is subsequently utilized as feedback for students and educators. For students, formative evaluations are beneficial for reflection, as they track their learning journey, the difficulties they face, and the actions necessary to keep enhancing their performance. This is a crucial educational journey to develop into a lifelong learner.

In a previous study, as found by Iqra Jabeen (2024) in his research entitled "Examining Formative Assessment Practices: Effects on Students' English Language Learning" revealed that, formative assessment practices impact students' learning positively as students average scores increased with the assistance of formative assessment. Meanwhile, according to Muhammad Nisar Ulhaq et al (2020) in his research entitled "Assistance of Formative Assessment in the Improvement of English Writing Skills at Intermediate Level" found out that, formative assessment assists in English writing skills, and the students face difficulties in improving English writing skills. Special lectures and trainings may be managed for English writing skills and give a specific focus on writing skills during formative assessment. Learning is a process carried out between teachers and students that aims to change students from not knowing to knowing, from not understanding to understanding. Therefore, to determine if there are any changes in students after learning it is necessary to assess.

Meanwhile, the preliminary information obtained by the researcher from an English teacher at MTsN 1 Susoh indicated that this teacher had carried out formative assessments in their classes. For instance, conducting oral or written assessments at the end of each English learning chapter. Assessment is needed to recognize and collect data about students to find ways to meet their needs and overcome obstacles in learning (Ninomiya, 2016). According to Permendikbud No. 81A (2013), teachers are required to use formative assessment as a method of assessing student competencies that encourages student independence and critical thinking as part of conceptual understanding. Therefore, the issue of using formative assessment as a means to evaluate students' speaking skills needs to be investigated.

According to the description provided, the researcher aims to investigate the impact of formative assessment on enhancing students' English language abilities. This study aims to investigate the impact of formative assessment on enhancing students' English language abilities at MTsN 1 Susoh. The research question for this study is: How does formative assessment influence the enhancement of students' English language abilities?

METHODS

This research used descriptive qualitative method. The participants of this study were English teachers at MTsN 1 Susoh. In addition, the researcher used purpose sampling technique, the researcher selected two teachers who applied formative assessment to evaluate students' speaking ability. The instruments of this research are: observation, interview. In collecting data to get the data needed. The researcher conducted several procedures as follows:

1. The researcher met with the Principal and requested to conduct the research.
2. The researcher met with the teacher and explained the purpose of the observation and how to conduct it.
3. The researcher observed the teacher while teaching the students.
4. Researchers observed and interviewed teachers' indicators in evaluating students' speaking ability through formative assessment.
5. The researcher explains the research conclusions based on the data and the researcher's point of view.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data obtained through observation, the formative assessment model applied by teachers in English classes is an interactive method that allows students to express their thoughts. This method also encourages students to collaborate in teams. However, crowded classes and time management remain obstacles for teachers in carrying out the learning process. The following are the results of interview with teacher :

a. What kind of formative assessment do you use in your English classroom?

T : I apply formative assessments that are structured or interactive. Because the main goal is to build an interactive classroom and provide more opportunities for students to express their thoughts.

This statement indicates how much importance of formative assessment implementation in maintaining student interaction during the learning process that provides more opportunities for students to convey their ideas, whether or not the teacher applies the formative assessment used by teachers, both structured formative assessments and formative assessments that involve interaction.

b. What kind of strategy do you use when assessing your students formatively?

T : For the most part, I implement an integrated curriculum because my Task objectives are to increase student engagement and collect data regarding their progress in the learning process.

The above illustrates that the application of this strategy aims to create interactive learning in a safe setting and increase student participation, both those used by the teacher and those planned for interaction and those already in the curriculum.

c. What are the effects of using formative assessment in your English classroom?

T : I believe, it is useful to be applied in the classroom, it enhances learning on the one hand, increases students' involvement in the learning process and helps teachers in collecting information regarding students' level especially in the aspect of language ability.

These issues show that the implementation of formative assessment is very beneficial in the English classroom, which has a positive impact on the teaching and learning process. It improves learning on the one hand, lowers anxiety levels,

provides better opportunities for students to participate as well as motivates them to become skilled users of English. On the other hand, it makes teaching more efficient by assisting teachers in gathering information about their students whether they have understood the learning objectives or not.

d. What strategy do you use in getting students' feedback?

T : I use both oral and written forms. It depends on the circumstances and time distribution. In addition, the purpose of learning is to encourage collaboration among students and create a conducive environment, so I, as a teacher, can understand the diverse backgrounds of students and structure an engaging class appropriately.

The statement reflects that feedback from students serves to facilitate them in sharing ideas and information, encouraging collaboration between students, as well as creating a conducive environment for teachers in collecting students' background information.

e. What is your objective in teaching speaking?

T : There are three main objectives in learning to speak. First, to encourage students to speak fluently. Secondly, it equips students to express themselves well, further improving their speaking ability, and finally, it enables students to improve their pronunciation including intonation and emphasis. The main goal in teaching speaking is for students to be able to speak fluently and precisely without hindrance.

These problems indicate that the goal of teaching speaking is for students to be able to speak in the target language precisely and fluently without difficulty, improving students' oral skills, as well as their pronunciation which includes intonation and stress.

f. How do you assess your students' level of speaking proficiency?

T : Actually, I divided the students' speaking skill levels into three categories. Those are Good, medium, and less. Good is good in pronunciation and also in vocabulary. The average speaks correctly in pronunciation, but the vocabulary used is still inaccurate. Weak is speaking in a way that is unclear and difficult to understand regarding pronunciation and word choice.

g. What is the main reason behind students' speaking difficulties?

T : So far, I have identified two difficulties encountered by students. The primary reason is disinterest, while the other is apprehension.

This statement suggests that factors contributing to students' challenges in speaking include anxiety, disinterest, and the inherent difficulty in speaking caused by inadequate vocabulary knowledge.

h. Do you encourage your students to speak English in spite their weaknesses? How?

T : Yes, I get it. This step is taken by avoiding direct correction when they speak, while I provide some activities to acquire new vocabulary such as reading and listening. It also provides opportunities for students to communicate well.

The picture indicates that educators should encourage ways in which they can help their students. This situation arises from not directly addressing their mistakes and from the involvement of others.

i. What the effectiveness do you know after implemented the formative assessment?

T : I noticed a marked enhancement in students' involvement in the learning process, lowering their fears and hesitations. The results I've observed indicate that students can learn from their errors, which enables them to enhance their fluency

and performance in speaking English while also alleviating their anxiety.

Teachers' opinions on the efficacy of formative assessment indicated that it positively impacted students' speaking skills, as students are able to learn from their errors. Formative assessment enhances their fluency and performance while diminishing hesitation, fears, and anxiety.

Based on information collected from observations, interviews, and documentation. The results show that formative assessment is helpful in assessing students' speaking ability. Below are the specific research questions by discussing two subsections of formative assessment. First, "the application of formative assessment in the educational process" is very important. The research findings show that formative assessment maintains students' involvement in the learning process, fostering an interactive learning environment. A non-intimidating environment produces a favorable impact on the educational and learning experience. This is in line with Khaloufa DA (2008) who noted that formative assessment can enhance effective teaching and learning strategies or be the basis for modifying existing practices. In addition, this positively highlights that increasing students' motivation in learning English can have beneficial outcomes.

On the other hand, the data indicated that formative assessment improved learning by providing better opportunities for student participation and motivating them to become proficient English users. Additionally, it supported students in sharing their thoughts and fostered collaboration with students who contributed to a positive environment in the educational experience. Black and William (2003) noted that formative assessment is especially beneficial for students struggling in school, thereby reducing the disparity between low and high performers while enhancing overall achievement.

Additionally, "the teachers' approach to assessing the students' speaking skills" works well. The results showed that students' oral performance and fluency improved with formative assessment. Additionally, it reduced anxiety, fear, and uncertainty when they manifested. Students' speaking anxiety is effectively reduced when formative assessment is used in oral English classrooms, according to Lingying Tang (2016). According to research by Fouzia Ben Rabia (2013), formative evaluation improves students' speaking skills and boosts their oral production engagement. In summary, formative assessment is essential for enhancing students' oral skills, which alleviates their fear and anxiety about speaking, fosters an engaging classroom environment, and provides increased chances for students to articulate their thoughts. This reality will be understood by evaluating students. formatively. It plays a significant role in the education system. It should be carried out positively, as negative feedback could discourage students from participating.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings and discussion, the conclusions drawn from this study regarding the impact of formative assessment on students' language skills validated our objective; this indicates there was a successful method for assessing students' speaking competence as it enhanced their oral proficiency, lessened their fears and anxieties about speaking, fostered an interactive classroom environment, and provided greater chances for students to articulate their thoughts. The Formative assessment is a crucial component of teaching that should be

incorporated into the English classroom. Moreover, we possess extensive knowledge regarding the impact of this process on students' speaking skills, as any language is primarily assessed through its spoken expression.

REFERENCES

Black, P., & William, D. (1998). Assessment and Classroom Learning. *Journal of Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 5(1), 7-74.

Black, P., & William, D. (2003). In Praise of Educational Research: Formative Assessment. *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(5), 623-637.

Brown, H. D. (2003). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. San Francisco, California: Pearson/Longman.

Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2014). *Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Greenstein, L. (2010). *What Teachers Really Need to Know about Formative Assessment*. ASCD.

Jabeen, I. & Shakur, N. (2024). Examining Formative Assessment Practices: Effects on Students' English Language Learning. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, *5*(2), 413–426.

Klute, M., Apthorp, H., Harlacher, J., & Reale, M. (2017). Formative Assessment and Elementary School Student Achievement: A Review of the Evidence. *REL 2017-248*.

Leong, L. M., & Ahmadi, S. M. (2017). An Analysis Factors Influencing Learners' English-Speaking Skill. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 2(1), 34-41.

O'Malley, J. M., & Pierce, L. V. (2002). *Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners Practical Approaches for Teachers*. Addison-Wesley.

Rabia, F.B. (2013). The Impact of Peer Assessment on Learners" language proficiency.

Tang, L. (2016). Formative Assessment in Oral English Claassroom and Alleviation of Speaking Apprehension. *Journal Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4.

Haq, M. N. U., Mahmood, M., & Awan, K. (2020). Assistance of Formative Assessment in the Improvement of English Writing Skills at Intermediate Level. *Global Language Review*, V (III), 34-41.