

## Chapter 82: The Impact of Formative Assessment on English Learners in Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract:** This capstone aims at introducing different methods of formative assessment in English classes in Saudi Arabia and considering it instead of using only summative assessment (grades of final tests). Andrade & Cizek (2010) defined formative assessment as the activities where instructors and learners are participated in collaboratively in order to understand the learners' learning, their weakness and strengths, their growth, and as an evidence for instructors to adjust their teaching instructions and for learners to enhance their performance. English formative assessment will consider the learners' daily work, record their progress, help them to achieve better progress, and eliminate their exam anxiety. Different studies and research have been reviewed to show the usage and the impact of formative assessment with English learners. According to the children's rights in assessment, Heritage (2013) advised educators to have formative assessment in order to enable the learning opportunities, progression, and success for all learners equally. In addition, Moss, C., & Brookhart, S. (2009) recommended shifting from only correcting into informing the learners about their mistakes and providing valuable feedback to move them into much progress. It is revealed that formative assessment develops the learners' linguistic performances and eliminates their anxiety of tests. It is strongly recommended to use frequent formative assessment methods in English classes in Saudi schools to help in shifting from summative assessment into formative assessment.

### 1 Introduction

English learners in Saudi Arabia, where English is considered a Foreign Language (EFL), have dramatic exam-panic. They do homework and work in groups or/and pairs, they participate, they do projects, they do classwork, but unfortunately their recorded grades depend only on the two midterm tests and on the final exam. English instructors, especially those who teach middle and high schools, depend on their final grades without providing a chance for learners to make a mistake, to have effective feedback, and to have another chance to correct their mistakes, and then to learn effectively. English instructors in the Middle East provide much summative assessment that prevents valuable learning results (El ebyary, 2013). A major reason of using formative assessment is their progress with instructors help. However, formative assessment, which includes considering the daily learning work in class, will not only eliminate the learners' anxiety from English exams/tests, but it will improve the learners' linguistic performance and save their effort and time. Of course, English instructors will need to include frequent formative assessment methods into their lesson planning and watch their learners' progress and collaboration. These formative assessments will have a positive impact on their learning.

### Context and Problem/Solution

In Saudi Arabia, the English assessment of the intermediate and secondary learners consists of only summative assessments. Summative assessment happens when instructors rely only on grades without providing feedback. There is no consideration of formative assessment that would show the frequent linguistic performance and the progress of learners. Even if instructors use formative assessment, such as exit tickets, short quiz, pair-assessment, or self-assessment, grades of summative assessments are considered the only measurement tool to

evaluate English Learners (EL). Arab educators believe more in summative assessments as the only evaluation tool for learners because of the negative attitude of many stakeholders towards formative assessment (El ebyary, 2013). Obviously, English assessment in Saudi schools is fully summative without including formative assessment.

The issue of English assessment in Saudi intermediate and secondary schools is that they rely only on summative assessment in order to grade the learners' linguistic ability. It is fairer for English Learners if their language is assessed formatively. To clarify, using tests and grades to examine the linguistics abilities of English Learners without using formative assessment is ineffective.

Formative assessment is considered an essential part in English learning. In a study of using the three types of assessment with English Learners (EL), formative assessment, summative assessment, and combination of them, it is shown that learners' scores of formative assessment are clearly higher than learners who were assessed summatively (Mahshanian, Shoghi & Bahrami, 2019). In other words, learners achieve better when they are assessed on a smaller amount of content. Using formative assessment would definitely increase the achievement of English learners. To emphasize, this paper recommends shifting into formative assessment.

According to my observation of my learners, when I give them frequent quizzes or/and Plickers (an assessment application) after each lesson or/and unit, their grades and linguistic abilities are much higher at the final exam at the end of term. It seems that the linguistic content cannot be examined easily in too much content at once without previous formative assessment. Hence, using only summative assessments for English Learners produces less favorable results.

Deborah Burns and Jeanne Purcell have been instructors in the United States and still works for the public schools. In 2019, Burns and Purcell presented a paper to discuss the misuse of grading when instructors assess their learners. They criticized using the traditional way of grading and its misuse by instructors when they use it to motivate and punish learners. In Burns's article, it is recommended to include a formative assessment system in order to measure and motivate learners. Burns and Purcell go on to say that formative assessment is required because it contains feedback, content validity and process reliability, and friendly reports. According to Burns and Purcell, the formative assessment system consists of the following:

- content standards when goals of learning are defined,
- learning targets where the learning expectations are friendly described,
- success criteria which are the evidence that is used to assess learners who meet the learning targets,
- performance tasks which are the learners 'performance and works that meet the learning targets,
- record keeping where the learner's level of proficiency can be reported and kept,
- effective oral or written feedback,

- resubmission opportunities which happen in order to motivate learners and to encourage ongoing learning.

In order to solve the problem of using only grades to assess English Learners' levels, assessment should be transformed from using only summative assessment into using more formative assessment. Providing more frequent opportunities for formative assessment throughout the year will improve scores and linguistic proficiency as well on the end of term summative assessments. Hence, including effective ways of formative assessment like self-assessment, peer-assessment, formative exit tickets, or/and short quizzes will enhance clearly the linguistic level of English Learners. Self-assessment and peer assessment occur when learners assess themselves or their peer in a specific area of learning. Regarding exit tickets, the instructor can write a question about the lesson and ask them all to answer it before leaving the class.

My initial evaluation of using formative assessment as a solution to assist EFL learners or English Learners achieve higher scores is my observation of my learners besides my host instructor's learners. When I was a middle instructor of English in Saudi Arabia, I observed that my learners' linguistics levels when I used frequent formative assessments like a short quiz after each unit and before the mid-term test produced positive results. Additionally, the learners of my host instructor (Melody Terasaki at Pleasantville Elementary School in New Castle, Delaware, the United States), who are ESL learners or English Learners, are assessed frequently by using friendly formative assessment, orally or written, by using exit tickets or quizzes. She evaluates her learners on less content in order to ensure their understanding before going on to the next lesson or topic. As a result, her learners learn better and achieve higher than our learners in Saudi schools. Indeed, formative assessment provide learners instruction with valuable feedback and also it provides the instructor the opportunity to address any learning needs that were not originally addressed or were not learned.

My application of formative assessment can be applied by other instructors and they will have the same positive results. Formative assessment will definitely work in Saudi schools because it is fairer than using only summative assessment. It would improve our learners' English and would help them to achieve much higher linguistic levels. It would reveal their progress. Furthermore, our English instructors would feel well-accomplished and well-satisfied because formative assessment involves both more efficient teaching methods and more frequent learner assessments. However, changing the attitudes of the stakeholders in the Ministry of Education regarding transforming the current traditional evaluation system into a flexible and friendly formative assessment system might be a challenge (Burns, 2019).

## **Literature Review/ Rationale**

### **English Language Assessment**

Assessment is a crucial factor in the learning process. Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) show that assessment is a continuous process which happens daily when instructors unconsciously assess the learners' progress from their comments, answers, or participation inside the class. Thus, learners can be assessed everyday with their instructors.

There are two types of assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment. As identified by Brown & Abeywickrama (2010), formative assessment is an evaluation that takes place in the classroom and that aims to support learners to be improved. They stated that formative assessment is used mostly in their classroom.

The second type of assessment is summative. The goal of summative assessment is measuring learners' comprehension at the end of a specific unit (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Summative assessment proves what learners have learned and how well they achieved goals, but it does not show

progress (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). A clear example of summative assessment is final exams when there is no feedback. Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) stated that all types of formal assessment are formative, formative assessment should be informal. When using formative assessment, the instructors' focus should be on the continuous improvement of the learners' language when providing feedback (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Indeed, assessment should be informal, and the feedback should be effective in order to apply the formative assessment.

### **Formative Assessment: Its Definition, History, and Principles**

Formative assessment is the basic concept of this research topic. Andrade & Cizek (2010) defined formative assessment as the activities where instructors and learners are participated in collaboratively in order to understand the learners' learning, their weakness and strengths, their growth, and an evidence for instructors to adjust their teaching instructions and for learners to enhance their performance. This implies that the learning collaboration between instructors and learners will result in better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of both learners and instructors. It has been shown that formative assessment contains an engagement between instructors and learners in order to understand the learners' knowledge, strengths, weaknesses, progress, and the teaching practices. It is obvious that there is a strong bond between formative assessment and learning.

Originally, formative assessment started with the American Educational Research Association (AERA) when Scriven (1967) originated the term *formative evaluation* firstly. The term *formative* assessment was used obviously in the practice of an evaluation program. In Scriven's and other former works, the concept of assessment had not yet been improved to the extent it is today, and the emphasis of collecting learners' evidence related to their performance was straight for the evaluative purpose.

Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues named the *Handbook of Formative and Summative Evaluation of Learner Learning* (Bloom, Hastings, & Madaus, 1971). They affected the evaluation program and influenced the assessment field as well. "For example, Bloom's expanded definition clearly foreshadowed the linkages and uses of the formative approach he outlined for the assessment of individual learners and toward the aim of improving teaching and learning" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).

#### **The Major Principles of Formative Assessment**

**Ongoing process** Formative assessment is an ongoing process that occurs daily in class's activities. However, instructors support learners to assess their learning by using peer-assessment or self-assessment following the rubrics by Assessment Reform Group (2002, as cited in Mahshanian, Shoghi, & Bahrami, 2019). Instructors can use also quizzes or short questions to assess learners.

**Learner-centered (Engagement)** The learning process with formative assessment is not instructor-centered, but learner-centered or learner-focused as well. There is an engagement between the instructor and the learners and also an interaction among the learners themselves. Indeed, Can Daşkın, & Hatipoğlu (2019) recommended instructors to assess English learners

formatively because formative assessment is considered essential part of their interaction in classroom.

**Feedback** Effective feedback is an essential part in formative assessment because learners need to learn from their mistakes and have a chance to correct their misunderstanding. Formative

assessment is efficient because it provides feedback (Burns & Purcell, 2019). When instructors respond to learners' work, orally or written or a demonstration, with the purpose of facilitating learning, this is the meaning of feedback (Moss & Brookhart, 2009). Moss, C., & Brookhart, S. (2009) recommended shifting from only correcting into informing the learners about their mistakes and providing valuable feedback to move them into much progress. Learning is affected by effective feedback because clear and descriptive feedback support learners' achievement and motivation (Moss & Brookhart, 2009). Instructors need to be flexible when providing feedback to learners' mistakes (Mahshanian, Shoghi, & Bahrami, 2019). Therefore, it is recommended to be friendly and flexible when providing feedback in order to motivate learners to achieve and grow academically. It encourages learners to take risks in learning English and keep trying to learn.

Formative assessment focuses mainly on the continuous growth of the linguistic abilities of learners. When instructors provide comments or a suggestion or point out to a mistake, they provide feedback. Hence, this feedback develops the linguistic abilities of learners (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).

**Adjustment of Teaching Practices** Formative assessment allows English instructors to collect learners' data in class by using observation in order to adjust the lesson (Ortega & Minchala, 2017). Ortega and Minchala (2017) suggested for English instructors to use formative assessment in all activities in order to have evidence of learners' understanding of their learning in the school. Formative assessment helps English instructors by considering learners' need to revise their teaching practices and to use scaffolding (Ortega & Minchala, 2017). Can Daşkın, & Hatipoğlu (2019) states that instructors can adjust their instruction by improving it. Hence, instructors receive feedback from their learners which results in reshaped activities and teaching practices to have better outcomes.

### **Why Formative Assessment is the Best Solution for English Learners' Achievement**

#### *Formative Assessment in the United States*

Melody Terasaki, who is an English instructor at Pleasantville Elementary School in New Castle in Delaware in America, stated that formative assessments are more common and casual than summative assessment. These assessments include simple oral questions and two minute (two dollar) written answers to see if the learners understood what they had been taught that day or two days. Then, instructors can know if the learners understood the lesson or not. If they did not understand the lesson, the instructor can revisit the vocabulary or the content or reteach it again. If the learners understood the lesson, the instructor can go on to the next topic (personal communication, January 23, 202019).

Other formative assessment are used by Terasaki with her learners. I observed that she uses songs, games, and videos which are other practices of formative assessment that show the active role of learning played when assessing learners. When learners are active, they will be more engaged.

Terasaki suggested using formative assessment on a regular basis. Summative assessment could be used at the end of each week. Formative assessment happens every day and possibly more than once a day. Formative assessment informs the instruction that needs to take place. For EFL learners in Saudi Arabia, formative assessment will be valuable in determining potential groups and

levels of learners and their needs and lacks in vocabulary or writing. To emphasize, formative assessment should be a significant part of instruction in curriculum.

### ***Benefits of English Formative Assessment***

Formative assessment promotes assessment *for* learning not assessment *of* learning which is considered summative assessment. Thus, formative assessment is for the sake of learning. It opposed grading practices (Burns & Purcell, 2019). Accordingly, learners are engaged in the learning process when they are assessed formatively. What matters to educators should be the learners' academic growth, not their final grades.

Formative assessment is used by English instructors to monitor learners' academic growth and progress. The assessors' goal is to help learners to apply the new knowledge in real situations (Ortega & Minchala, 2017). It is important to connect the learners' new knowledge to their life.

### ***Technology in formative assessment***

Technology, especially a Web 2.0 tool, can be used effectively for formative assessment. When English learners and instructors use technology for formative purposes, their time and effort will be saved and used efficiently. Web 2.0 is the second developmental phase of the World Wide Web which provides services like Google Maps, Google Docs, You Tube, wikis, blogs, social networking, podcasting, and many other services. Robertson, Humphrey, & Steele (2019) asserted that the well-chosen technology enhances the effectiveness of formative assessment. In fact, the immediate feedback and immediate scores are the largest benefit of using technology with learners for formative purposes (Robertson, Humphrey, & Steele 2019). Actually, it is approved that technology can be used for formative assessment because it provides the needed feedback successfully when learners are doing assessment (Karagianni, 2012). Obviously, utilizing a Web 2.0 tool with English learning is beneficial to and of formative assessment.

Computers are beneficial for English formative assessment. Computers can connect learning and assessment through formative assessment effectively, (Karagianni, 2012). Karagianni (2012) approved that computers can be used sufficiently as formative assessment to measure learners' progress continuously. Assessment that used with computers serve as assessment deliverer, assessment marker, analyzer of learners' assignments and exams, a record keeper of assessment, and a feedback provider (McKenna & Bull, 2000). Instructors can start by building tasks of assessment, learners do tasks and have self-assess, learners receive automated feedback and act on it to submit their answers, their results stored in computer, instructors receive informative feedback in order to design remedial work or to move on, finally learners become aware of their learning habits (Karagianni, 2012). It is approved that learners improved clearly in grammar and in reading quizzes that are done with computer (Karagianni, 2012). Learners' scores improved especially with class practicing in class and revision tasks following each quiz (Karagianni, 2012). Learners liked the idea of having formative assessment online at home many times (Karagianni, 2012).

Formative assessment can take many shapes that instructors and learners can apply and benefit from. Instructors can gather learners' data from activities such as classroom tests, observation, oral questions, discussions, homework, portfolio, projects, group work, peer feedback, and self-assessment (Andrade & Cizek, 2010). Assessment can be self-assessment, peer-assessment, or instructor-assessment (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).

## Limitations

Most of the English instructors need to be introduced to instructional materials of assessment during their previous education. If English instructors were provided training using materials for formative assessment, they could benefit from the skills (Nevisi & Hosseinpur,

2019). It is suggested that English instructors have to involve daily informal interactional activities for formative assessment (Daskin & Hatipoglu, 2019). In fact, English instructors in Saudi Arabia need to know about and to train on the application of formative assessment.

Many English instructors complain that they do not know how to observe learners' growth and do not know how to assess them in a formative way. They complain about time and large number of learners. However, English instructors in Saudi Arabia can be trained well to use different methods of formative assessment. English instructors can develop their English practices if they just train themselves by attending workshops and conferences about formative assessment. They can apply peer-visit instructors who apply methods of formative assessment. They just need encouragement, guidelines, and time to apply it successfully. If they noticed the outstanding growth of learners who experienced formative assessment in their classes, they would be motivated to start using it. Besides, they need to learn more about classroom management in order to evaluate the learners in classroom every day and to observe and record their progress and achievement. Also, they may need to train their learners how to assess their peers and themselves as well. Applying formative assessment in the large-learner classrooms might be a challenge, but with choosing the best methods of formative assessment and with managing the classroom successfully, instructors and learners can do English formative assessment effectively.

## Impact Evaluation

### Logic Model

This logic model shows the overall implementation of the action plan where participants and processes are outlined. In this action plan, the main objective is to consider what English learners are doing at in English classes (group work, homework, classwork, and quizzes) as an ongoing assessment instead of the final exam.

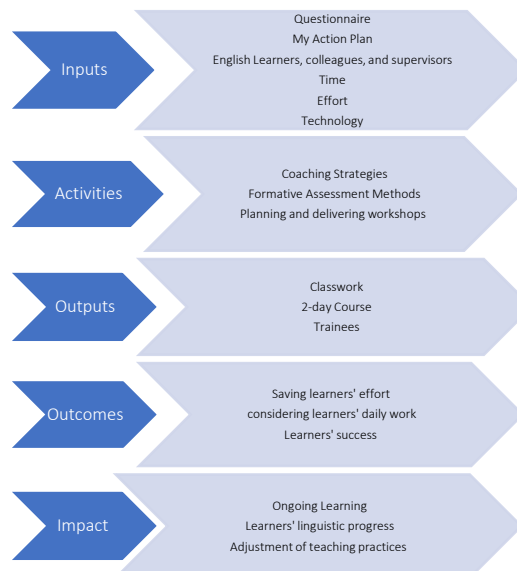


Image 1: Logic Model

## Evaluation Plan

The Action Step	The Evaluator	Time	Evaluation Method	Results Used
Collect learners' results of the previous two academic years of seventh grade	The instructor	The first week of the year	Test scores	The results will be used to demonstrate the learners' linguistic level.
Assess English learners	The instructor	The second week of the beginning of the academic year	Test scores	Pre-test results will be used to assess the learners' linguistic level in English.
Assessing learners with different formative assessments	The instructor	The whole academic year, starting from the second week	Observation and feedback	Results will be used to demonstrate the learners ongoing progress.
Evaluating the linguistic level of learners	The instructor, English colleagues, Principal	The week before the final exams	Test scores	Post-test results will be used to evaluate the learners' linguistic levels
Analyze the results and compare and contrast between the previous and the latest results of learners	Instructor	The last week of the academic year	Test scores of the previous two years and the recent year	The analyzed data will be used to convince the educators in the Ministry of Education about including frequent formative assessment methods.

Thus, the above table shows the assessment and the impact evaluation of learners' linguistic level by using pre-test and post-test results and analyzing them. This implementation presents the steps of my evaluation to my action plan.

### Action Schedule

To introduce the learning method of formative assessment to English instructors and English supervisors in Saudi Arabia, I need to convince them and coach them cognitively. I need an implementation plan to apply my action plan. Hence, the following table shows clearly the actions to be taken, the included resources, and the methods of evaluation.



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Action item – what needs to happen?	Completion date – when will it be finished?	Resources – what is necessary to complete this step?	Lead- who is in charge of this step?	Evaluation – how will the success of this step be measured?
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1) Create formative assessment methods while planning lessons	The first week of the academic year	Textbooks Quizzes, classwork, exit tickets, voice recording, and technology (plickers, kahoot)	Instructor	The suitability of chosen methods for learners and their levels
2) Apply different methods of formative assessment in my English classes with my learners	The beginning of the first term	Quizzes, classwork, exit tickets, voice recording, and technology (plickers, kahoot)	Instructor	schedule formative assessment in my lesson plans  collect data on learners' performances during the term (observation, record, and note-taking)
3) Compare their grades with previous summative tests that happened without previous formative assessment and create a report with graphs	The last week of the first term	Test scores of the previous two weeks  The recent scores	Instructor	Analyze the two groups of test scores
4) Have a meeting and discussion with my English colleagues at the school and the school principal about the progress and growth of my learners' linguistic levels and about following	The first week of the second term	Action plan examples of formative assessment collected data (Graphs)	Instructor, Principal, and my English colleagues	Schedule and confirm the meeting.  Gather feedback and work on it  Revise the used formative assessment based on their suggestions

formative assessment in English classes				
5) Distribute a questionnaire about English formative assessment for my learners and their parents	The last month of the second term (end of year)	Questionnaire	Instructor	Collect the surveys Gather the data analyze the results
6) Collect learners' results and questionnaire answers to write a report about them and send a summary of questionnaire answers and assessment results to the Ministry of Education to suggest including formative assessment and training English instructors in using it	The last week of the school year	Learners' results of growth and progress Questionnaire answers A copy of my action plan	Instructor and Head of Department	Consider their feedback and work on it
7) Contact the English supervisors in my region about introducing the concept of English formative assessment and	The last week of the school year	Create a report P Action plan Models of formative assessment Data (report)	Instructor	Await their feedback

presenting a report of formative assessment to request permission to conduct two-day workshops for English instructors in the region				
8) Design a training package about the impact of formative assessment for English teachers	During summer	Power Point Presentation (technology) Worksheets Evaluation feedback from trainees Action plan Models of formative assessment	Instructor	Organize and collect information

The implementation plan of this action plan will take at least a year to be prepared and fully implemented. In fact, some instructors might refuse the idea because it needs both effort and time to plan, to apply and to record the learners' results. However, after attending peer-class visits and attending workshops about formative assessment, they can follow this method and apply it successfully. Therefore, English learners will definitely achieve higher linguistic performance.

### Conclusion

Assessment of English learners in Saudi Arabia needs to be shifted from summative assessment to formative assessment. It is recommended to have much emphasis on the formative assessment that affects learning positively (El ebyary, 2013). According to the children's rights in assessment, Heritage (2013) advised educators to have formative assessment in order to enable the learning opportunities, progression, and success for all learners equally. This capstone introduced the idea of formative assessments for English educators in Saudi Arabia. Formative assessment includes changing both the teaching process and daily learning. It showed that formative assessment will help learners to progress linguistically when their daily work is considered by instructors.

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