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Article

## Formative Assessment in Language Evaluation Class

Basori<sup>1</sup>, Harir Mubarok<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Jl. Gajayana No.50, Dinoyo, Kec. Lowokwaru, Kota Malang, Jawa Timur 65144, Indonesia

### KEYWORDS

formative assessment technique  
 language evaluation class  
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### A B S T R A C T

This study is intended to analyze variations of formative assessment strategies applied in Language Evaluation class. The class was taught by an English native speaker. A descriptive qualitative method was employed in the study in which interviews and classroom observations were conducted to collect the data. In addition, syllabus and materials used for the class were also used as the supporting instruments in the study. The findings set out that various kinds of formative assessment used in the respective class. They were oral question, choral questioning, a quiz, Think-Pair-Share, Think-Pair-Write-Share, pair work and group work. The delivery of each assessment technique are differed in each lesson, but are always preceded with questions before a specific technique used. The study advocates that formative assessment in higher education is highly suggested, yet real challenges lie for lecturers to apply.

### CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

E-mail: basori@uin-malang.ac.id  
 harirmubarok@uin-malang.ac.id

## INTRODUCTION

Assessment has a variety of meanings in higher education. It includes any activity designed to collect information on the success of a program, course or university's curriculum in order to improve institutional practices (Stassen, Doherty and Poe, 2001). However, since students learn and understand their lessons well from their lecturers, assessment is not needed anymore. As a matter of fact, assessment is still used to measure the extent to which students gauge the lessons. Therefore, many studies have been focusing on the implementation of the assessment in learning (e.g. Scouller, 2000; Baleni, 2015; and Aguilar and Aguilar, 2017).

Formative and summative assessment are two popular approaches to assessment in learning that teachers use in the classroom to assess their students. As defined by Tsagari et. al., (2018), the first approach aims to evaluate students' success upon taking a course while the latter approach is used to evaluate

someone's learning progress in a classroom. The goal of summative assessment is to decide whether or not students fail or flung of a course, meanwhile formative assessment is more on measuring students' improvement during learning a course. Dixson and Worrell (2016:154) mention that "projects, performance assessments, portfolios, papers, in-class examinations, and state and national test are the examples of summative assessments". On the other hand, formative assessments include quizzes, daily test, homework, question and answer sessions and observations (Chaqmaqchee, 2015; Dixson, and Worell, 2016, Mahendra, et. al., 2020; Stull, et. al., 2011). In sum, formative assessment takes place during a course and summative assessment is the final evaluation at the end of the course.

Before students are judged on how proficient they are in mastering the content of a course or a lesson, students need to know their progress during their learning. Formative assessment becomes a pivotal answer to know how far students improve their mastery in learning. Therefore, many researchers have conducted

studies in the topic. Previous studies have revealed that formative assessment benefit students in learning. Formative assessment can be a way to improve students' in learning English (Ismail and Tini, 2020), to boost their motivation to learn the language (Panesar-Aguilar and Aguilar, 2016), and to promote deep learning (Zacharis, 2010). Besides serving as a tool to report students' progress of their learning (Baleni, 2015; Jimaa, 2011), formative assessment also promotes students' critical thinking (Chaqmaqchee, 2015). This assessment benefits teachers in understanding problems that students face in their learning (Widiastuti et al., 2020). However, there room for a research in formative assessment focusing on the assessment conducted in Language Evaluation class taught by English native speaker is still vacant and needs to be filled in. Therefore, this study is conducted attempting to describe kinds of formative assessment techniques in Language Evaluation class taught by English native speaker. Below are the research questions carried out in this study:

- a. What are the formative assessment techniques applied in Language Evaluation class?
- b. How the formative assessment techniques used in Language Evaluation class are conducted?

## METHOD

This study aims to examine formative assessment technique used in Language Evaluation class taught by an English native speaker and describes how the assessment techniques in the respective class are conducted. In order to achieve the goals, the researchers applied a descriptive qualitative study as an appropriate design for the study. The researchers took the data from the subject without manipulating the natural setting and condition (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Latief, 2010).

The study was conducted at one of the Islamic-based universities in East Java involving an English native lecturer. It was conducted from August 23rd to October 22nd, 2019. The data gathered were taken from the results of interviews with a lecturer assigned for teaching Language Evaluation class. The interviews were in the form of semi-structured interview. There were 10 questions asked to the lecturer focused on a topic related to formative assessment technique implemented in a Language Evaluation class. In addition, classroom observations of the aforementioned class were also conducted. The researchers also used field notes in order to get the valid data (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993). The field notes recorded the teaching and learning activities of the class particularly on the teaching assessment technique used. The collection of the syllabus and the materials used during teaching and learning activities of the respective class were taken as supporting instruments to reach the valid data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to describe the kinds of formative assessment techniques applied in Language Evaluation class taught by an English native speaker. Further, the study also narrates how the formative assessment used in the respective class is conducted.

### 1. Kinds of Formative Assessment Techniques Applied in Language Evaluation Class

Based on the data taken, it can be concluded that the lecturer divided the classroom teaching and learning activities into three phases which are pre-activity, main activity and post activity respectively. In each phase, the lecturer applied various techniques of formative assessment. In addition, the researchers also found that there were some activities that the lecturer did before pre-activity. Those activities were called a 'housekeeping'. However, during the 'housekeeping' the lecturer did not use any formative assessment technique.

The lecturer admitted that she named the first phase herself 'housekeeping'. At the first meeting, the housekeeping activities consisted of a classroom discussion on an agreement between the lecturer and the students about class attendance, tardiness, the use of e-learning, the use of phones in the class and homework. The data gathered showed that the housekeeping activities were mostly talked about the classroom rules. The lecturer admitted that these activities aimed to prepare students before they received lessons. The activities of 'housekeeping' were given along or embedded with the agenda of each day lesson.

From the data gathered, the lecturer applied some activities in pre-activities. The first activity that she did was question and answer activities. The lecturer posed a question or some questions that invited the class to find the answer for the questions. The questions were given before the lecturer went to the main topic of that day's lesson. One of the questions was *What problem does this cartoon portray?* This question was given along an image next to the question.

On the other day of the classroom observation, during the pre-activity the lecturer put the class into groups. The lecturer presented a question using presentational slides in which each group was asked to discuss the answer of the question. Meanwhile, on the other day of the observation, the lecturer did question and answer activities in which students were pairs to discuss the answer of the question given by the lecturer through presentational slides. The last day of the observation revealed that the lecturer gave question and answer activity. However, instead of asking the class to work in groups or in pair, the lecturer directly asked questions to the class about terms in language assessment principles. Based on the result of the field notes, the number of the questions varied from day to day of the lesson.

The field noted taken during the observation also captured the use of choral question as a way to assess students' understanding. This formative assessment technique motivates students to engage with teaching and learning processes (Regier, 2012; Nagro, et. al., 2018). In addition, the choral questioning provides real-time formative assessment for students (Twyman, 2018).

The oral questioning activity is a kind of formative assessment (Regier, 2012). The questioning allows the lecturer to ask questions that vary the level of questions range from low to high level question. These forms of question encourage students to use both low and high order of thinking which depends on a question asked by the lecturer. The questioning activity promotes learning retention upon the lesson students received (Krathwohl and Anderson, 2009). In other words, students' knowledge stays longer in their brain as they practice using their cognitive skills.

On the second day of the observation, the lecturer did a quiz covering the materials discussed in the previous lesson. The quiz consisted of ten questions that the students had to answer individually. The lecturer said that the quiz served as a review of the lesson. According to Ghaicha (2016), quiz is part of the assessment that teacher can check students' understanding or knowledge upon the lesson. Since the quiz is given as a review test, the quiz serves as proof how deep or far students have learnt the lesson (Chaqmaqchee, 2015). Through the quiz the lecturer as well as students can define whether the goal of the lesson has been achieved or not.

The findings above are in line with the result of interviews, analysis of the syllabus and teaching materials used for the class served as supported documentation used in this research. The lecturer admitted that she often used continuous question and answer activities. She added that she varied the question and answer activity in which she often asked the question by pointing out some students to answer, asking the class to work in pairs, or discussing the questions posed in a group. She said she had to vary the assessment technique which she admitted that it was one of the aspects considered when she taught in the class. She further added that the function of the question and answer activities is to review the lesson as well as to lead students to the topic discussed on that day's lesson. Her statement is in line with Willian's statement in Andrade and Cizek (2010) that the activity of questioning in teaching learning activities elicits the evidence of learning. Even, the questioning can be a way to provide meaningful feedback to students to improve their learning (Ghaicha, 2016).

The findings showed that the main activities consist of some activities which mostly pairs or group work. In doing the pairs or group work, the lecturer posed a question or some through presentational slides. What is a diagnostic test and what is the difference between a formative assessment and a summative assessment are some of the questions that the lecturer asked to the class. The lecturer also asked students to give examples of the answer the students made. During the pairs or group work, the lecturer mingled with the class and occasionally asked questions to the pairs or to the group while observing students' activity. At this time, the lecturer often provided feedback or have other questions related to the main question given in the presentational slide. Then, the lecturer discussed the answers with class by inviting students to voluntarily answer the question. During this activity, the lecturer also provided feedback upon students' answer for the question.

The aforementioned information shows that in the main activity, the lecturer still used questioning as a formative assessment technique. As the lecturer went to questioning, the lecturer let herself collect information necessary that helped him/her in

relation to activities in her instructional planning (Cizek in Andrade and Cizek, 2010). Furthermore, the ongoing observation that the lecturer did provide formative feedback immediately. It can help students scaffolding the knowledge and understanding upon the lesson (Baleni, 2015).

Think-Pair-Share in another activity the lecturer had for a formative assessment technique. This activity was documented through the field notes of the classroom observation. The lecturer asked the class to list different kinds of assessments that students have taken and to identify the skills tested as well as to categorize the type of test. Further, matching activity was conducted in the main activity. The lecturer assigned the class to pay attention to the presentational slide given in which the class had to match words with their correct definition. The observation conducted also revealed that the lecturer used video as the media in learning. Prior to watching the video, students were given questions they had to answer while watching the video. This activity was done in group.

According to Fisher and Frey (2014), Think-Pair-Share boosts collaboration between and among students. In other words, students can provide feedback among them which is beneficial for students' improvement in learning (Gultom, 2016). In addition, during the 'Think' phase, the lecturer can monitor students' work and provide feedback for improvement as necessary. Further, the lecturer can check how deep the understanding of the students of the lesson studied (Regier, 2012). In other words, the lecturer can do observation as students do the Think-Pair-Share which benefits as mentioned in preceding paragraphs.

For the post activity, the lecturer reviewed the lesson. To review the lesson, the lecturer applied a question and answer technique. What did we learn today was one of the examples of the review question. The question was then elaborated into some questions related to the topic discussed on that day. Then, the class was resumed with homework. The kinds of homework assigned also varied. The kinds of homework that the lecturer asked students to do were reading some pages of the class book, completing assessment worksheet, and making a progress report related to the final project.

According to Davidson and Feldman in Andrade and Cizek (2010), the oral questioning that lecturer does in the classroom is the form of formative assessment. They further add that questioning can boost self-reflection which could enhance students' mastery in learning. When students are able to answer questions given by the lecturer, they can be positive that they have master the lesson. It also becomes a measuring tool for teacher upon the lesson she taught whether students are ready to move on to the next level of the lesson or not (Rindone and MacQuarrie in Andrade and Cizek, 2010).

## **2. How the Formative Assessment Techniques Used in Language Evaluation Class are Conducted**

The goal of this research is to describe how each formative assessment technique used in Language Evaluation class runs in each phase of classroom activities. During pre-activities, the lecturer used question and answer activities that were delivered in some ways. The lecturer often posed a question or some

questions to the class through presentational slides. She then invited students to answer the questions. Upon the answers given by students, the lecturer discussed the answer with the class. If the answer was not the one expected, the lecturer posed other questions to the class. She also often invited the rest of the class to give opinions that might differ from the answer given. The other way how the lecturer did questioning activity was through choral response or questioning. The lecturer posed a question that the class had to answer the question together. Meanwhile, for the quiz used a formative assessment the lecturer asked each student to take out a piece of paper for the quiz. There were 10 questions given when the observation was conducted and there were projected through power point slides. Instead the 10 questions projected at once, the lecturer showed each question and allowed students to answer each question for some time. Finished answering the last question, the lecturer asked the class to collect the work. She then continued discussed the answer with the class at a glance.

For main activities, the lecturer assigned students to sit in pairs or group activities. With their pairs or in their groups, students had to discuss possible answers for the question given by the lecturer. In doing pairs or group activities, the lecturer allocated for some time to answer the questions. While students did the task, the lecturer always mingled among students and occasionally asked questions. The form of questions asked varied from asking students whether or not they understand the question to ask students to explain their answers. When the time was reaching to an end, she grabbed students' attention by asking the class to resume their work. She invited the class to share their work with the class orally. At one time, she asked students to write the answer on the whiteboard. Other than pair and group activity, the lecturer did Think-Pair-Share. However, instead of asking students to formulate an individual response before turning to a partner, the lecturer skipped the 'think' stage and directly asked the class to sit in pairs.

There was a time that the lecturer added one more step in Think-Pair-Share activities. The lecturer added writing activities in Think-Pair-Share. During teaching learning activities using Think-Write-Pair-Share technique, the lecturer posed questions to the class as an initial activity in Think step. Each student was then had to write answers for the questions. During the Share step, the lecturer often asked students to voluntarily share their answers to the class orally. The other way that she did was asking the class to write the answer on the whiteboard followed by a short explanation of the answer given. Then, the lecturer provided feedback at the end of each student's answer.

For the post activity, how the lecturer did the formative assessment was the same as the questioning technique during pre and main activity. The lecturer had a question written in her presentational slides which then were elaborated. The question was then read aloud to trigger the class to answer. Based on the field notes, the lecturer chose some students who raised their hands to answer the questions. Then, the follow up feedback came along.

## CONCLUSION

The study aims to describe kinds of formative assessment techniques used by an English native speaker in teaching Language Evaluation class. The kinds of assessment techniques used in pre-activities mostly involved oral question activities with variations of deliveries. The variations of deliveries are in forms of oral questioning, choral questioning and a quiz. For the main activities, the lecturer also did the same technique used in pre-activity. However, additional techniques such as Think-Pair-Share or Think-Write-Pair-Share, pair work and group work are also used as assessment techniques. For the post activities, the lecturer often gave homework for the following meeting and reviewed the lessons using the same technique in pre-activities, that is, the questioning delivered through oral questioning technique.

Varying kinds of formative assessment become a vital point. The variations maximize the purpose of conducting an assessment which is to measure how deep students have learnt (Lowman, 1995). Ultimately, the lecturer needs to consider the maximum feedback and washback given to students through a formative assessment. Without feedback and washback, a formative assessment acts like a test which results in only final grade and has no intention to improve students' learning. In addition, a formative assessment should be designed as such to minimize students' anxiety and to encourage interactiveness (Bachman and Palmer, 1996).

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