Formative Assessment Practiced by EFL Lecturers in STAIN Majene

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Abstract

This research aimed to find out (1) how do EFL lecturers perceive formative assessment? (2) How do EFL lecturers practice formative assessment? This research employed a qualitative research design based on a case study approach involving three EFL lecturers in STAIN Majene. Data collection methods include interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. The result of the study showed that (1) the EFL lecturers perceived formative assessment practice mainly as a process of giving feedback for the student's improvement and for adjusting their instruction. and (2) learning targets, monitoring, feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment assisted the EFL lecturers and students in achieving their learning objectives. The present study concluded that EFL lecturers perceived that the experience of implementing formative assessment has shaped their perceptions of EFL lecturers. The EFL lecturers got various and different experiences in practicing formative assessment.

Keywords: *Formative assessment practice, EFL lecturer, perception*

Introduction

Assessments are essential in the teaching and learning process. They informed both teachers and students whether or not learning goals were being met. Assessments provide teachers with information about instructional decisions based on the student's learning needs and students with information about their learning progress and placement. Cowan (1998) stated that assessment is the engine that drives learning. Therefore, the effectiveness of assessment can be used to improve grades, placement, advancement, instructional needs, curriculum, and student learning.

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Specifically, assessments distinguished based on aim and time were summative and formative assessments. Summative assessment occurs at the end of the course to measure performance or what students have learned. On the other hand, formative assessment occurred during daily students' learning activities. It was used for giving information about what the next step in the learning process might be, and students' progress toward a goal, but not for registering results about competence, and it was also used by teachers to make instructional decisions. Knight (2001) confirmed the main distinction between the two assessments by stating that summative assessment was for "judgment" and formative assessment was for "improvement." It was a judgment because students were given their final grades based on numerical feedback. In contrast, the assessment became "improved" when students were given helpful feedback that showed them what they had accomplished and what they needed to do in the future to master the course objectives. According to Brown, Peterson, and Yao (2016), summative assessment is ineffective when compared to comprehensive assessment since it only provides feedback in terms of grades or scores. Therefore, when used effectively, formative assessment was assumed to be more effective than summative assessment. However, formative and summative assessments were important, but they served different functions.

Lecturers needed to give students feedback that assisted them in improving their learning and achieving the aims of learning. Black and Wiliam (1998) stated that feedback is an essential element of formative assessment. In line with that, Sadler (1989) also argued that feedback was the key aspect of formative assessment, but that feedback can only serve a formative function when it is used to close the gap between current and expected levels of understanding. Thus, feedback should be well stated and comprehended by students to encourage them to act on improving their learning.

After reviewing the literature on the study, about the formative assessment practiced by EFL lecturers in online research databases such as SAGE, JSTOR, ProQuest, ScienceWiley, ERIC, and Google Scholar, by using specific terms such as formative assessment practice, assessment for learning, or formative assessment. Only a few studies on the perception and practice of formative assessment in English language teaching have been carried out in Indonesia. To date, there are four studies on the practice of formative assessment that has been conducted in junior high school and senior high school settings. In ELT, the formative assessment used in junior high school and senior high school settings in Indonesia has been researched by Widiastuti and Ali Saukah (2017); Arrafii and Baiq Sumarni (2017); Defianty (2018); Widiastuti, Mukminatien, Prayogo, and Irawati (2020), and certain aspects of formative assessment, such as feedback, monitoring/questioning, self-assessment, and peer assessment, have also been researched. Nevertheless, such a formative assessment practice has not been found in higher education. Besides that, based on the researcher's observation at STAIN Majene, when lecturers and students are involved in distance learning, the lecturers employ feedback in assisting students in the learning process.

However, on a few occasions, students have difficulty understanding the intention behind the feedback spoken by the EFL lecturer. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate how EFL lecturers perceived formative assessment and how EFL lecturers practiced formative assessment. The present study focuses on two research questions: 1) How do EFL lecturers at STAIN Majene perceive formative assessment? 2) How do EFL lecturers at STAIN Majene practice formative assessment?

Formative Assessment

Thompson & Wiliam (2008) argued that students and teachers use evidence of learning to adapt teaching and learning to meet immediate learning needs minute-to-minute and day-by-day. According to Oswalt (2013), formative assessment consists of the following elements: (1) learning objectives: defining learning objectives and sharing success criteria; (2) monitoring: designing effective classroom discussions, questions, and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning. (3) feedback: providing constructive feedback that propels learners forward. (4) empowering students to be the owners of their learning; (5) empowering students to be instructional resources for one another.

Airasian & Russel (2008) argued that formative assessment can take many different forms but that it relies on information obtained through structured formal activities or informal observations made during the instructional process as followed: (1) formal information was gathered through pre-planned questions and activities that were presented during instruction to assist a teacher in measuring a student's current understanding. Formal formative assessment activities provide careful planning and aiming actions throughout the lesson. Formal formative assessment gives teachers detailed information about their student's current understanding and frequently allows students to receive feedback to help in improving their thinking or skills. Formal formative data can be gathered using a variety of techniques, including pre-planned questions, formal activities, student self-assessment, and peer or teacher feedback. Short problems, homework designed to elicit student comprehension or misconceptions, quizzes, essays, and formal observations of laboratory or other hands-on activities were all examples of formal activities. (2) Informal information was intended to modify instruction based on less direct evidence of student comprehension and involvement, such as attentiveness, facial expressions, posture, and student questions.

METHOD
Design and Sample

This research used a qualitative research design based on a case study approach to investigate a bounded system in depth (individuals, activity, event, process). There were nine EFL lecturers, but the subject of this research was three lecturers at STAIN Majene who taught different subjects (Speaking, Reading, and Research Methodology). The subjects

were selected through convenience sampling, a sampling strategy where participants were selected based on their accessibility and/or proximity to the research (Bornstein et al., 2013).

Methods of Data Collection
Interview

A structured interview was utilized to acquire in-depth information. Fourteen questions were used to determine the lecturers' practices and perceptions in conducting the formative assessment. Seven questions addressed the participants' perceptions of formative assessment, and seven questions concerned the participants' practice of formative assessment. The researcher employed a semi-structured interview to gain EFL lecturers' perceptions about the formative assessment based on Defianty (2018).

Observation

The researcher employed an observation checklist in observing the formative assessment based on Oswalt (2013) to gain insight into how EFL lecturers put their views about formative assessments into practice. There were five aspects of formative assessment that concerned them, namely: learning targets, monitoring, feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment.

Document

Various types of documents were used as the data source to contribute to the researchers' understanding of what was happening in the classroom. It contained an authentic assessment that captured students' work samples, lecturers' feedback samples, and lecturers' assessment instruments.

Data analysis

The triangulation method was used to analyze the data qualitatively. Miles and Huberman's (2014:11-14) qualitative data analysis used, which consisted of three stages: (1) data condensation (the data from a recording of class observation and the interview was transcribed into a written transcript), (2) data display (transcribing the data display based on formative assessment aspects by Oswalt (2013) and formative assessment perception and practice by Defianty (2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Perception of Formative Assessment

During the interviews, the EFL lecturers were asked about the characteristics of formative assessment to reveal their knowledge and understanding of formative assessment. The experience of implementing formative assessment has shaped the perceptions of EFL lecturers. The EFL lecturers got various and different experiences in practicing formative

assessment. Therefore, their perceptions are different from one another. Every single EFL lecturer who had a part in this research has a generally positive perception of formative assessment. Almost all EFL lecturers defined formative assessment as giving feedback for the student's improvement and adjusting their instruction. As an evaluation process, it requires lecturers to discover their and their student's strengths and weaknesses in their teaching and learning process to ensure the sustainability of improvement. Furthermore, the current study found that EFL lecturers assumed that formative assessment was a process for the students in identifying, responding, and fixing input given by EFL lecturers. In the process, the lecturer examined the students' progress in understanding what has been learned and identified the students' learning needs. In line with that, McManus et al. (2007) stated that formative assessment is a circular, continuing process involving evaluations of student work and behavior, feedback, and instructional/learning adjustments (sometimes called "instructional correctives"). It is implied that formative assessment assists EFL lecturers and students to adjust and improve learning to achieve learning targets. The data interviews also showed that EFL lecturers shared, clarified, and understood learning targets with the students. Simon and Taylor (2009) stated that it is essential that learning objectives are not only shared but also clarified and understood by teachers and students, because teachers and students may have different perceptions of the expected learning outcomes. Jiang (2014) stated that comprehensible, simple, and content-oriented questions should be prepared. From observational data, the researcher found that L1, L3, and L2 stated that they checked students' understanding and prior knowledge, through questioning strategies after explaining the teaching material. EFL lecturers considered that questions and repetition after questioning assisted them in examining the students' understanding.

The practice of Formative Assessment

It was found that there were five aspects of formative assessment that EFL lecturers used. They are learning targets, monitoring, feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment.

Learning Target

William et al. (2004) stated that communicating learning goals encourages independent learning provided students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and they work towards learning goals. EFL L1 and L3 lecturers gave lecture contracts and explained learning objectives to students at the first meeting. They describe and implement learning targets based on the semester lesson plans in every meeting. The learning objectives are presented in the form of PowerPoint and, they shared, clarified, and understood the learning objectives together with students in teaching and learning activities. This is to ensure the suitability of students' understanding of the learning targets. However, it was found that L2 did not use lecture contracts and semester lesson plans in every meeting. L2 only informed and describe to the students about learning targets at each meeting and assigned the students

to complete their tasks so the learning objectives could be achieved. Oswalt (2013) argued that it is important for the lecturer to make certain that students understand the learning targets for each activity. he also asserted that lecturers should address potential misunderstandings regarding the criteria of learning success.

Monitoring

Monitoring is the effective classroom discussion, questions, and learning tasks to acquire evidence of students' learning to improve learning. Pinchock and Brandt (2009) pointed out that EFL lecturers need to choose and organize assessment instruments that are suitable for their teaching and learning context. Throughout the observation stage, it was found that EFL lecturers, L3, L2, and L1 asked questions as a strategy to monitor the students' current understanding. Oswalt (2013) stated that the question is the way an EFL lecturer monitors students' learning. Then, it was found that EFL lecturer L1 communicated a practice test (pre-test and post-test) that will be showing the students' evidence of learning. Oswalt (2013) stated that the EFL lecturer needs to assess whether the student possesses a conceptual understanding of the subject matter.

Feedback

It is necessary to provide effective feedback that moves students' learning forward after completing a learning task. Because feedback assists in improving students' learning. Kluger and Denisi (1996) defined that when students receive feedback, they react with one of the following responses: change behavior, change goals, abandon the goal, or reject feedback. Throughout the observation stage, it was found that EFL lecturers L1, L2, and L3 described students' strengths and suggests strategies when continued learning. They had given feedback and based on that feedback the student took positive action to enhance their learning. EFL lecturers gave feedback to the students individually and orally on the given tasks it is because the students have different competencies. Oswalt (2013) stated that the EFL lecturer has an important role in providing feedback to make students make an action to improve their learning and the EFL lecturer should describe the specific areas of needed improvement. Marzano (2001) highlighted that feedback is "the information loop between the teacher and the students that provide students with an awareness of what they should be learning and how they are doing. Specifically, Hattie and Timperley's (2007) explained that feedback models should be used to facilitate learning, they are feed-up (the comments made on the learning objectives), corrective feedback (comments on errors and correct forms), and feed-forward (comments on the next step in performance by presenting more challenging tasks to work on, which may lead to a deeper understanding).

Self-assessment

Self-assessment is encouragement and assistance so the students take control and are responsible for their learning. From observation data, it is shown that EFL lecturer L1 wanted

the students to assess themselves. And, in the process of the individual assignment, L3, directed students toward self-assessment of their competence. Then, in the individual assignment, L2 directed the students by asking follow-up questions that required the student to self-assess their completed work. According to Boud (2013), effective self-assessment occurs when students apply standards and make judgments about how well they meet those standards or criteria. all of the EFL lecturers realized the importance of self-assessment in the teaching and learning process.

Peer assessment

Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwell, Van Merriënboer, and Martens(2004) emphasized that assessment criteria should be discussed before peer assessment of the students, and used to assess and provide feedback to their peers. Peer assessment provides opportunities for students to learn and help one another as a source of information and feedback in the teaching and learning process in achieving learning objectives. L1 and L3 utilized peer assessment in pairs and groups so that students can share, discuss, and learn with their peers or groups. Besides, L1 and L3 also asked questions to the students in the whole class about their opinion after a student or group had presented their certain tasks so the students can give feedback. However, L2 did not utilize peer assessment because he thought that it would not be relevant to the subject that he taught and he is the most competent in giving feedback. So he made himself a peer to the students. L3 also asked questions to the students in the whole class about their opinion after a student or group had presented their certain tasks so the students can give feedback. The findings showed that all of the EFL lecturers realized the importance of peer assessment but they still need to provide assessment instruments in improving the students learning as a one of source learning.

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that EFL lecturers perceived that the experience of implementing formative assessment has shaped their perceptions of EFL lecturers. The EFL lecturers got various and different experiences in practicing formative assessment. Therefore, their perceptions are different from one another. Every single EFL lecturer who had a part in this research has a generally positive perception of formative assessment. Almost all EFL lecturers defined formative assessment as giving feedback for the student's improvement and adjusting their instruction. As an evaluation process, it requires lecturers to discover their and their student's strengths and weaknesses in their teaching and learning process to ensure the sustainability of improvement.

Formative assessment practices assisted the EFL lecturers and students in achieving their learning purposes. But in the process, there are aspects of the formative assessment that have not been carried out. The result revealed that L1 and L3 lecturers gave study contracts and explained learning objectives to students at the first meeting. They described and

implemented learning targets based on the semester lesson plans in every meeting. However, L2 did not use lecture contracts and semester lesson plans in every meeting. L2 only informed and describe to the students about learning targets at each meeting. They checked the students' understanding when they have completed a task and after lecturers explain the teaching material through questioning strategies, assignments, and tasks, used feedback orally, and used Google Classroom feedback in writing. However, they are different in how they practice it. L1 wanted the students to assess themselves. L3 directed students toward self-assessment of their competence. L2 directed the students by asking follow-up questions that required the student to self-assess their completed work. L1 and L3 utilize peer assessment in pairs and groups so that they can share, discuss, and learn with their peers or groups. However, L2 did not utilize peer assessment for the students because he thought that it would not be relevant to the subject that he taught and he is the most competent in giving feedback.

Suggestion

The EFL lecturers are suggested to effectively utilize students' self-assessment and peer-assessment skills for the students. For example, to prepare for establishing criteria for self-assessment and peer-assessment activities that students can use. Thus, students can manage their learning and can accept criticism from one another as a learning source.

The researcher who wants to conduct similar research, should enrich add the number of participants, check students' perceptions about the lecturers' practice of formative assessment, and investigate students' self-regulation as a result of formative assessment guidance.

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