

## CÁI NHÌN TỔNG QUÁT VỀ NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN KHOA NGÔN NGỮ ANH VỀ ĐÁNH GIÁ QUÁ TRÌNH

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận: 15/8/2023	Nghiên cứu này được tiến hành với mục đích tìm hiểu nhận thức của sinh viên Khoa Ngôn ngữ Anh về đánh giá quá trình trong quá trình học. 3 lớp chuyên Anh với tổng số 125 sinh viên được mời tham gia nghiên cứu này. Dữ liệu định lượng được thu thập thông qua bảng câu hỏi với sự tham gia trả lời của tất cả sinh viên trong khi dữ liệu định tính được lấy từ các cuộc phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc với 10 sinh viên đã được chọn trước đó. Kết luận của bài nghiên cứu cho thấy rằng sinh viên đa phần hài lòng với đánh giá quá trình trong suốt quá trình học. Ngoài ra, bài nghiên cứu này đề xuất một số khía cạnh cải thiện cách đánh giá quá trình như thường xuyên thông báo tình trạng đánh giá đến sinh viên, tích hợp các hoạt động giao tiếp trong đánh giá và duy trì tính nhất quán trong đánh giá quá trình. Một điều quan trọng hơn là sự hài lòng của sinh viên đối với cách đánh giá quá trình ở một số môn học có thể giúp cải thiện chất lượng đánh giá quá trình ở những môn học khác.
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<b>TỪ KHÓA</b>	
Đánh giá quá trình;	
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Đề xuất;	
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## A GENERAL LOOK ENGLISH MAJORS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS AT LHU

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Aug 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2023	This study was conducted with the main aim to collect students' perceptions towards formative assessment (FA). 3 classes of English majors with a total of 125 students were invited to join the study. Quantitative data was collected through the questionnaire administered to all the participants while qualitative data was gain from semi-structured interviews with 10 preselected students. Findings from the study highlighted that students are generally contented with the formative assessment. In addition, they suggest several aspects to refine such as frequent notice of assessment, interating communicative tasks for assessment and maintaing consistency in formative assessment. More importantly, students' satisfactions with formative assessment in several subjects can help increase the quality of formative assessment in various subjects.
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Formative assessment has been valued in recent years, especially after the COVID-19 when learner-centered approach greatly has assumed its values. The pandemic did exert great impacts on both learning and assessment (Almeida and Monteiro, 2020). In fact, the focus on learners' learning process has been paid more attention to. This can be the after-effect of COVID-19 during which students' learner-centered was paid much attention to. To align with this, formative assessment has been proved as an efficient tool for assessment due to its aims of enhancing both teaching and learning quality. Especially for English majors at FEL, formative assessment can be considered as a good way to monitor the second language learning process. High performance in second language learning is the ultimate aim of for all second language learners. To achieve this aim, they have to undergo a long process full of challenges ahead. Educational tools and instructions are vital during this journey. One of the important tools is the formative assessment. In fact, formative assessment is a useful way for students to track their learning so that they can adjust their learning process. As for teachers, formative assessment aids them into both teaching and assessing. Having recognized the value of formative assessment, Faculty of English Language (FEL) at Lac Hong University (LHU) has long prepared to enhance formative assessment in a lot of subjects in the curriculum.

## 2. CONTENT

Torrance and Pryor (1998) in their book defined that "formative assessment is generally defined as taking place during a course with the express purpose of improving pupil learning."(p.8). It can be drawn from the definition about two features of formative assessment. They are timing and the main purpose of improving students' learning. The first feature is still in debate. Many researchers argue that the timing of formative assessment does not necessarily limit to the length of a course subject. On the contrary, others point that formative assessment cannot last further when a course ends. As for the second feature, many authors and researchers agree on a consensus that one prominent feature of formative assessments is the instant and frequent feedback from teachers to improve students' learning. The feedback is extremely vital to students as it can reveal students' strengths and weaknesses in learning. As a result, students can employ the feedback to help them monitor their learning process.

In a different vein, Tang (2017) also highlighted that formative assessment can increase interactions in classroom contexts and thus increase students' performance in Speaking. Students can raise questions about the feedback and expect further explanation from their teachers to comprehend the feedback.

Recently, Koroğlu (2021) confirmed in his study that formative assessment can help enhance both learning process as well as their performance. Especially for second language learning, formative assessment is useful in helping students diagnose their learning process and thus make timely adjustments to enhance their learning.

Compared with summative assessment, Chen and Zhang (2017) noted that formative assessment is more effective than summative assessment in terms of improving students' learning abilities. This can be explained via the main aim of formative assessment is to boost students' learning. Meanwhile, the main aim of summative assessment rests on measuring students' performance.

Many questions are raised about how formative assessment foster learning and teaching process. The answers lay in the feedback generated from formative assessment (Marsh, 2021). The feedback help students actively monitor their learning process. Hence, it can be seen that feedback and self-monitoring are two sides of a coin and they can greatly help refine both teaching and learning. Feedback can be transformed into self-monitoring and vice versa. The goal of teaching and learning to smooth the transition from feedback to self-monitoring (Sadler, 1989). Marsh (2007) suggested that formative assessment can help teachers formulate appropriate adjustments in teaching and help students identify their gaps in learning.

Feedback from formative assessment is extremely vital for improve students' learning in many subjects. Chen and Zhang (2017) drew from their study in China that feedback from peers and teachers can help provided by both peers and the teacher is treated seriously by most learners, which contributes to the gradual improvement of their writing.

Although formative assessment has been proved to gain fruitful fruits in both teaching and learning, employing it effectively is not an easy task. As for LHU teachers, lack of intensive training sessions on formative assessments is unavoidable due so several objective reasons.

The first reason is effect of COVID-19 which led to academic disruptions. Right after the COVID-19, the staff has huge educational tasks to complete, which cut down the time for trainings. The lecturers now assume their works in a new teaching time, namely the time after the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, trainings on formative assessment are hard to organize due to limit time budget. As a result, teachers lack of sufficient practice of formative assessment.

Another reason is that lack of official guidelines for and specific methods for calculating the scores transferred from formative assessment. At FEL, the score from

formative assessment presently account for 30% in the final grade. Due to its high proportion in the final grade of a subject, both lecturers and students highly need a specific guidelines and methods of calculation to produce valid and reliable score.

The health problems of both students and lecturers cannot be neglected. Not only mental but also physical health are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As mentioned somewhere in this paper than formative assessment takes place during a course so it demands a great of efforts from both teachers and students. Long and detailed records of students' learning progress are vital. Extra activities that possibly appear in the course cannot be ignored as they can provide instant and frequent feedback.

Formative assessment and constructivism share the same aim which is improve students' learning. In terms of constructivism students actively take part in the learning process. Teachers hence perform the roles as facilitators. They interact with students to build knowledge. As for formative assessment, teachers communicate with students via feedback. Teachers provide meaningful feedback for students to self-monitor their learning process. Though the ways of interacting may vary, the same purpose of enhancing both teaching and learning is still the same.

Schildkam, Kleij, Heitink et al (2020) concluded that there are several factors that decide the choice of formative assessment. The first factor is that teachers have the ability of collecting various kinds of data. Next, teachers must have the knowledge and skills to analyse data. More importantly, teachers are required to comprehend data analysis to transform the data interpretation and provide feedback and recommendations to students.

With respect to the use of a particular tool in FA, Findings from Nguyen and Tran's (2018) study suggested that teachers demand more instructions on using portfolios for their speaking assessment. Almeida and Monteiro (2021) noted that teachers in Portuguese concerned that validity and reliability of the results gained from summative assessment as there are various factors that can influence the examinations.

Concerning the impact on learning performance, Cheng and Zhang (2017) concluded that formative assessment enhance students' writing learning better than summative assessment.

In Vietnamese context, Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) from their study with 118 English majors at Mien Dong University of Technology claimed that students generally show positive attitudes towards the use of formative assessment in their classrooms. Those students generally showed their positive opinions towards the tasks used in

assessing their learning pronunciation. Le (2021) in his study at Lac Hong University focusing on integrating online assessment into blended learning pointed out both strengths and challenges of onliness assessment. However, the study swings its pendulum towards summative assessment as formative assessment is not meticulously examined in the study.

To detect the factors representing the research gaps for the current study, it is worth noticing that a plethora of research have emphasized the role of formative assessment in a particular subject such as speaking, writing, pronunciation and so on. A general picture of students' perceptions towards formative assessment in various subjects integrate formative assessment has not been painted clearly at LHU. In fact, many lecturers have to use formative assessment in most of subjects taught at LHU. Thus, a study to investigate both lecturers and students' general perceptions towards formative assessment is needed. This study is expected to provide students' general feedback towards formative assessment. As a result, adjustment in using formative assessment as well as further studies into both positive and negative feedback in particular subjects can be conducted in the near future.

To investigate English majors' perceptions towards formative assessment, two research questions were raised as:

What are English majors' perceptions towards formative assessment at FEL?

How can formative assessment be improved at FEL?

## 2.1 Research methods

A total of 125 English majors from 3 classes, namely 22AV111, 22AV112, 22AV113 were invited to joined the study. At the time of this study, they were studying the first semester at their third year at FEL. The use of formative assessment was widely seen in the previous semester. 10 male and 10 female students among the 125 students were selected for the semi-structured interviews.

The current study employed two instruments to collect quantitative and qualitative data for it. As for quantitative data, a Vietnamese questionnaire was distributed to all the students of the four classes. With respect to qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participation of 10 pre-selected students.

With respect to data collection procedure, the researchers set a date to meet the three classes 22AV111, 22AV112, 22AV113 to inform them the purpose of the research. The reasons for choosing the three classes because of the convenience for the researchers. The researchers were teaching two classes, namely 22AV111 and 22AV112. At the time of the study, all the three classes finished the second semester in the second year at

FEL. In the second week of the first semester at their third year at FEL, all the students were distributed questionnaires which took them around 5 minutes to answer. The semi-structured interviews were conducted one week later with the participants of 10 students from the three classes.

As for qualitative data, 10 students including 5 male and 5 female students were selected for the semi-structured interviews. There was a total of 10 open-ended Vietnamese questions and each interview lasted about 5-7 minutes. All the interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The scripts from the interviews were analysed based on the content.

## 2.2 Data analysis

### 2.2.1 Students' perceptions towards the use of formative assessment

**Table 1:** *Students' attitudes towards FA*

Items	Highest results at numer 2(agree) out of 6-point Likert Scales
I am satisfied with the scores calculate from FA.	58,2%
I think the number of tasks in FA is appropriate.	61,8%
I think the forms of the tasks in FA is appropriate.	67,6%
I think I was well informed about FA	61%
I have no questions about scores from FA.	61%
I know the components in FA well.	47,1%
I know the methods of calculating and transforming scores from FA.	52,9%
I think what I have done was all counted in FA.	52%

There were 8 sub-questions composing students' attitudes towards formative assessment. In general, all participants show positive attitudes towards the use of formative assessment in previous semester. Students showed the highest score in the activities used in formative assessments. These activities ranged from individual to pair work and group work. In line with this, students demonstrated a relative high percent in the aspect that they believe the number of activities used in

formative assessment. They shared the viewpoint that number of activities is appropriate. The high scores also present in the two following aspects, namely being informed measurement and clearly understanding formative assessment. This means that students were well informed about formative assessment and at the end of the semester they did not have many questions about the scores transferred from the assessment. It is worth noticing that students know the methods of transforming scores from formative assessment but no more than a half of them know clearly the components in formative assessment. It can be inferred that there is a slight variance between the informative assessment and the real formative assessment.

### 2.2.2 The methods used in formative assessment

There were six sub-questions to collect students' attitudes towards the methods of formative assessment used in the classroom context. The results revealed that 73,5% of the students believed the lecturers did use appropriate methods in formative assessment and transforming scores from formative assessment. As a result, more than half of the participants were contented with the scores they obtained from the assessment as they voiced that their scores were valid. Concerning the consistent use of formative assessment, a half of the participants agreed that formative assessment was used rather consistently during the semester. This aligned with the result above, students thought that there was a slight variance between the informed and real formative assessment. This led to the result that a rather high percentage of students (55%) know the focus of formative assessment. As for the time of informing the progress in formative assessment, students agreed that the time of announcement was appropriate.

**Table 2:** *Results for the methods in FA*

Items	Highest results at numer 2(agree) out of 6-point Likert Scales
I think my scores from FA is accurate.	61,8%
I think teachers used the right methods in FA.	73,5%
I think teachers showed consistency in FA.	51%
I think teachers calculated and transformed the scores from FA accurately.	44%
I know the focus of FA well.	55%

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I think the time of informing scores from FA is appropriate.	47,1%
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### 2.2.3 Suggestions to improve formative assessment

The collected data to find out students' opinions to enhance formative assessment showed that students expected to know the focus of formative assessment so that they could concentrate on what to do to gain high performance. In addition, a high number of students desired to know ways of calculating scores from formative assessment. This desire disclosed that students wished to know the scores so that they can remedy their learning in order to get high score. Concurring with these, students wished to be informed about the progress of formative assessment. Further research is expected to be done to find out the appropriate time of informing students' progress in the assessment process. The intervals between the announcements are worth considering as well. With respect to the activities used in the assessment, more than half of students stated that the number of activities used in the assessment is appropriate, which led to the relatively low result in item of reducing activities in assessment. From the results about the activities, it can be concluded that students believed lecturers used the appropriate number of activities in the formative assessment. Adding new activities is possible as it can bring more opportunities for both lecturers and students make more progress in formative assessment.

### 2.2.4 Data from interviews

To collect deeper data to answer the research questions, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper data. for the ease of analysis, 10 students were anonymous and numbered as 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> male students and 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> female students. There were 9 questions in the interviews. Each interview lasted about 3-4 minutes. The interviews were recorded with students' permission and then translated in to English. 9 out of 10 students were contented with the scores transformed the formative assessment. One student was not happy with one subject because he was absent for a day on which teacher assigned an important task in assessment. He missed the task, which led to low score.

As for the question relating to the methods of calculating and transforming scores from formative assessment, there were various opinions towards this issue.

"Teachers use the same formulations such as attendance, tests and activities."

"No, it depends on the teachers and the subjects they teach"

*1<sup>st</sup> female student*

"I know the components but I don't the methods of calculating and transforming scores from formative assessment"

*3<sup>st</sup> female student*

"... different teachers use different methods of assessment so I am not clear about that"

*5<sup>th</sup> male student*

"It's quite confusing. Some lecturers focus on exercises in class, others focus on volunteering to answer questions"

*7<sup>th</sup> male student*

"We don't know how many columns (i.e the criteria of assessment) in the formative assessment"

*4<sup>th</sup> female student*

"Too many exercises and we don't know how to calculate the scores"

*1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> female students*

Other students mentioned they know the methods of calculation when "teachers show the columns at the end of a teaching day" and "teachers show our progress so that we know what we should do to gain better scores"

*6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> male students*

relating to the focus of formative assessment, students believed that to get high performance in formative assessment students should "do tasks and write answer on blackboard".

*8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> male students*

Other opinions are shared by many interviewees included:

"volunteer to do the tasks"

"working in groups and volunteering to answer questions matter a lot"

"attending class regularly to get score for attendance"

"in my opinion, attendance show students' seriousness in study"

"attendance is not important than doing tasks"

"exercises are important"

*1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> students*

Related to the suggestions to enhance improve performance on formative assessment, students need "time to prepare the tasks", "more communitive tasks", "designing more tasks for students to have chance to get higher score", more groupworks" I want more scores for mid-term, mid-term scores should account 40 instead of 30 percent". "informing the progress before the end of a semester".

### 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of formative assessment has assumed its values at FEL in recent semesters. In fact, formative assessment has been applied in most of the subjects taught at FEL, which familiarize both teachers and students with this kind of assessment. Therefore, a general description about the use of formative assessment is vital. The description can serve as springboard for both teachers and students to refine formative assessment in the future. With those reasons, the study was conducted to provide a general view about the use of formative assessment. In addition, opinions to enhance formative assessment were also collected. Thus, the current study with its findings and recommendations are expected to better the use of formative assessment in the near future.

Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data helped researchers to find answers to the two main research questions mentioned above. As for the first research question related to the use of formative assessment, participants generally showed positive attitudes towards the formative assessment. With respect to the second research questions, major suggestions were proposed to enhance formative assessment such as informing progress of the assessment frequently, informing the methods of calculating scores, assigning communicative tasks.

In short, formative assessment is well accepted by both teachers and lecturers. There was positive feedback from students' side. Major ways to improve the assessment have been found from the study. Based on the results and findings from this research, several recommendations for teachers and further research have been proposed.

Firstly, the teachers should announce the methods of calculating and transforming the scores from the formative assessment to their students publicly and strictly follow the as variance can confuse the students. The focus of the assessment should be informed as well since this can guide the students to navigate their effort in learning.

Secondly, informing the current progress in the assessment is vital as it can help students monitor their learning and thus make adjustment to keep their learning in the right track.

Finally, students show their need of communicative tasks in formative assessment. Teachers can consider integrating these kinds of tasks in to their assessment to raise the quality of the assessment.

As for future research, it is worth investigating particular subjects such as Speaking and Listening since students showed high satisfactions with these two subjects. Findings from those researches are expected to shed more light on the successful use of the formative assessment in second language learning.

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