

IMPACTS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ON PEDAGOGICAL ENGLISH MAJOR'S LEARNING MOTIVATION AT TEACHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITIES IN VIETNAM

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Abstract: The motivation of students to study is crucial to a teaching process, which contributes to shaping student's attitude vis-à-vis what he/she is learning. Formative assessment, together with curriculum content design and teaching methodology, is recognised as one of the key factors facilitating motivation enhancement. The insights of formative assessment lead stakeholders to the right decision whether to apply formative assessment in one another way. A study on formative assessment literature gave a theoretical frame to mirror how the reality meets criteria. To investigate this reality, we conducted a survey of 116 lecturers and 228 students at three teacher education universities in Vietnam based on Yamane Taro's simplified sample selection formula. Then the data were analysed by using the software SPSS to produce the percentage, mean value and standard deviation of each answer group. The results show important positive and negative impacts of formative assessment on English major's motivation. Thence some solutions are suggested to improve student motivation and the quality of English teacher-student training.

Keywords: Formative assessment; motivation; teacher-student; English major.

1. Introduction

Student motivation has become a major preoccupation of all stakeholders in a training process. It may not be a determinant of student achievement but contributes to improving greatly student's learning results. Several authors have spent a lot of time studying its representation and impacts on all aspects of the training process and suggest a great number of solutions to enhance student motivation. However, in the specific context, student motivation is manifested and strengthened in a particular way.

The motivation of English students to learn is also interested by many educators, the formers have shown a lot of strengths over others but they sometimes stay inert during their studies. How to motivate them to study assiduously and effectively is a big question. In each stage of the training process, educators can have a plan and techniques to motivate their students to work better. Assessment, one of the important stages of the training process, impacts on student involvement in their studies.

Among different forms of assessment, formative assessment outstands over others. It does not aim at grading student's work but gives feedback on student's achievements, strengths, weaknesses, etc. in order to help them improve in a timely manner to get good final results. By conducting the formative assessment, normally in various types of tests, educators can encourage students to involve in all activities with enjoyment and responsibility. In this research, we would like to investigate the reality of formative assessment implementation, its impacts on student motivation and then find ways to improve student motivation by promoting the advantages of formative assessment.

A great number of studies on formative assessment have been conducted in Vietnam in particular and in the world in general. The issue of formative assessment's impacts on student learning motivation has been also studied and results have contributed to the improvement of student's motivation. However, this question is opened without any detailed research in the field of teacher-student training in Vietnam. In fact, the formative assessment facilitates English teacher's and student's adjustments in their teaching and learning activities on a daily basis. These adjustments have been made individually and spontaneously. There is no scientific and systematic research on the impacts of formative assessment on pedagogical English major's motivation to help teachers and students to improve their knowledge, skills, and attitude during a training programme. Such a reason gives a ground for this paper to be conducted and contributes to satisfying the crucial needs for learning motivation for English teaching students in Vietnam.

2. Literature review

2.1. Formative assessment

Many scholars have defined the construct of formative assessment, with a focus on its meaning and objectives, since its inception in the 1960s. Formative assessment, according to Black and Wiliam (1998), Lorna Earl and Steven Katz (2006), Brookhart (2007), Ahmed, Nisreen and Teviotdale, Wilma (2008), Aranda S. Yates P. (2009), Kathleen M. Cauley, and James H. McMillan (2010), Eccleston and Davies (2010), Laight Jean, Asghar Mandy and Aslett-Bentley Avril (2010), Ian Clark (2010), T. L. Larkin (2014), Filisetti, L. & Wentzel, K. (2006), Bui Minh Hien, Nguyen Vu Minh Hien et al. (2019), Dang Ba Lam (2003), Nguyen Huu Loc, Phan Thi Mai Ha (2018), Tran Thi Tuyet Oanh (2016), Ho Thi Nhat (2018), etc., is more than recording the results achieved after a learning process; it also helps optimise learning outcomes. Throughout the teaching process, formative assessment is carried out. Formative assessment, as described by Kathleen M. Cauley and James H. McMillan of Virginia Commonwealth University, is a process in which assessment-elicited evidence of student learning is gathered and instruction is adjusted in response to feedback. Nguyen Cong Khanh (2014) described the formative assessment as a tool that aims to find mistakes, provide feedback, encourage the learning process, orient/instruct students to study, and orient/instruct teachers to teach in his book "Syllabus on competency-based assessment and testing in education". In addition, formative assessment aids in the monitoring and improvement of educational quality. While various implications exist, researchers agree that formative assessment, like other assessments, occurs during the training process and is known as an informal assessment to evaluate students' success at a specific point in the training process. Formative assessment is used to enhance teaching and learning activities, as well as to assist students and other stakeholders in adapting their process to achieve the learning outcomes of training programmes and to improve training efficiency. According to Kathleen M. Cauley and James H. McMillan, if the information from the observations and questions to students is accurate, the teacher identifies instructional adjustments that can help improve student learning. In this way, formative assessment is integrated with instruction and ideally provides a seamless process of assessment followed by further assessment and instruction (cf. Fig. 1).

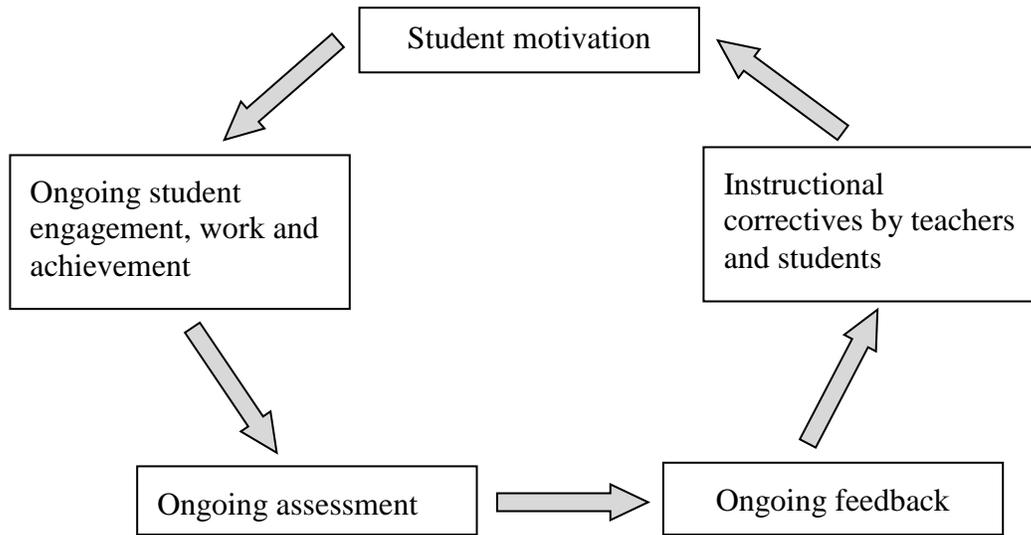


Fig. 1: *Formative assessment cycle*

2.2. Motivation

Motivation is defined as a set of needs that drives a person to act in order to achieve previously set goals. To achieve his or her objectives, the individual must mobilize both internal and external powers. Alain Lieury and Fabien Fenouillet (1997) in “Motivation and school success” recognized motivation as the whole of biological and psychological mechanisms which allow launching of orientation action (toward a goal or contrarily to avoid it) and finally that of intensity and persistence: more we are motivated, more the activity is great and persistent. Motivation is concerned with energy, persistence, and equifinality - all aspects of activation and intention, according to Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci (2000). The growth of students’ cognitive competencies can generate and enhance motivation, as Veronika Thurner, Daniela Zehetmeier, Sabine Hammer, and Axel Böttcher (2017) discovered in their research.

Motivation is produced by the interaction between an individual and his or her environment. It greatly affects people’s mental state and their working results. Motivation is regulated by cognitive engagement and perseverance as results of the source of motivation; including the perception of the value of the activity, competence, and controllability (Viau, 1994). These indicators of motivation were also offered by Viau as contributors to the improvement of motivation at work in general and at university in particular. Gardner’s motivation construct in the foreign language teaching focused on two components, integrative and instrumental motivations. The integrative motivation is associated with a positive disposition towards the foreign language group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community. The instrumental motivation is related to the potential pragmatic gains of foreign language proficiency, such as getting a better job or a igher salary (Gardner, 1985).

Researchers identified two types of motivation that affect student engagement in different ways, that are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Ryan and Deci (2000) defined intrinsic motivation as a construct describ[ing] this natural inclination toward

assimilation, mastery, spontaneous interest, and exploration that is so essential to cognitive and social development and that represents a principal source of enjoyment and vitality throughout life” and extrinsic motivation as “the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome, [which] contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. Extrinsically motivated behaviours are the ones that the individual performs to receive some extrinsic reward or to avoid punishment, with intrinsically motivated behaviours, the rewards are internal (e.g. the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one’s curiosity) (Zoltán Dörnyei, 1994).

3. Research methodology

3.1. Survey population

The survey was conducted at Ha Noi National Education University, Vinh University, and Ho Chi Minh City Pedagogical University in 2021. There are 127 teachers and 1,350 students, to determine the survey population, the author used Yamane Taro’s simplified formula. The Yamane sample size states that:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N.e^2} \quad (1)$$

where n is the minimum sample size of teachers and students, N is the underlying population size and e is the acceptable sampling error that was 0.1 (10%) with a confidence level of 95% and $p = 0.5$.

So the determination of the minimum sample size of teachers surveyed was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{127}{1+127.0.1^2} = 55.94 \quad (2)$$

The minimum sample size of students surveyed was as follows:

$$n = \frac{1350}{1+1350.0.1^2} = 93.10 \quad (3)$$

From (1), (2), and (3), we found that the minimum sample size must be 56 people for teachers and 93 people for students to assure the confidence level. As result, we decided to select randomly 116 teachers and 228 students from three universities from three areas of Vietnam (North, Centre, and South).

In addition to the survey, we conducted interviews of nine teachers at three universities mentioned above to study more profoundly the research question.

3.2. Interpretation of survey and analysis methods

We used a questionnaire to investigate the impacts of formative assessment on student motivation in this study. The questionnaire consists of five questions that look at formative assessment impacts on English majors at pedagogical universities. The questionnaire was given to 116 teachers and 228 students from three pedagogical universities known as Vinh University, Ha Noi National Education University, and Ho Chi Minh City Pedagogical University. The data were analysed using SPSS software to determine how formative assessment affected student motivation in Vietnam and what can be improved to maximise the benefits of formative assessment during the teaching/learning process. The data treated produced confidential values of percentage, mean value, and

standard deviation of each answer group based on which we interpreted all figures and clarified the reality of formative assessment impacts on pedagogical English student motivation. Additionally, the questionnaire was accompanied by interviews with randomly selected teachers in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the issues in question. The interviews included questions related to five major impacts of formative assessment on student motivation. The interviewees gave more details of the answers and comments on which level students were motivated. The questions were open and focused on students' shortcomings and strengths for further consideration to suggest solutions.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Results from the survey through a questionnaire

As expected to find out the impacts of formative assessment on student motivation in the English education programme, we based on the theory of formative assessment and motivation to carefully build up five questions that aim to evaluate the level of formative assessment influence on student motivation. Accordingly, five typical factors were surveyed. The results indicate that formative assessment strongly affects the motivation of students to study with the percentages ranging from 69.83% to 94.83% for teachers, meanwhile these rates varied from 70.61% to 85.53% for students. It is also clearly seen that the majority of teachers and students highly agreed with the second impact (Assisting students in promoting their strengths and controlling their weaknesses) and the third one (Helping students be more responsible for their educational advancement) of formative assessment on their motivation to study at 91.38% and 94.83% for teachers; 75.88 % and 85.53% for students respectively. Looking at the data for the fifth impact known as facilitation of student improvement of study achievements and shortening the gaps between real results and expected outcomes, it is evident that most teachers and students admitted that it also influenced their teaching/learning activities. 74.14% of teachers and 74.12% of students recognised this percussion, which represents a large part of the subjects questioned. It probably suggests involved stakeholders to use formative assessment to better improve student's performance and assure their outcomes prescribed in the curriculum design. Another important element which contributes to changing the attitude of teachers and students towards their teaching/learning is their adjustment when getting the results of the assessment. The percentages of teachers and students who agreed with the effect of these results on their adjustment accounted for 71.55% for teachers and 73.68% for students. This element was set as one of the primary goals of formative assessment, but it affects student motivation less than some others. The last indicator and the lowest motivation promoter is the intensification of inner value awareness which gained two thirds of answers favouring its impact on student motivation, accounted for 69.83% for teachers and 70.61% for students.

Besides positive feedback on impacts, there is also a part of teachers and students who were confused with the impacts. The percentages varied from 5.17% to 29.31% of which high rates go for students' answers. Two indicators got the lowest percentages of unfavourable answers are related to the promotion of student strengths, control of their weaknesses, and assistance of students to be responsible for their educational advancement at 8.62% for teachers, 11.84% for students, and 2.17% for teachers, 22.81%

for students respectively. The highest percentages of confusion consist in the first factor referred to as student awareness of their inner values with 29.31 % of teachers' answers and 27.19% of students' answers.

In contrast, the number of disagreement feedbacks is relatively low ranging from 0.89% to 2.63%. In fact, just a very limited rate of teachers and students who do not think that formative assessment affected student motivation at 0.86% in the first factor for teachers and 1.32% to 2.63% for students. Surprisingly, six out of 228 students, equivalent to 2.63% and the highest percentage of disagreement, did not think that the promotion of their strengths and control of their weaknesses as a result of formative assessment impacts on student motivation. The lowest rate of disagreement in the student category goes for the intensification of students' responsibility for their educational advancement, at only 1.32%.

Furthermore, the index of standards deviation fluctuates in acceptable levels from .442 to .511, which shows the confidence of data collected and student's answers reflected correctly the reality. Different data indexes illustrate the level of formative assessment impacts on student's learning and motivation. It is obvious that formative assessment contributes to improving student's performance in different ways.

The table below showed how factors impacted on student motivation:

<i>Impacts of formative assessment on student motivation</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Statement</i>						\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>
		<i>Agreement (3)</i>		<i>Confusion (2)</i>		<i>Dis-agreement (1)</i>			
		#	%	#	%	#	%		
1. Helps students understand their inner values.	Teachers	81	69.83	34	29.31	1	0.86	2.69	.483
	Students	161	70.61	62	27.19	5	2.19	2.68	.511
2. Assists students in promoting their strengths and controlling their weaknesses.	Teachers	106	91.38	10	8.62	0	0.00	2.91	.282
	Students	195	85.53	27	11.84	6	2.63	2.83	.442
3. Helps students be more responsible for their educational advancement.	Teachers	110	94.83	6	5.17	0	0.00	2.95	.222
	Students	173	75.88	52	22.81	3	1.32	2.75	.466
4. Supports students adjusting their learning activities with accurate, detailed, and useful feedback.	Teachers	83	71.55	33	28.45	0	0.00	2.72	.453
	Students	168	73.68	55	24.12	5	2.19	2.71	.499
5. Facilitates student improvement of study achievements and shortening the gaps between real results and expected outcomes.	Teachers	86	74.14	30	25.86	0	0	2.74	.440
	Students	169	74.12	54	23.68	5	2.19	2.72	.497

4.2. Results from interviews of teachers

The results from interviews indicate that all factors raised have affected English student motivation. The levels of impact varied depending on the importance of each factor. Actually, the priority was given to the promotion of students' strengths and improvement of their weaknesses. According to the interviewees, this helped them a lot to engage students in classroom activities and other complementary assignments in a volunteer way. A lecturer at Ha Noi National Education University stated *"we focus on organising a variety of learning activities with the purpose of encouraging students to learn assiduously and invest more time in enhancing their strengths and coming over step by step their weaknesses to maximise their academic performance"*. By applying different techniques, teachers could figure out each student's strengths, encourage them to promote these strengths, and motivate students to work better and get favourable achievements. Besides, teachers also analysed impacts and stated that these impacts encouraged students to make positive adjustments in their learning activities and plans based on the accurate feedback from different actors (teachers, education managers, classmates, or students themselves (self-assessment)). A lecturer from Vinh University indicated that *"We actively and promptly gave feedback about student's achievements and drawbacks based on which they could adjust their learning activities and plan conformable to their learning outcomes previously set"*. Furthermore, they appreciated formative assessment's support to facilitate student's responsibility for their educational development. Once students recognise their achievement at some points of time, they are aware of what they need to improve to achieve their educational goals, then they make their own detailed plan in order to make sure they can meet the expected learning outcomes.

Regarding student's awareness of their inner values, teachers thought that some students neglected their inner values. Their experience suggested some long-term actions from different stakeholders to help students understand and develop fully their inner values. This was recognised by a lecturer from Ho Chi Minh Pedagogical University as *"we highlighted the inner values of students by promoting their creativity, autonomy and self-determination in order to help them understand their personal values and make these values their strengths. This helped students improve their intrinsic motivation"*.

An additional comment from teachers is that formative assessment in Vietnam is formal rather than informal because all student's works are graded according to regulatory documents from higher governments. This contributed to demotivate students to work because they just crammed for examination but not creatively constructed their responses.

5. Solutions to improve student motivation

The motivation of students to work, either intrinsically or extrinsically, remains a crucial question in teaching and learning the English language at higher education institutions. The questionnaire and interviews revealed a certain lack of teacher and student awareness of motivating factors, which depreciates some of the formative assessment values. Some solutions which may support student motivation will be suggested ulteriorly.

- Formative assessment should be treated as informal as its nature. The goals of formative assessment are to give accurate feedback to students, teachers, and other stakeholders so that the latter can adjust their activities rationally. Formative assessment never gives grades to students in all cases. By doing so, they can take advantage of formative assessment to enhance student's achievements, innovate teacher's methodology and curriculums, and encourage students to invest time and energy to complete their assignments. In addition, the fact that examiners give accurate feedbacks to students helps them be aware of their limitations and advantages to re-draw their plan in response to the expected learning outcomes. These feedbacks are considered as guidelines for their success.

- The strengths, weaknesses, and inner values should be comprehended by students. There will not be any motivation if students do not understand what they have to improve and how they can do it. In this case, teachers should enable students' cognition of their values, encourage them to make effort to improve these values and enjoy learning. To achieve this goal, teachers need to diversify classroom activities, and evaluate accurately students' strengths, weaknesses, and inner values in a very individual way, which convinces students that they are fully cared for in terms of their educational progress.

- Teachers and other stakeholders should design formative assessment content and method which favour student's responsibility for their educational advancement. Self-assessment and peer-assessment should be prioritised since these assessment methods mobilise student's abilities, autonomy, self-esteem, and self-determination. When students understand and enhance these qualifications, they are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated.

- Another important issue should be the shortening of the gap between student's real performance and what the expected learning outcomes set as criteria. To solve this problem, teachers and other stakeholders should consider to designing the formative assessment scheme and what students must achieve at a certain time of the training process. A matrix of formative assessment content and scheme is needed before the training starts and it should be published to all involved stakeholders. A clear plan and content will motivate students to make effort to achieve the goals.

- Through the results of formative assessment, teachers should reward students who show great improvements in their study to encourage them to make more effort. The reward is a factor of extrinsic motivation and can be prepared in different forms.

6. Conclusion

Formative assessment is largely used in the world with relevant features which favour student motivation and academic achievements. In the framework of this research, we studied the impacts of formative assessment on English teacher-student learning. The results showed some shortcomings in formative assessment application at Vietnamese higher education institutions, especially in teacher education. Regardless of the training method used, educators should rely on frequent progress evaluations to identify students' deviations, tardiness, or mistakes so that they can adjust their shortcomings as soon as possible. This mission could be covered by formative assessment. Finally, teachers must analyse the reality of the training environment, learning schemes, and learning results in

order to use formative assessment flexibly, efficiently, and in a timely manner. Students are more inspired, adaptive, and advanced when they are formatively evaluated and given enough feedback, according to studies.

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TÓM TẮT

ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA ĐÁNH GIÁ QUÁ TRÌNH ĐỐI VỚI ĐỘNG LỰC HỌC TẬP CỦA SINH VIÊN ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM TIẾNG ANH TẠI CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM VIỆT NAM

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Tạo động lực học tập cho sinh viên là vấn đề cốt lõi trong quá trình dạy học, góp phần hình thành thái độ học tập của sinh viên. Đánh giá quá trình cùng với thiết kế nội dung chương trình đào tạo và phương pháp giảng dạy được xem là một trong những yếu tố chính hỗ trợ tăng cường động lực học tập cho sinh viên. Nhận thức đầy đủ về đánh giá quá trình giúp các bên liên quan đưa ra quyết định phù hợp về việc áp dụng đánh giá quá trình. Nghiên cứu về lý luận đánh giá quá trình làm rõ khung lý thuyết để xem xét mức độ đánh giá thực tế đáp ứng tiêu chí đánh giá. Để tìm hiểu thực tế, chúng tôi đã khảo sát 116 giảng viên và 228 sinh viên tại 3 trường đại học sư phạm Việt Nam dựa trên công thức tính mẫu gián lược của Yamane Taro. Dữ liệu khảo sát được xử lý bằng phần mềm SPSS để tính tỷ lệ phần trăm, giá trị trung bình và độ lệch chuẩn của mỗi nhóm câu trả lời. Để khẳng định kết quả khảo sát, chúng tôi thực hiện phỏng vấn sâu 12 giảng viên tại 3 trường đại học nói trên với các nội dung chi tiết. Kết quả cuối cùng thể hiện các tác động tích cực và tiêu cực của đánh giá quá trình đến động cơ học tập của sinh viên đại học sư phạm tiếng Anh. Từ kết quả đó, chúng tôi đã đề xuất một số giải pháp nhằm cải thiện động lực học tập cho sinh viên và chất lượng đào tạo sinh viên đại học sư phạm tiếng Anh.

Từ khóa: Đánh giá quá trình; động lực; sinh viên đại học sư phạm; sinh viên tiếng Anh.