

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AS EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICE****Olena Zelenska**

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**Summary**

The article examines the phenomenon of formative assessment as an innovative trend in English language teaching. The essence and the concept of formative assessment are considered in the article. The impact of formative assessment on the process of teaching and learning is highlighted. The advantages of using formative assessment approach in teaching of the cadets of the university are investigated. The article provides the basic principles and structural components of formative assessment. The paper shows the role of formative assessment in the process of improving cadets' knowledge and skills, its effect on increasing their motivation in learning. The scientific and theoretical foundations of formative assessment are presented. The development of scientific ideas on formative assessment is analyzed. The article concludes the significance of using formative assessment principles in the process of studying aiming to motivate future officers to study English. It is the important factor for their future promotion and the key that will open for them lots of opportunities in future.

**Keywords:** motivation, knowledge, skills, increasing, improving.

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**1. Introduction**

The issue of teaching foreign languages in military educational institutions is the top issue. It has become even more relevant in the context of continuous improvement of interoperability with the armed forces of the allied countries. To successfully master any skills or abilities in any area of life a person needs motivation. When learning a foreign language, motivation plays almost the crucial role. The level of progress directly depends on it. It is not enough to use proper curricula and good explanations in class. Students must be motivated.

Motivation is a set of factors in the perception of the world that guide people to achieve the goal. This is especially important when learning a foreign language as on it depends if a person wants to learn a foreign language, how much effort and energy they are going to invest in this process.

Teachers cannot simply motivate students with words. But they can make the process of learning stimulating and attractive, create an atmosphere of cooperation. Teaching should be aimed at the expectation of success, provide their students with regular information about their achievements focusing on positive self-esteem and awareness of learning process and progress. That is, the methods of teaching, informal interaction with learners, and the atmosphere in the

classroom are important factors influencing their motivation in learning a foreign language. The purpose of this research is to show that the formative assessment approach meets all these requirements.

## 2. The scientific foundations of formative assessment

The term formative evaluation was first used by Michael Scriven in 1967 in connection with teaching and the curriculum. Two years later, Benjamin Bloom, the American educational psychologist who fostered a common vocabulary for thinking about learning goals, replaced the term 'evaluation' with 'assessment' and suggested considering formative assessment as a tool to improve students' teaching and learning processes.

In 1971, Bloom, along with George Madaus and Thomas Hasting, wrote the book *Handbook of Formative and Summative Evaluation*, where the term formative assessment was first used in its generally accepted meaning. (Bloom *et al.* 1971)

These studies contributed to direct the attention to the classroom processes, i.e. to the fine detail of the ways in which the day to day actions of teachers put formative principles into practices focused on learning. (Harlen *et al.* 1992 Marshall and Drummond (2006) Dann (2002)

A large number of scientists have worked in this field of pedagogy and psychology, who made significant contributions to the theoretical concept of formative assessment and to practical use: Natriello, Crooks, Bangert, Drowns, Kuliks, Daugherty, Tunstall & Gipps, Torrance & Pryor, Marshall and Drummond, Dann, Sadler, Earl, Harlen and James, Black and William.

Natriello (1987) in his work covered the full range of assessment goals – certification, selection, direction and motivation. Terrance Crooks (1988) studied only formative assessment. He stressed that the most important are the skills, knowledge and learners' attitude. According to Sadler (1989) the focus of formative assessment is the gap between what every learner currently knows and what they need to know. This understanding is crucial for a student. Hattie & Jaeger (1998), Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006), Sadler (1998) also consider feedback as an essence feature of assessment for learning (formative assessment) and assessment as learning.

In Dann's research (2002) he states that 'assessment is not merely an adjunct to teaching and learning but a process through which pupil involvement in assessment can feature as part of learning – that is assessment as learning' (p. 153).

Earl (2003) states that *assessment as learning* is the complicated interaction of teaching, assessment and learning; the most important in which is that learners understand their role in learning and aims they want to reach employing different cognitive events. Self-assessment is the one of key points of the process.

Sadler highlights that teachers need to bring to the feedback superior knowledge; understanding and empathy of how learners learn; knowledge of constructing tests which will reveal responses from students' knowledge of criteria and standards; evaluative skills in their abilities to make judgements about student efforts; and the ability to frame feedback statements. (Sadler 1989, pp. 80–82).

Black and William (2009) interpret formative assessment widely as all the activities undertaken by teachers and students to obtain feedback as information to modify teaching and learning process. Harlen and James (1997) formulated the basic principle of formative assessment.

In short, formative assessment has a strong research base supporting its impact on learning.

### 3. Formative assessment as classroom process

Thus, formative assessment is a series of specific teaching and assessment procedures done by teachers to change learning activities and improve the progress of their students. Effective assessment not only measures the progress made by learners but identifies their needs in learning process and responds to them.

Formative assessment is a process by which evidence is collected, interpreted and used. It helps to identify the actual leaning level of each student based on the results of what each student knows and can do, and to understand what each student needs to learn next. In other words, formative assessment is a process of establishing where the learners are in their learning, where they are going, what they need to do to get there.

The core of assessment lies in the sequence of two actions. The first is the perception by the learner of a gap between a desired goal and their present state (of knowledge, and/or understanding, and/or skill). The second is the action taken by the learner to close that gap in order to attain the desired goal (1983;, 1989).

To be really effective, assessment should be “formative” – i.e., identify and respond to the learning needs of the students. When teaching in classroom is featured by formative assessment approach it means making frequent, short, interactive assessments of learners understanding, adjusting teaching to meet individual student needs, and helping all the students to reach higher standards in their learning.

Teachers actively involve students in the process, helping them to develop skills that contribute to their success. Using formative assessment approach raises the level of the students and improves their ability to learn. Teachers may find out the factors behind the variation in students’ achievements and adapt their teaching to meet individual needs. Despite general globalization expanding more and more in the world, formative assessment approach is a kind of individualization in teaching and learning. Good assessment is valid, fair, transparent, reliable and feasible.

When formative assessment approach is used in class, students are involved as partners in the process and build step by step their “learning to learn” skills emphasizing the process of teaching and learning. Developing skills at peer-assessment and self-assessment students develop skills of a range of effective learning strategies. Cadets, who are eager not only to absorb information but understand new concepts of learning by developing abilities to estimate their own and their peers’ work against clear criteria, obtain valuable skills for their life.

Using formative assessment in the classroom changes the culture of teaching; students feel safe to make mistakes and that develops their self-confidence at the lessons. Teachers make the learning process more transparent when they define and notify the goals of learning, monitor student motion and sometimes, if necessary, adapt goals to better meet students’ needs. When students are partners in learning, comments are often more effective than marks where it goes about improving the progress and helping students to reach the level they need.

When teacher uses this approach, students gradually begin to trust the learning process more than before – they are not afraid to fail anymore. They understand why they need to learn, how they can see the result. When they study in order to obtain the knowledge and acquire skills, students do out-of-class tasks more willingly, find out what is not clear for them, and ask more questions. Their questions are more comprehended and indicate that they are analyzing the target material trying to master it. They are eager to do short tests to find out if they know the target language.

Self-assessment and peer-assessment encourage cadets to take responsibility for their own learning.

A very important feature that makes assessment formative is feedback. The proper feedback evaluates learners' achievements and instructs them what to do next. For student who succeeded, feedback is the evidence of good efforts. For students who are not succeeding, feedback can provide some tools to solve the problem. Feedback encourages students to take further active steps on their way to success as it not only finds weak points but explains what to do next to overcome the drawbacks and misunderstandings. It is an instructional action, not an evaluative one. It should be a shift from correction to interaction and collaboration. Truly formative feedback is always timely, goal-oriented, sensitive to individual needs of cadets and inspires students to revise and master the target language or skills.

The actions made by learners after receiving feedback are even more important than the feedback itself. Learners start not to listen to information only to absorb but comprehend it. Learners start to understand that their achievements depend only on their efforts.

Formative assessment feedback makes a positive impact on students' personality. It helps them to elaborate ability to self-esteem, to analyze their own level of knowledge and develop motivation.

#### **4. Practice at English language lessons**

It is possible to do assessment while every classroom activities or almost every. When cadets work in pairs, for example, doing speaking activities or dictating each other words, teacher can listen, collect the information and note it to make a feedback.

When asking the questions on the learned topic a teacher pays attention and makes notes who in the class take an active part and what language they use.

After teaching new grammar or vocabulary material it is possible to give a short quick test to find out the level of assimilation of learned material. When cadets doing listening activity to do true/false, teacher can see who cannot do this properly.

To check writing skills cadets are asked to write what they read or listen. It is beneficial for cadets who have good reading or listening skills but are not good in writing. All this information is collected not for grading but for identifying weak points to improve the situation.

A very good way to reach progress and improvement is peer –assessment or self-assessment. The first – year cadets finish the discussion about food and drink the language aim of which is to revise better understanding of countable and uncountable nouns and are asked to do a gap-filling exercise on using countable and uncountable nouns. Cadets can check each other's exercises and analyze the results. Doing peer-assessment students have the opportunity to revise the studied material once more.

The third-year cadets who having done reading task are asked to make up some questions for reading comprehension and ask them each other in small groups for better understanding and peer-assessment.

The second year cadets read an unfinished story, do exercises for better understanding, read and analyze the questions given in exercise to guess the end. Then they listen to the end of the story and ask each other the questions to check the understanding.

While being in the process of acquiring the target grammar and vocabulary cadets are asked to do exercises and check each other works. When checking they use all the reference material they need. Checking peer's work they get the opportunity to deepen their own knowledge in mastering the learning material.

## 5. Conclusions

Started using formative assessment approach at our lessons we discovered that cadets can achieve better results in their learning. Knowing about their level of skills and knowledge they are aware what they can do to change the results.

When we obtain the information about the process of teaching and studying we can realize which activities and methods are the most useful, select the proper strategies of teaching process and plan it in the best way.

When formative assessment elements are used in learning, it helps cadets to activate their current knowledge and skills and improve their abilities to learn. It increases their self-efficacy and improves metacognitive awareness of how they learn. Formative assessment changes the interaction between teachers and cadets. Frequent assessment, being done in a positive way, helps the learners to focus on progress instead of grades.

This paper shows that formative assessment approach in teaching has been investigated in a great number of papers by plenty of scientists. The use of formative assessment in practice needs further implementation and scientific research. It will undoubtedly be beneficial both for the progress of cadets and English language teaching in general.

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