



**FINDINGS IN ADAPTATION OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT TO ONLINE
EDUCATION IN EFL CLASSES: SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE**

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Abstract

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, all modalities of learning assessment had been strongly dependent on students' physical presence – either for administration or for observing the learners' daily progress. Current school closures necessitate development of alternative approaches to delivering the critical feedback function of learning assessment. While all types of assessment of student learning are important, the need for formative assessment right now is particularly critical because learning needs to take place outside of the physical classroom, and teachers and parents-turned-teachers need to understand whether students are absorbing the content that is delivered to them in formats that differ from business-as-usual.

Keywords: formative assessment, EFL teachers, secondary school, COVID-19.

Introduction

The educational process and its evaluation are related to each other as educators combine them for establishing the already set learning objectives. With the rise of modern technologies, as well as with the further development and popularity spread of EFL method, educators now have possibility to track their students' scores using online formative assessments. According to Boston the score is determined as a diagnostic process that provides feedback of the course, and the ending score is the final assessment of an individual's capability (Boston, 2002). Besides, Stiggins and Pantiwati & Husamah indicate that assessment provides the information about the success during the learning process, providing necessary information for both teachers and students on what to pay special attention to in order to enhance the educational process and to meet the learning objectives (Stiggins, 2002). Also, assessment is an important and integral process that helps teachers provide feedback on the quality of the material studied by students, how much of the material was learned and understood (Dabbs, 2015).

It is necessary to indicate the difference between the formative and final assessment, based on the above. The formative assessment and its main idea is to identify ways to properly guide students in improving their language competence, while also identifying improvements and achievements from the measures applied, as well as individual approach and needs. [2] The final grade is a resultant variable that allows you to identify the final knowledge of individuals at the end of the course to evaluate all applicable teaching methods and identifying achievements. [2]

Studies conducted among EFL teachers have shown that the results and conduct of the



assessment significantly depend on the teacher's initial belief in the methods of this formative assessment. [5] On the one hand, the overwhelming number of teachers are of the opinion that this type of assessment helps to evaluate the intermediate result in order to improve language competence, while some often incorrectly used the results of these assessments.

Recently there has been increase in the usage of new tools that help formulate the scores in the context of secondary schools which was dictated by the realms of COVID-19 pandemics. For instance, Saudi Arabian government totally replaced offline classes by online ones, as well as assessment procedure (Akhter, 2020). One of the most convenient ways to evaluate the students' scores is to use Google Forms platform, a survey tool which was initially used as an online processor of information, including tables, documents and slides which help to generalise the data. Up to now, taking into consideration the new conditions, it has been used as a digital tool to formulate the assessment (Thuan, 2018). Considering that there are a lot of alternatives to Google Forms, this platform is a more convenient option for teachers, which is distinguished by its versatility, types of questions, administrative tools, automatic counting function and many other elements useful in this process. Thus, a formative assessment can be easily done throughout this platform with the user-friendly interface.

Summarizing the above, it becomes obvious that formative assessment is an important part of the educational process, especially in EFL programs, and the adaptation of the traditional format to the new online, due to the dictated conditions of the coronavirus, is a new trend and trend among middle school teachers. This article will focus on whether formative assessment is really a demonstration of how much students are aware of the material being studied during a survey and interview among secondary school teachers in Uralsk.

Research questions:

How effective was formative assessment in the realities of the pandemic for assessing students' understanding of the material in EFL middle classes?

What shortcomings have been identified in the use of this method of formative assessment?

Methodology

Research Design

For this research work, a mixed approach was used using both qualitative and quantitative methods, which includes conducting a survey and semi-structured interviews in order to obtain more accurate results. Thanks to the combination of the two research methods, it will be possible



to conduct a deeper analysis and identify the results.

Participants

The following criteria were taken into account when selecting participants: mandatory qualifications and at least five years of teaching experience. Moreover, teachers were required to have at least a bachelor's degree in education in English. Teachers of only secondary schools from the city of Uralsk were considered. Since this research work combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods, 30 teachers participated in the survey, and 10 teachers were involved in the semi-structured interview.

Data Collection

Several methods were used in data collection, which included semi-structured interviews and surveys. Semi-structured interviews were used for the ultimate purpose of collecting data related to the effectiveness of formative assessment and applied methods in order to establish the academic performance and level of language competence of secondary school students. The interview was conducted in one stage, including questions that aimed to determine the attitude of teachers to the adaptation of formative assessment, the effectiveness of using formative assessment to understand the material learned and teaching methods, as well as the importance of this process in teaching among EFL high school students. The surveys focused on revealing how often teachers resorted to formative assessment, and also the main goal was how difficult this method was to implement in the new realities of online learning.

Data Analysis

The collected survey data was analyzed using the Google Forms platform, and subsequently it will be interpreted by thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews.

Findings

After conducting an online survey among the 30 teachers who took part, it is necessary to elaborate on each of the sections in order to draw a general conclusion and answer the first research question posed, which seeks to confirm or refute the effectiveness of the formative assessment method.

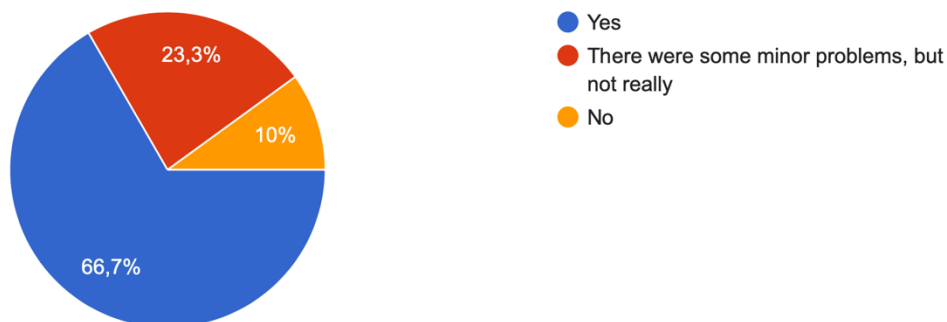
In general, according to the survey results, among the 30 surveyed, the majority of teachers, namely 14 people had a class of 20 to 25 people, which is 46.7% of the total, while 11 people led classes of 25 and above people (36.7%) and only 5 people (16.7%) had relatively small classes of 15 to 20 people. 20 of the interviewed teachers replied that it was difficult for them to assess the



progress of students during the pandemic, 7 people noted that there were insignificant problems and only three people did not experience any difficulties (see Picture 1).

During COVID-19, was it hard for you to evaluate students' performance?

30 ответов



Picture 1. Number of teachers who experienced or not any difficulties evaluating students' performance.

The majority of respondents, namely 12 people, answered during the survey that they had not previously resorted to formative assessment before the start of online training, where 11 people also replied that they had used this method and 7 people answered negatively. As for the main parameters that are used in this assessment method, 17 teachers evaluated reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. At the same time, 12 teachers assessed active participation in lessons even without significant possession of language skills. Only one person in the survey replied that one of the language skills was evaluated.

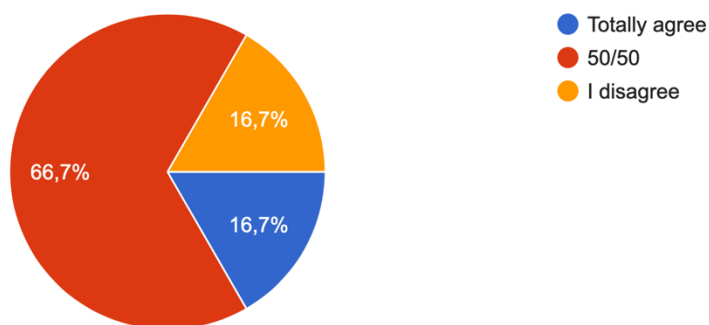
For the most part, 19 teachers replied that parents were interested in their children's academic performance, and only three confirmed that there was no interest on the part of parents at all. At the same time, 8 teachers noted that only half were interested in their child's academic performance.

The survey also revealed an ambiguous opinion about the objectivity of formative assessment for EFL students studying online, where 20 people noted the "50/50" option, which contrasts between their agreement and disagreement (see Picture 3).



To what extent would you agree that formative assessment of academic performance of students' learning online is not objective?

30 ответов

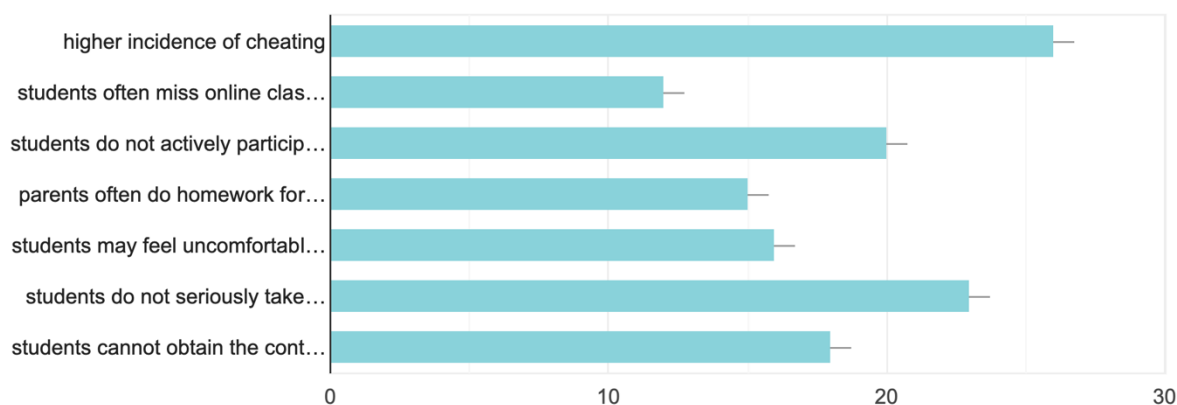


Picture 3. Teachers' opinion regarding objectiveness of formative assessment.

Based on this, the following reasons were identified, reflected in Picture 3 (see Picture 3).

Please, indicate the reasons why it may not be objective

30 ответов



Most of the teachers noted that the traditional format of lessons is superior to the online format – 15 people, 14 people noted the "50/50" option, which correlates between the option of full agreement and disagreement, where in the second case only 1 person held the opinion that online lessons are superior to the offline format. In addition, there is also an ambiguous opinion of parents about the evaluation of formative.

As for conducting a semi-structured interview and its results, the analysis will be given below.



Answering the first question about whether teachers were satisfied with conducting lessons in an online format, 6 respondents answered negatively, and 4 people answered positively. In addition, almost all participants noted that there was low activity in the lessons, and that the material was absorbed late. Since the middle classes are taught according to the EFL program, 8 of the teachers surveyed noted that they noticed a deterioration in the language skills and competence of a foreign language among students, and only two noted that there were no obvious changes.

Following from the interview, 5 teachers replied that they had previously used formative assessment and 5 noted that they had not had to resort to such an assessment method.

Discussion

The main issue of the semi-structured interview was to identify the main disadvantages of conducting this assessment, among which it was noted that there were problems with understanding the operation of online platforms, since 4 teachers were closer to the advanced age from 40 to 55 years, which did not allow them to fully master computer technology. Of the significant disadvantages, it was also noted that due to the large number of people, it was quite difficult to assess their involvement without conducting real interaction and evaluating from the outside in real time, since many of the students were in the mode of disabled cameras, despite the strict requirement to be visible during the lesson. In addition, all 10 teachers noted that assessing skills through online testing for formative assessment was the only alternative, but this did not guarantee an accurate result, since it is quite possible that students used third-party help and did not answer the questions themselves.

During the survey, it was also found that many teachers experienced difficulties with conducting a formative assessment, where only a small number noted that there were no difficulties at all, or they were insignificant. This may be due to several criteria: this is the fact that most teachers had large classes, which made it difficult to implement this assessment, especially considering that previously a relatively small number of teachers conducted knowledge assessment through formative assessment.

Many have noted that language skills are important criteria, and this, in my opinion, is the most relevant answer, since EFL learners, in order to fully master the material, must have a language minimum to understand and master the lessons. Regardless of the fact that almost half of the teachers also evaluated activity in the lesson, which should also be encouraged, without



having at least basic skills, the assessment of knowledge can vary significantly.

Since many teachers have noted that the most common reasons for the lack of objectivity of this assessment of the online learning format is a high degree of probability of cheating, as well as a low level of responsibility in relation to the perception of classes in an online format, this may also justify ambiguous answers about the assessment of the objectivity of formative assessment. Moreover, another most popular reason was noted that students do not have the opportunity to fully learn the material in an online format, which also justifies the answer that traditional learning, at least in high school, is the most productive and effective compared to online learning.

The survey showed that only 9 parents were completely satisfied with the results of the formative assessment, while the majority noted that parents were completely dissatisfied and complaints were observed, namely 11 people. 10 people held the opinion "50/50".

Conclusion

Summing up the results of this research work, it was found that among the 40 teachers who participated in the qualitative and quantitative analysis with regard to formative assessment and adapting to it among EFL secondary school learners, most experienced some problems and had no previous experience in using this assessment method.

In addition, the results remained unsatisfactory, as shown by the responses of both teachers and parents, based on the practice of evaluation. All sorts of minuses and shortcomings were listed, and the formative assessment among Uralsk secondary school students could not be accurate for sure due to the fact that the assessment is not objective enough.

However, for future research, it is worth taking into account another age group, for example, high school or university students, which may show different results and compare them, comparing whether age affects these criteria.

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