Carried out at the end of learning: Perceptions of the Formative Assessment

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	Abstract. Formative assessment in language learning is inevitable. The differences between formative and summative assessment do not only lie in the time when the assessment is carried out. The differences might be examined by the purposes why the assessment is conducted. This study aims to gather information about the implementation of formative assessment in the classroom. Seven open-ended questions were distributed to 100 participants in an online survey. Eighty-three responses were gathered and analysed qualitatively. The findings showed that there are different perceptions of formative assessment with formative assessment on the policy. The participants indicated that the assessment practices focused more on gaining scores than on providing positive feedback to the students. The new curriculum that emphasises more formative assessment of the pedagogy practices might be failed to be implemented in the classroom.
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INTRODUCTION

Informal stream of values, norms, traditions, beliefs, and rituals that have developed over time as people work collectively, work out problems, and face challenges refer to as "school culture" according to Peterson and Deal (1998: 28). In their later book, Deal and Peterson (2016) emphasised the importance of determining the school culture whereas school is a place to promote learning. Throughout the years, some studies had discussed the link between student achievement and school culture (e.g., Cunningham, 2003; Demirtas, 2010; Koçyiğit, 2017). Through an assessment perspective, Birenbaum (1996) argued that the school culture can be divided into testing culture (TC) and assessment culture (AC).

The impact of assessment on pedagogy is a topic of great interest in the academic world (Havnes, 2004; Guskey, 2007; Birenbaum, 2016; Oyinloye & Imenda, 2019; Puspitasari, 2020). The connection between

curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy is often depicted as a triangle, indicating their interrelatedness. Ideally, assessment and pedagogy should align with the curriculum to ensure that teaching and assessment methods are suitable for the desired learning outcomes. However, this is not always the case due to various reasons, which can have serious implications for students learning. The high-stakes nature of TC, which includes judgments that affect students' future and the status of teachers, schools, and even countries, is one of the reasons why assessment is not always aligned with the curriculum.

The testing itself becomes high-stakes, and the use of results may and can be a major goal on the curriculum, learning, and teaching (Shohamy, et.al., 1996; Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Sukyadi & Mardiani, 2011; Tsagari, 2011; Ali & Hamid, 2020). The traditional culture of testing emphasizes technical issues such as standardization and reliability, which can limit what is assessed. In an accountability era where students or schools are compared to one another, the emphasis is on ensuring that assessment is carried out, scored, and understood consistently for everyone, which can compromise assessment validity (Jennings & Bearak, 2014). It thus could lead the teachers to teach to the test and deflate high stakes testing score while the students adopt a surface approach to learning, which can negatively impact their motivation. Furthermore, a great emphasis on the test can jeopardise the validity of the results (Davies, et.al., 2003), as was common in the past when the Indonesian government organised standardised testing called *Ujian Nasional* (National Examination).

The new Indonesian Minister of Education, Culture, Research, Technology and Higher Education that managed education abolished the National Testing policy a few years ago. He also introduced the new curriculum called *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar* (Curriculum of Freedom to Learn). This new curriculum put forward many policies that can be said more related to AC (Clifton, 2023). The handbook describes learning and assessment as a cycle in which the assessment provides details on the needs of learning to be developed and the assessment is then used to evaluate the efficacy of the learning that is currently taking

place (Badan Standar, Kurikulum dan Asesmen, 2022). Formative assessment is the main assessment to be used while summative assessment can be used or not based on discretion by the teacher. The most important thing is to make sure assessment can be used as help to learn so the students can achieve the learning purpose (CP). The Ministry proposed that curriculum, teaching and learning process, and assessment be matched with a constructivist underpinning and objective based on a theory by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). The guideline of learning and assessment from the Ministry also suggested that assessments focus more on the role of assessment and the development of instructors' and students' ability for self-reflective judgement.

The concept itself showed a clear dichotomy between what can be called formative assessment and summative Assessment. The handbook from the government iterated that assessments can be formative and summative. Formative assessments can be in the form of diagnostic assessments before learning and assessment in the learning process. Diagnostic assessment supports differentiated learning so that students can get appropriate learning with what they need. Meanwhile, formative assessment throughout learning can be used as a foundation for reflecting on the entire learning process. It thus will be implemented as a reference for planning learning and revising when needed. If teachers felt that the students have achieved the learning objectives, then educators can continue to the next learning purpose. However, when learning objectives have not been achieved, educators need to strengthen them first. Next, educators need to conduct summative assessments to confirm the achievement of the overall learning objective. Formative and summative itself translated as functions and objectives of the assessment. The handbook clearly stated that the result of a formative assessment is used for feedback on learning, while the results of the summative assessment are used for reporting learning outcomes. There is thus a precaution that formative assessments are designed for learning objectives analysis and should not be used to determine the grade in the report of students, level promotion and graduation decisions, or other important decisions. Here we can see

that the new curriculum wants that in the beginning and for learning or feedback purposes than teachers need to do formative assessments. The summative only has the purpose to confirm the knowledge known to the teachers know about their pupils in classroom learning. However, summative needs to be done as it has a function to support the decision unrelated to practice in the class. The policy and the implementation suggested such intention of the Ministry of Education in Indonesia want to change its assessment culture to AC. In this case, even suggest the summative assessment result did not show the score but by description.

Effective implementation of AC depends on how policy is carried out. A group's or organization's application of any guideline or principle to direct its decisions and actions is frequently communicated as "official texts articulating the intentions of central authorities to guide the actions of participants" (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007: 208). However, there is no guarantee that such intentions will be carried out. Christie and Fierro (2012) found that the relative relevance of policies in educational systems and the actual scientific results supporting their execution is not balanced. Even though education policies are in large programmes and have a big impact, not much empirical research has been done to better understand how education policies are construed and implemented by teachers whose work they are expected to affect. Several scholars have emphasised the significance of tracking the change from policy adoption to policy implementation (e.g., Morris & Scott, 2003; Christie & Fierro 2012; Cerna, 2013; Birenbaum, et.al., 2015; Viennet & Pont, 2017). One can anticipate significant diversity in policy execution given the variations revealed in the conception and enactment of assessment guidelines. As a result, it seems even more crucial to be able to track how assessments are being used to make sure that they adhere to the guide's letter and spirit.

The definition becomes important on the exploratory understanding of how the policy is implemented. If the teachers even cannot clearly describe the meaning of the assessment intended by the policy, we can evaluate that the assessment is more likely not carried out as intended (Bennet, 2011). Teachers who are not able to interpret the

policy in their own context, how will they know what to focus on in the classroom?

This paper scrutinizes two interconnected topics as proxies for understanding the teachers in Indonesia already move from testing culture to assessment culture, designated as follows: the AfL definition and the relationship with formative assessment. Both topics are valuable in exploring what assessment they know of and what the teachers presented as knowledge about assessment asked by policy and what they know about it. The objective of this research is to promote better implementation of AfL and formative assessment.

METHOD

This paper reports on the perceptions of AfL and formative among teachers in Indonesia. Questionnaire data from teachers have been collected online. The questionnaire was distributed in May 2023. Eighty-three respondents joined the open-ended questionnaire asking about the definition of assessment for learning, the difference between assessment for learning and formative assessment, a form of assessment for learning implemented to the participants' students, the difficulties experienced by the participants in implementing assessment for learning at school and how the participants integrate digital technologies with the implementation of assessment for learning. Thirty-five English teachers were among the respondents. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the open questionnaire answers based on the questions given.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data were analysed to examine the perceptions of teachers on the implementation of AfL in the classroom. The findings are divided into two parts: the definition of AfL and the relationship between it and formative assessment.

The Definition
In this study, many teachers show tendencies that they are employed in a system of education that faces accountability demands and in the environment of a testing culture. AfL is thus considered to be

important on the political agenda more than the educational agenda which in the end the educators caught up to only superficial rhetoric statements about AfL as an important method to increase learners' test grades not for students' learning. Less consideration is given for interpretation based on what and why AfL was created but more on the function as a tool or key to successful performances of students based on expectations at the countrywide and intercountry levels. In this case, the survey with open-ended questions is likely to have functioned as a formative assessment and become useless to some teachers. Some educators care more about how to show how they can cater to the "right" answer to the question than provide me insight on how they understand what AfL is.

Many answers can be said to copy and paste from the web on what AfL is. In the end, we can find that many answers in the survey with the open-ended method have duplicates with the exact words. The one that cannot be possible except they copy-paste from one source. This is shown that the rhetoric of testing culture where educators care more about testing results is quite big at the top of the minds of many educators. In this study, the teachers showed how they caught on concerned about the necessity to guarantee demands from external, such as the need to get the right answer, are met. The decisions that some teachers shown here make show how they are usually succumbing to external pressure and decide to 'teach to the test'. The actions in the classroom can guarantee better scores for making sure students can get the right answer on the test but do not promote sustainable learning or provide students with a meaningful path to knowledge finding.

The meaning of AfL in most answers also showed that the meaning of AfL is not about feedback or reflection but about measurement. They said:

"Assessment carried out after the learning process is complete".

"Assessment to measure learning carried out at the end of learning".

"It is about knowing the students' achievement and performance".

"Grading carried out after the learning process is complete".

"The action or an instance of making a judgment about something".

It is much about evaluation, grading and measurement. A minority of around two people said about feedback. Meanwhile, no one said about reflection except the educators who copy paste the answer from the web.

The conceptualization and definition of AfL is a vital aspect in its effective implementation. As a result, teachers think of AfL in terms of performance monitoring. According to James and Pedder (2006), teachers do not always practise what they value in assessment, which might lead to an emphasis on student outcomes in scores rather than learner improvement in knowing the language. The three pillars of AfL practises were discovered by the Learning How to Learn project: increasing pupil autonomy, making learning explicit, and focusing on learning. The challenge for teachers was balancing the need to monitor performance with various assessment practices that can increase learning. In line with this study, Puspitasari and Pelawi (2023: 4) clearly argue that "neoliberal educational reform creates a specific type of person controlled by competition and focuses on a narrow definition of success based on outcome only".

Time was identified as a significant issue in the examination of the impacts of altering assessment practices. The willingness and acceptance of the protracted timeframe associated with implementing reform when the influence on learning may not be immediately apparent are required. Time is required for reforms to become established in practice, but there is often pressure in Indonesia to move on to other initiatives, as evidenced by the saying that "minister changing means changing curriculum changing."

The Relationship

While there are teachers aware of the concepts of AfL and formative assessment like those provided by one of the respondents:

Although the concepts of Assessment for learning

and Formative Assessment are often used interchangeably, there are actually differences between the two. Formative assessment is an evaluation technique carried out during the learning process to help students and teachers monitor and evaluate student progress. Formative assessment is often used to provide feedback to students about their performance and to provide directions to teachers about corrective steps to be taken next. Meanwhile, Assessment for learning is a broader concept, which includes not only evaluation techniques but also pedagogical principles and practices that support effective learning.

However, shown by most of the answers, many teachers responding to the study that the relationship is frequently misinterpreted:

assessment for learning is carried out during learning and formative assessment is usually carried out at the end of learning.

assessment for learning is carried out after the learning objectives are completed, while formative is during learning.

assessment for learning is generally about measuring learning outcomes, while formative assessment is one of the measurement models.

Assessment for learning is to measure learning but in various forms, while formative is in the form of tests.

As evidenced by many of their responses, teachers frequently misinterpret the concept of what these assessments bring by placing a strong emphasis on performance evaluation or judgment rather than on promoting learning. This is particularly evident that most of them emphasise on the dichotomy between the two assessments. There are none that bring the difference based on literature said but mostly about the difference of objectives as one of AfL or Formative acted as helper to summative.

The hegemonic power dynamics between instructors and pupils also result from teachers' lack of theoretical knowledge of AfL and Formative principles. The judgment emphasis on the values unintentionally encourages teachers still to play a dominant position in the learning process as shown in this precept:

Assessment for learning can be carried out during the learning process including observing students' attitudes and activeness while formative assessments are carried out at the end of learning to measure student understanding.

Even though assessment for learning and formative assessment have the same purpose but they are different in the assessment process. In the formative test, it carried out in the middle of the semester or in a certain time through the test, while assessment for learning can carry out within a period of time and the instrument to test is not simply an objective test but a classroom observation that can also be involved.

Additionally, the assessment's "paradigm shift" conveys a shift from its initial emphasis on reflection to a continued emphasis on students' value. The continued hegemonic power ties between educators and learners can be understood as an extension of the lack of communication between them. As a result, there have been numerous missed chances for student involvement and learning as many teachers continue to view evaluation and feedback as a monologue.

This emphasis on information dissemination and this kind of hegemonic relationship counters the initial intent of both assessments. The goal of the Merdeka curriculum has always been also to switch from teacher-centred to student-centred learning. While the use of learning objectives is considered essential to the planning and design of curricula, students were required to take on more responsibility for creating their own learning by better comprehending what it is they were learning. This is especially evident in the constructive alignment of the curriculum, and it is seen as a crucial component of formative AfL.

There are teachers who have shown a clear grasp of the need to use a form of assessment that aligns with AfL paradigm:

Ask students to write notes about learning and learning control.

Group discussion provides an opportunity for students to share their understanding of the subject matter, discuss ideas, and provide feedback to one another. Group discussions can also be a means of developing social skills and critical thinking skills.

One form of AfL that can be given is a simple

discussion about case studies, which can hone students' critical thinking and writing skills.

However, they are in minority. The answer above almost shown all teacher who have the consideration that AfL about two-way communication of assessment format. Most of the other only shown that AfL is one way:

Quiz

Provisions of exam questions such as multiple choice, essays or projects

Giving assignments both in writing and practice

There are various forms of learning evaluation that can be given to students/teachers, such as homework, presentations, projects, and quizzes.

Test, asking questions and game.

For now, I still use traditional assessment.

Diagnostic, formative, and summative. E.G. Final Test

We want to draw attention to the fact that many teachers instinctively adopt a hegemonic position when it comes to feedback, focusing on the dissemination of knowledge rather than meaningful engagement with it. Students frequently are assigned the passive role of waiting for and absorbing criticism from lecturers, while instructors regard themselves as the feedback provider. Students are not encouraged to perceive feedback as having a clear and active role for them in accepting responsibility. In fact, as demonstrated, teachers treat students with a customer-like attitude implying feedback as something that should be "given" rather than a component of the learning conversation.

Only what the teacher observes from things like class activities, assignments, homework, and exam performance cannot allow the teacher to really build valid hypotheses on the students' learning. The extent to which teachers can find practical coherence in students' behaviour over various sources and circumstances provides stronger support for the validity of their hypotheses. As a result, each teacher-student contact offers the chance to present and enhance the beliefs about what a student understands, what they

can do, which parts of learning progress they need to develop, and what approach the teachers should be implemented to scaffold the improvement. Thus, the two way-dialogue would be more beneficial to the teacher in making the learning process more meaningful.

'Formative assessment' and 'assessment for learning' (AfL) are worldwide terms that are frequently used within educational contexts (Klenowsky, 2009). Several definitions of AfL and formative dominate in these discourses. However, the interpretations and applications of these meanings in educational policy and practice frequently reflect a misunderstanding of the fundamentals and a distorting of the practises that the original goals meant to advance. Part of these misconceptions and difficulties are caused by definitions that are still vague. Others have been the result of a desire to appear to be adopting the idea while applying a series of superficial or mechanical practises without the teacher's and, most crucially, the student's active participation with knowledge learning as the primary focus. Others have developed because of the political exploitation of ideas that have had strong backing from academics. For example, 'deciding where The learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there' (Klenowski, 2009: 263), has been from time to time (mis)construed as an encouragement to teachers make formative as a (summative) test for students on the level they can achieve on standardized national testing and or school test. In this setup, grades, which are projected to be proxies for, or markers of, learning, instead become the main objectives of learning. It is not learning for knowledge but instead learning to be better on the test. It cannot be said real learning and sustainable on making students become lifelong learners.

Contrarily, formative assessment's main goal is to support learning itself. This makes sense given the axiom that learning that has taken place will show in performance. The opposite is not true, as passing an exam with good grades does not prove that you have learned that much knowledge. It is possible to teach students how to perform well on exams without much underlying knowledge. Formative and AfL is about the course of action on finding knowledge by learning and using evidence

from assessment to improve learning and teaching, primarily as identification for enrichment of the course of action. The centres right on the student's developing competencies, while developing capabilities themselves. It looks for, examines, and considers information provided by learners, teachers, and the student's peers as it is communicated through conversation, student responses to questions and assignments, and observation. Formative assessment is a part of routine instruction in routine classrooms.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study showed the relationship between cultural beliefs and the implementation of formative assessment in the learning environment. The participants' responses to open-ended questionnaires indicated that the policy enacted by the Indonesian government concerning the assessment might need to observe more deeply towards the practices. The assessment for learning emphasised in the *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) curriculum encourages educators to focus on the improvement of learning rather than learning for the test or gaining high scores. Providing positive feedback to the students in the formative assessment or assessment for learning can create a supportive environment for students to improve their learning and skills. Assessment must emphasise genuinely becoming friends and helpers to learn for students and teachers, rather than simply making an enemy beat by learning. In this accountability era and in the environment of testing culture, teachers have challenges to create sustainable learning.

The responses gathered from the participants suggested that the data given might not be original and valid as they have the potential to gain answers from online sources rather than their own beliefs. Therefore, further study is needed to examine the participants' perceptions of how to put the assessment theory and policy into practice. Conducting the study with qualitative, quantitative or mixed approaches in different settings depending on the needs of researchers are possible to gain data from different perspectives and contexts.

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