Focusing On Formative Assessment Techniques To Improve Students' Narrative Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate and demonstrate the effectiveness of formative assessment in developing students' narrative writing skills in English. Data were collected from three schools comprising 50 pre- and post-test students. Formative assessments were carried out during normal activities over five weeks. There was much improvement among the pupils, particularly in the fourth and fifth weeks when it was noticed that they wrote better stories. As this research has shown, teachers need continuous t[1]raining to use formative assessment effectively. In future investigations, it would be interesting to establish how different tests affect a wider range of learners, with a special focus on improving writing.

Keywords: *Formative Assessment, Narrative Writing, Writing Skills Development, English Language Learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing in the national curriculum is seen as one of the categories of literacy development. English has four main skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing. These skills should be developed through language acquisition, multilingualism, respect for civil rights, equality before cultural diversity, understanding of other countries' nationalities and patriotism towards them; democracy; active participation in public life Norwegian (2013); and peace education are some of these areas.

There are four main domains: language learning; oral communication; written communication; culture and society literature. According to Sadler (1989), qualitative judgments about performances where externalizations are allowed may have to be qualitatively unproblematic. In addition, any one purpose for which someone writes could have many purposes since no purpose is exclusive and individuals use language strategically depending on their intentions thus all these objectives come into play at once. From such a standpoint both process-based approaches to teaching have been found useful in raising learners' metacognitive awareness thereby enhancing self-regulatory skills needed for successful writing.

These descriptions include Irons' continuous gathering of information on teaching effectiveness vis-à-vis learning skills, while Clark (2008) defines it as an ongoing process for continuously obtaining data about the quality or state of something to rectify it later. Greenstein (2010) defines it as the systematic way teachers gather evidence, engage students in assessment, use data, and improve teaching and learning.
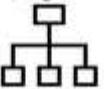
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Assessment for Learning Strategies

Multiple choice	Images	Match up
Give questions based on previous lesson's learning but with options. a) b) c)	Use images to link to conventions or themes being taught. It can then be used to recall the knowledge. E.G. Connotations = think/feel	Matching terms to definitions or criteria to starter sentences can help create a check list for independent tasks.
Cloze activity AKA – gap filling. To consolidate processes, help recall key knowledge, information.	**Check list** Create a list of concrete things to include in an answer or steps to follow. Highlight the proof as self assessment and set own targets.	**Window of Opportunity** Get pupils to highlight a box around a section of their work and ask them to write down a question or for specific feedback on a section of work.
Money points / points Set prices for things pupils should have included in their work. The more challenging criteria... the higher the price! Pupils can see what they 'earnt' and set targets.	**Partner Questions** After teaching some key knowledge ask pupils to write 5 questions for their partner (with the answers separate) Swap questions and mark each others.	**Today. Yesterday. Tomorrow** Retrieval Practice is low stakes AFL. Setting questions that are based on previous lessons, today's lesson and tomorrow's lessons help focus on what has been learnt and also pitching your lessons.
Knowledge Organiser Create own knowledge organiser using a template that pupils can continue to fill: vocabulary, themes, key figures, images etc.	**Jenga** Number a Jenga set and create a set of questions based on the knowledge of your last scheme of learning to match. They get the points on the Jenga Piece if they get it correct. Don't forget to create the Answers too!	**SOLO** Structured Observed Learning Outcomes. 1. Ask – what do you already know? 2. Name 1 thing you've learnt 3. Name as many things as you can that you've learnt 4. Can you link / connect your list in number 3? 5. Can you link your connections to other subjects, real experiences or real life examples?

Teachers often refer to formative evaluation as learning assessment and teaching because they collect information about what students know and can do, identify strengths and weaknesses, and identify areas for growth or improvement after the learning experience against established goals.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To evaluate how effective formative feedback from students on their narrative writing skills can be.

2. To highlight teachers' role in enhancing students' ability to write narratives.

3. To create better awareness and understanding of formative appraisal/feedback among educators that can be used in teaching

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does formative assessment improve middle-level story writing among students?

2. What are some of the teacher's roles that can help enhance student's narrative writing skills?

3. How does information from formative evaluation and reviews improve instructional practice assessment by a teacher?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part of the literature review tackles the theoretical questions that are central to this paper. For this reason, only studies that are applicable and relevant have been considered. According to Blake (2006), formative assessment seeks to look at the process of teaching and learning from a formative angle. Students' peers or students themselves

can disclose achievements thus using assessment formatively as an opportunity for more options and actions to improve student performance.

Formative evaluation is not necessarily formative; it depends on how it is used by teachers and learners. Generally, teachers assess learner achievement using summative appraisal based on test scores or points recommended (Blake, 2006).

Ricky (1973) found out that moderately self-regulated learning could be boosted when preparing for exams through summative tests and tasks. He may need to revise his findings in light of discussions or informal information gotten during class discussion about formative assessment. Additionally, one-on-one consultations with students can further inform his assignments. Teachers can provide feedback to help students develop better understanding principles and skills which may involve changes in instructional techniques and training methodologies (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Mastery learning concept by Bloom (1968) has greatly contributed towards teaching since it breaks down objectives into manageable units with specific goals thereby making them achievable given enough time and right instruction.
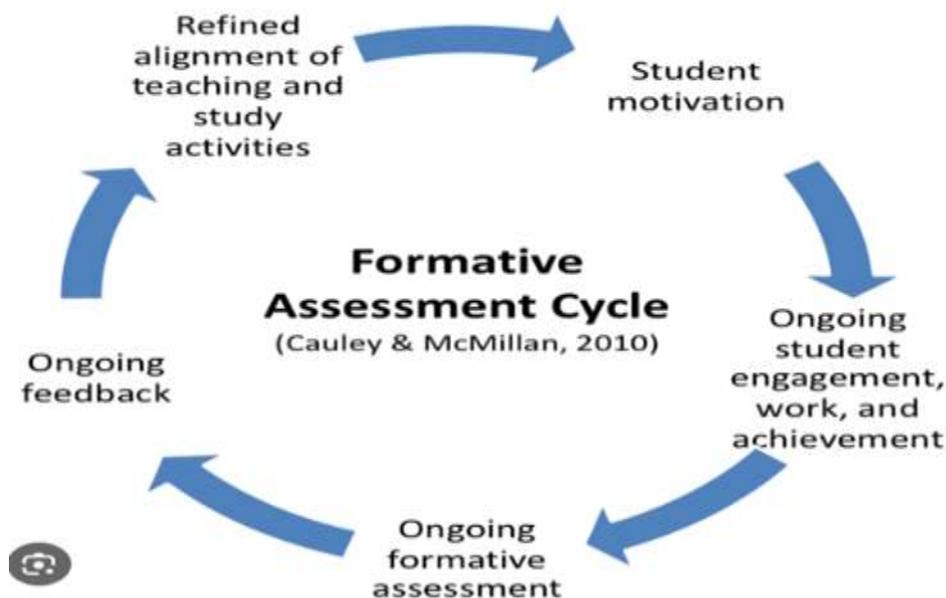
Formative appraisal involves giving teachers feedback about their daily performance on storytelling skills among others where necessary for learners' development while monitoring and correcting mistakes made by them during narration sessions. Teachers should also guide learners through careful reception recording improvement suggestions provided towards enhancing narrative writing abilities besides addressing weak areas shown thereof.

Writing: Theoretical Perspective

Formative assessment aims at enabling students understand how to solve problems as well as learn related strategies (Engh et al., 2007). It becomes part of learning process with active teacher participation anticipated in this regard. The current study focuses on providing student texts with formative feedback to improve their learning. Therefore, discussing theoretical perspectives on writing is important **to** comprehend how writing connects with students' learning processes. Writing theories highlight the interplay between writing and learning, stressing the need for knowledge about writing and learning when evaluating written text

Response Triangle

The 'Response Triangle' (Hoel, 2000) is a cognitive model of writing which explains that different components are integrated and organised at various levels during the process. This view is aligned with the process-oriented nature of English curriculum where writing is also seen as a process. While describing it as a process, the model also treats writing as a product by breaking down text into analyzable levels. Moreover, Hoel (2000) built on ideas from Hillocks(1987) who argued that shifting from lower text levels to global text issues requires considerable mental effort compared to moving from global to local text levels (2000, pp. 33-34).

Feedback

Formative evaluation needs to be understood and used by both learners and teachers hence its feedback component plays an important role. Ramaprasad (1983) defined feedback as information about the gap between actual performance level and desired level which triggers corrective actions aimed at minimizing this difference. He also talked about the "feedback loop" between teaching and learning.I n England's "Know How To Think" project teacher input was one of five successful formative assessment approaches identified.

Main Focus of Written Feedback

Recent research has altered the focus from teacher control to textual aspects that teachers prioritize in their feedback. In L1 contexts, studies on teacher feedback uncovered what teachers comment on. Selected Scandinavian studies are presented for comparative purposes to show similarities in L1 and L2 contexts (Eriksen, 2017; Brorsson, 2007). Norwegian studies (Bueie, 2016; Igland, 2008) mainly concentrated on the global text level while Swedish and Norwegian studies addressed both local and global issues.

METHODOLOGY

Pretest-posttest designs were developed from simpler posttest-only designs to address assignment bias and participant group allocation concerns. Researchers may use these designs in education to assess the impact of a new teaching method on student groups. Other applications include counselling effects assessment, medical treatment testing, and psychological construct measurement.

A pretest-posttest design is an extension of a posttest-only design with nonequivalent groups, which is one of the simplest methods for testing intervention effectiveness. This design involves two groups: one receives the treatment, and the results are collected at the end. In contrast, another group acts as a control and does not receive it but takes similar tests over an equal duration.

Participants

Five schools from District Sialkot that are implementing formative assessments provided participants for this study.

Sample

Surveys are usually conducted when gathering information from the entire population could be more practical. Therefore, in this study, a sample size of 50 students was selected from two middle schools in the region to examine how they develop their narrative writing skills using formative evaluation.

Data Analysis

The analysis was based on four weeks' worth of data about students' narrative writing skills. Evaluating students' papers is not as easy as administering multiple-choice

questions or collecting short answers. Instead, each student's work needs to be carefully examined.

Students learn fast with personalized feedback. Teachers must read each student's work twice or thrice to provide accurate feedback, which takes time. This feedback process is demanding but crucial for student development. Results were tallied and analyzed to understand individual and collective student success better. Improvement was assessed to see if formative assessment was helpful for English language learners. Charts were kept tracking individual student progress (Ferris, 2014; Lee, 2008; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Straub, 1997).

Writing Tasks

Name: .... Class: ....

Date: .... ID: ....

Instructions:

Write your answer on lined paper. Include your ID and the date.

Write smoothly; no cuts or overwriting are allowed.

TOPIC:

Narrate any unforgettable incident of your life that you could never forget.

Narrative Writing Progress Chart

Name: .... Class: ....

Learning Objective: ....

My Score at the Beginning: ....

My Goal: Achieve specific improvements in narrative writing by applying targeted strategies.

Chart Representing Progress

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Wee 4

Using this chart, students reported their output based on the scores received for weekly narrative writing tasks. Students were assigned numbers instead of names.

Table 1

Students roll#	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
1	4.5	5	5	7
2	2.5	4	4.5	6
3	6	6.5	6.5	8
4	5	5.5	6	6.5

5	7	7.5	7.5	8
6	5	5	4	6.5
7	7.5	7	6	8
8	7	5	6	7
9	4	4.5	5	6
10	2	2.5	4	6
Total	50.5	52.5	54.5	69

The four consecutive weeks' scores show how much the change has increased from the first week to the fourth week.

Some students began with low scores. But these grades improved greatly over time as they took formative assessments.

Results of the Students after Pretest

Table 2

No of Students	Spelling mistakes	Command over grammar	Use of language	Expression
1-5	20%	40%	55%	60%
6-10		20-25% 55%	35%	60%
10		30% 45%	45%	45%

The total marks for the four weeks showed a considerable growth between weeks one and four. The learners bettered their marks slowly using formative evaluation.

Post-Test Results of the Students

Table 3

No of Students	Spelling mistakes	Command over grammar	Use of language	Expression
1-5	10%	55%	65%	70%
6-10	15-20%	45%	55%	60%
1		20% 55%	60%	70%

Table 4

	1 below standard	2 approaching Standard	3 meets standard	4 exceeds standard
1 week	50%	40%	5%	0%
2 week	40%	45%	7%	2%
3 week	35%	55%	10%	4%

These results mean that students have improved their performance. They made fewer spelling mistakes than they had in the past, which supports the notion that formative tests help people learn. The latter also allows learners to develop their knowledge and skills while enabling educators to enhance their teaching techniques.

This chart contains information about how well-advanced diploma class students did on various assignments over time. After some time, it became clear that pupils were becoming better at narrative essays. By week four, one-tenth of them met the standard, which shows that formative feedback significantly aids the learning process. The research question was initially formulated: "How does formative assessment affect writing among Advanced Diploma learners?"

Data collected revealed that candidates neither performed excellently nor attained high marks during exams compared to an average student's performance level, according to this study, nor gave analytical answers in reports. However, all other subsequent tests showed a great improvement. Thus, with evaluation being a case of advanced diploma achievement, the next inquiry might be: "At what stage do writing abilities increase or decrease among these students after undertaking formative evaluations?" In response to this question, there has been marked progress based on student performance ratings over different weeks. No student met the standard for the first week, but by the fourth week,

10% met standards, indicating significant growth over time through formative assessments in terms of writing skills among learners.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper discusses formative evaluation methods about traditional teaching methodologies. Learners were subjected to assessments guided by formative principles to establish whether they were applicable. My study relied heavily upon recent data concerning ongoing educational practices and patterns within the curriculum; hence, its grounding within such frameworks would yield the best outcomes.

The findings show specific criteria and conditions under which feedback can be provided for students and teachers through formative assessment processes. This will ensure growth in learners' and teachers' engagement in the learning process. Moreover, many recommendations have been provided based on feedback from active students during the course. These suggestions are essential and can improve teaching and learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From my conceptual and theoretical analysis of the study, I propose several recommendations that will help promote effective teaching-learning processes among all stakeholders;

1. Alignment of Coursework with Learners' Needs: The selected coursework should be tailored to address learners' needs and self-assessment requirements.

2. Peer Participation Promotion: Coursework should foster peer participation through group work activities that enhance the overall learning experience.

3. Skills and Expectations Focus: Coursework should be designed around learner skills set within their expectations, which ensures relevance and effectiveness.

4. Provision of Constructive Feedback: Students need continuous feedback on their performance throughout the learning process to identify critical areas for improvement.

These recommendations seek to create an interactive environment where students and teachers benefit from formative assessment practices. Learners gave positive feedback, feeling that they benefited most from continuous feedback during this course since it helped them overcome their challenges in studying.

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