

What do they really see when they observe? Novice teachers' use of observation as formative assessment

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OUTLINE

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- Observation as formative assessment (FA)
- The study
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- Implications

Formative Assessment: A brief overview

“to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning”

(Black et al., 2004, p. 10)

→ Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Formative Assessment (FA)

- “all those activities undertaken by teachers—and by their students in assessing themselves—that **provide information** to be used as **feedback** to **modify** teaching and learning activities.
- Such assessment becomes formative assessment when ***the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet student needs***”

(Black & Wiliam, 1998b, p. 140)

FA Cycle

McMillan 2018

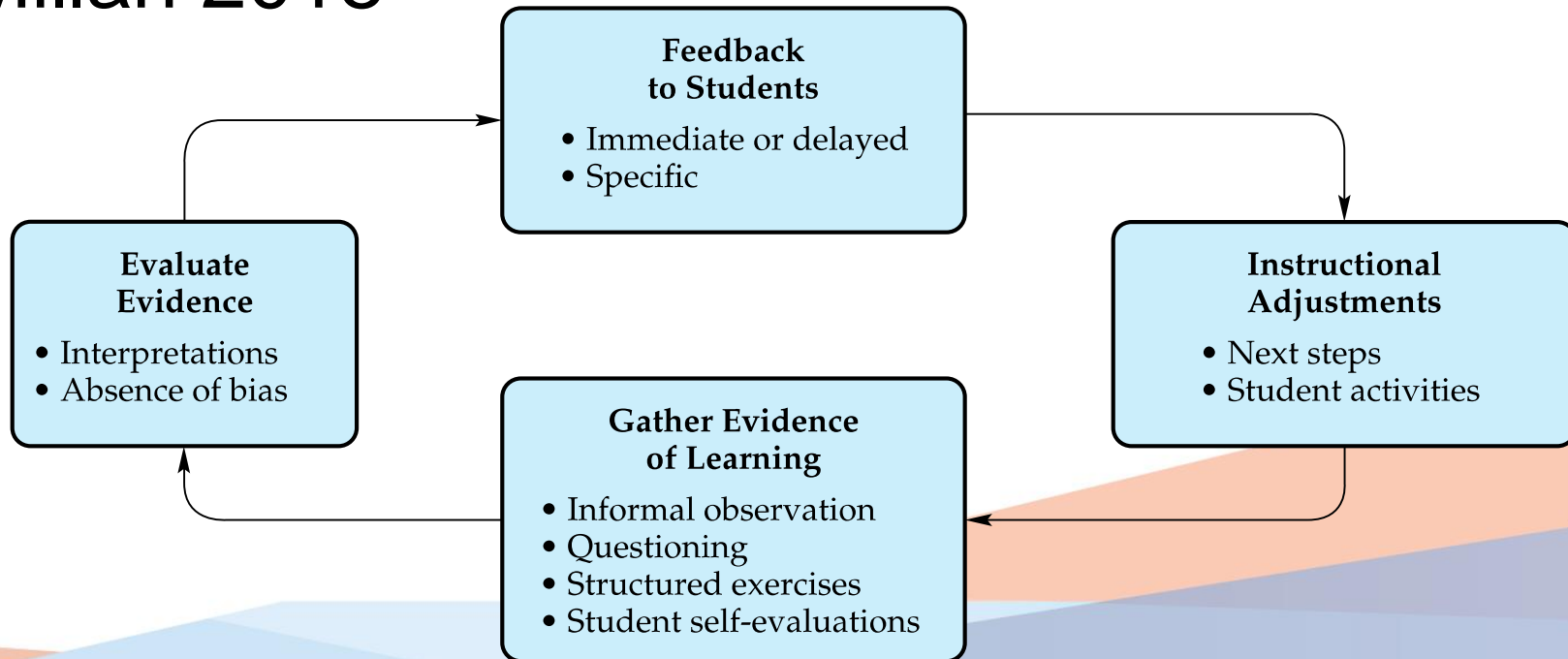


FIGURE 4.1 Formative Assessment Cycle

Formative Assessment: Implementation

- **Significant differences** in FA perspectives and practices (Deneen et al., 2019)
- Key features
 - Teachers and students **co-establish** learning targets and success criteria
 - then actively use assessments to provide self-, peer-, and teacher-feedback on students' progress toward the established targets

Stiggins (2002); De Luca et al. (2019)

Formative Assessment: Implementation

(Formative) Assessment-driven pedagogy

- (a) Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning outcomes and success criteria
- (b) Engineering effective classroom discussions, questions and tasks that elicit evidence of learning
- (c) Providing feedback that moves learners forward
- (d) Activating students as instructional resources for each other
- (e) Activating students as owners of their own learning.

FA implementation

- Letter (procedural) vs. spirit (pervasive/ maximal) (Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Swaffield, 2011)
- Low-level vs. High-level (McMillan, 2010)
- Limited vs. extended (Carless, 2011)

FA Possibilities

McMillan 2018

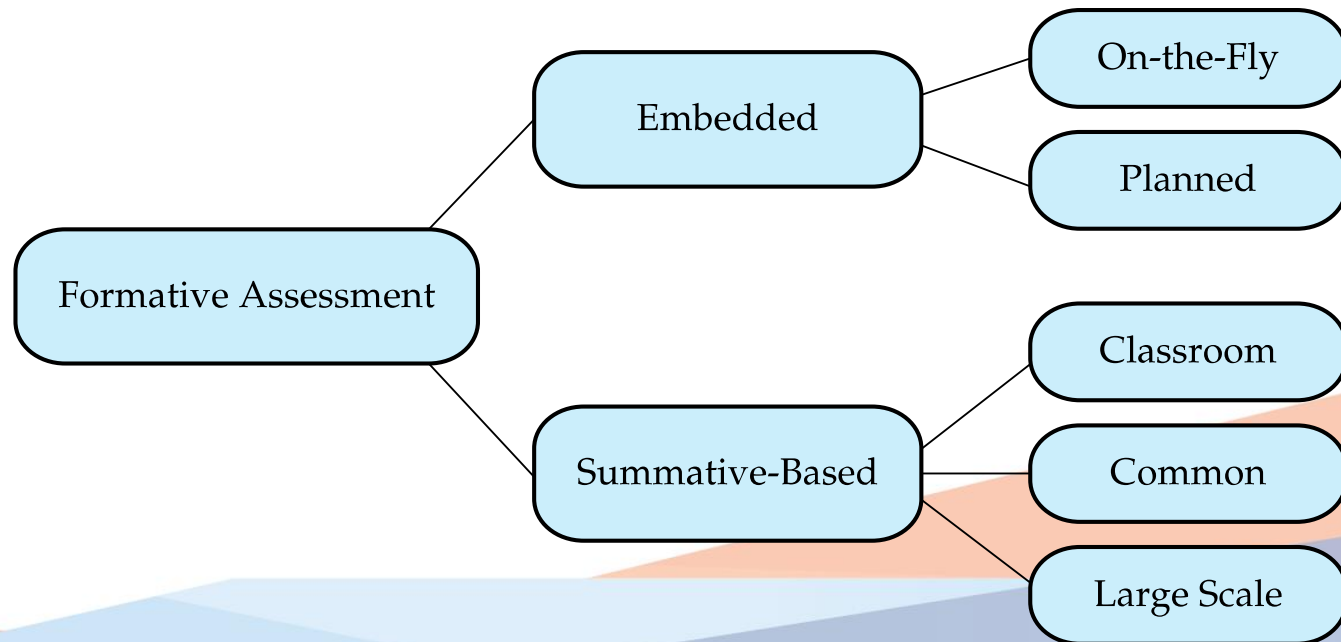


FIGURE 4.2 Different Types of Formative Assessment.

Observation as FA

- Observation as an FA tool

“Assessment for Learning is part of everyday practice by students, teachers and peers that seeks, reflects upon and responds to information from dialogue, demonstration and **observation** in ways that enhance ongoing learning”

Klenowski (2009; p. 264).

Observation as FA

Two types of observation (Maxwell, 2001)

- Incidental observation
 - Embedded in learning & teaching activities
 - May (not) be used for formal assessment & reporting
- Planned observation
 - May occur in the context of regular classroom activities or as part of a formal assessment task.

Observation as FA

- Observation can make assessment become more **comprehensive, connected, contextualized, authentic, and holistic** (Maxwell, 2001; Gipps, 1994)
- Arguably one of the most pervasive assessment activity (McMillan, 2018)
- Recommended by guidelines >< Seriously under-researched

The Study: RQs

RQ1: How often did the participants make use of observation for FA?

RQ2: What were the purposes of their observation episodes?

RQ3: To what extent were the observation episodes aligned with expected learning outcomes (i.e. course/ lesson objectives)?

The Study: Methods

- Design

Case study research (CSR)

- (mainly) qualitative approach
- a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time
- multiple sources of data

The Study: Methods

- Why use CSR?
 - complex issues where the boundary between the issue of interest and **context** is not clear-cut (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2014)
 - embraces a range of methods (Thomas, 2011)
 - essential conditions to understand the “how” and “why” of an issue (Yin, 2018)

The Study: Methods

- Data collection (Part of a PhD project)
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Classroom observation
 - Stimulated recall (interview based on stimuli)
- Data analysis
 - within-case analysis followed by cross-case analysis (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014)
 - from inductive to deductive analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

The Study: Context

- Research site
 - Lingua (pseudonym)
 - Foreign language specializing university
 - English Faculty: ~ 2000 students/ ~100 teachers
 - Students major in ELT or translation/ interpretation
 - Entry A2+ (L2) - Exit: C1 (L5)

The Study: Focal participants

Thuy

- MA in Applied Linguistics (AU)
- 2 yrs (Lingua) (+ teaching in VN + AU)
- EAP course (Reading – Writing)
- 2nd -year students (Target B2+)

Nam

- Bachelor of TESOL (VN)/ current MA student (VN)
- 2 yrs (Lingua) (+3)
- GE course (Listening – Speaking)
- 1st-year students (Target: B1)

The Study: Findings

- RQ1: How often did the participants make use of observation for FA?

Participant	Session	No. of episodes	Min.	Max.	Mean
Thuy	R1 (01:22:30)	16	4 sec.	4 min. 31 sec.	83 sec. (1 min. 23 sec.)
	R2 (01:18:20)	11	6 sec.	3 min. 54 sec.	44.18 sec.
Nam	S1 (01:15:46)	7	7 sec.	6 min. 27 sec.	151 sec. (2 min. 31 sec.)
	S-L2 (01:05:22)	10	12 sec.	1 min. 56 sec.	50.33 sec.

The Study: Findings

RQ2: What were the main purposes of those observation episodes?

- Maintain discipline & student engagement (15 episodes)
- Check students' progress on an assigned task (13)
- Check understanding & following of instructions (10)
- Check quality of students' work (9)
- Record errors for delayed feedback (6) (Nam only)

The Study: Findings

RQ2: What were the main purposes of those observation episodes?

- Multiple purposes esp. in extended episodes (mini-episodes)
- Combined with other FA tools: Oral questioning, feedback (esp. instant)

The Study: Findings

‘Anatomy’ of an extended observation episode

Thuy – R1

- Walked to the end of the class
- Stopped & bent over a student on the next-to-last table to check her work. Made no comment.
- Moved on to the next table.
- Moved to the other side.
- Gave **instant feedback** on a student’s work on the last table.
- Got back to her desk, asking students on her way ‘**Are you alright?**’

The Study: Findings

RQ3: To what extent were the observation episodes aligned with expected learning outcomes?

* FA implementation: “Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning outcomes and success criteria”

>< ‘It’s just my habit ...

I didn’t think much ...

I felt quite neutral’ (Nam, SR)

The Study: Findings

- Promising but remains ...

... limited FA implementation (procedural)

Concepts	Thuy	Nam
FA	Assessment during the learning process	... tests that can measure progress during the learning process
CA	... assessing things like participation and attendance... attitude in the class... progress and also tests ... oral assessment ... and observing students not written tests ... something like feedback

Implications

- Implications for initial teacher education (ITE) programs
 - More focus on FA esp.
 - + FA tools (incl. observation)
 - + procedural (low-level) vs. maximal (high-level FA)
 - E.g. Observation ~ learning outcome
 - Observation → modified instruction/ feedback

Implications

- Implications for institutional leaders and policy makers
 - An environment that is conducive to FA (incl. observation)

E.g. A separate score for teacher observation?

→ More systematic observation

→ Better students' motivation

Implications

- Implications for researchers

How can FA (incl. teacher observation (T.O)) be implemented in a Confucian-heritage education system like Vietnam?

(Cf. Leong et al. 2018 – AfL in East Asian countries)

How can T.O complement summative assessment?

What models could be used to develop teachers' observation skills?



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