

Reframing Formative Assessment Practices in Emergency Remote Teaching Context of English Language Teaching in Higher Education institutions Indonesia

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Abstract. Providing learning evidence can be very challenging, especially in the context of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). ERT emerged as one of the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak that has imposed teachers to conduct a major shift from face to face to online teaching. The barriers in attaining assessment data may derive from a lack of technology literacy and an unsupportive ecosystem. This study explores students' perceptions of how teachers should conduct formative assessments in ERT in the context of English language teaching in Indonesia. 193 participants from two Islamic universities in Indonesia were involved in this survey design research. Findings from the study revealed that students opt for formative assessment strategies, such as clarifying learning outcomes, establishing learning activities that can accommodate all students, and providing effective feedback to be implemented during ERT. Interestingly, this study found that students do not consider their involvement as a crucial part of the assessment process; hence, it raises a question on the role of technology in promoting autonomous learning.

Keyword: Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), Educational Technology, English Language Teaching, Formative Assessment

1 Introduction

Due to the threat of COVID-19, many educational institutions need to undergo an abrupt migration from face-to-face to online teaching and learning. This major shift has posed several problems in the Indonesian context, especially on students' and parents' dissatisfaction with the learning mode. Substantially, a considerable literature has grown up around the theme of the role of technology in education or educational technology. Roblyer and Doering [1] defined educational technology as "a combination of the process and tools involved in addressing educational needs and problems, emphasizing applying the most current tools: computers and electronic technologies".

The past decades have seen increasingly rapid advances in the field of educational technology. Various technological-based education concepts have emerged, namely: ICT, blended learning, digital learning, distant learning, and online learning. Despite their different

labels, the rationales of integrating educational technology are relatively similar: technology enhances learning because it provides valuable learning resources and thus supports learning [2]–[5]

Recently, a new form concept of educational technology is emerging, entitled Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT, hereafter). Hodges, Moore, Locke, Trust, and Bond [6] referred to ERT as “a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery model due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated”. The definition implies that ERT is substantially distinct from online learning in which, in terms of design, the course is carefully designed, and it is implemented by choice. Nonetheless, despite the challenges ERT can be needed to be improved, assessment can be one way to improve ERT; as Bakia and Murphy [7] explained, online assessment can provide information about students’ learning state.

A considerable literature has documented the pivotal role of assessment in improving learning. Broadly defined, assessment is a systematic process of collecting data about students’ learning progress [8]–[13]. Substantially, assessment can be divided into two streams: formative and summative assessment. Although both streams are equally important, much of the literature maintains that teachers should focus more on formative assessment because it provides valuable learning evidence that can be used for learning improvement daily [14]–[17].

The prominent role of formative assessment can be attributed to Black and Wiliam [18]; they gathered 250 publications on classroom assessment dated from 1987 to 1997. They concluded in their seminal article that formative assessment has the potential to improve learning. Subsequent studies on the same learning field have also revealed similar findings; it is now well established from various studies that formative assessment offers several benefits such as motivating students, informing them about learning progress and enhancing their achievement on external tests [19]–[22]. Furthermore, Ash and Levitt [23] point out that teachers also get benefit from formative assessment.

Black and Wiliam [18] defined the formative assessment as follows:

...all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.

This definition raised questions about what activities could be categorized as a formative assessment and what could not. Despite various attempts that scholars have made to clarify the definition, a consensus has not yet been reached. However, many have agreed that the key point of formative assessment is its purpose of improving learning. Pinchot and Brandt [24] affirmed that formative assessment is not confined to particular assessment instruments such as tests, dialog journals, or portfolios; rather, it depends on how teachers (and learners) use the results from those assessments to adapt teaching-learning if it is necessary. Further, Wiliam and Leahy [25] formulated what they referred to as ‘formative assessment strategies’:

- 1 Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning
- 2 Engineering effective classroom discussion, questions, and learning tasks;
- 3 Providing feedback that moves to learn forward;
- 4 Activating students as the owners of their learning;
- 5 Activating students as instructional resources for one another.

This research aims to uncover students' perceptions of how assessment should be carried out during ERT. Another purpose of this research is to identify students' challenges during ERT. This investigation will enhance our understanding of how assessment should be carried out in the ERT context. Eventually, the assessment will benefit learning regardless of the means or the context.

2 Methodology

This study aims to explore the role of technology in ERT, specifically in the assessment process. In line with the purpose of the research, a survey research design which is defined by Creswell [26] as "procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population. Among the two forms commonly used for collecting data for survey research design."

The questionnaire was selected over interviews to collect data for the study between the two research instruments commonly used in survey research design [27]. The questionnaire was adapted from Oswalt [28]. It is divided into two sections: participants' demographic information and the participants' attitude towards applying technology in ERT specifically for formative assessment purposes. The study involved students at two English Education Department in two universities in Indonesia; of the study population, 193 subjects completed and returned the questionnaire. The participants were those who had experience learning in the ERT program.

3 Findings and Discussion

This research aims to identify students' perceptions of teachers' formative assessment practices in ERT. Findings from the study showed that the majority of the participants would prefer their teachers to apply formative assessment strategies. For example, the participants thought that teachers should inform them about the course's aim and what is expected from the task that the teachers assigned. Further, the participants pointed out that teachers need to provide clear and specific example before giving the task, as they stated in the questionnaires:

*In my opinion, jika sistem online masih berjalan alangkah baiknya pada saat dosen mengajar harus menyertakan contoh. Cara ini agar kita sebagai mahasiswa mudah memahami materi pembelajaran kuliah online.
(In my opinion, if we are still using online learning, it will be better if the teachers provide examples. By this, it will be easier for us to learn the materials online).*

Lecturers should teach and guide the students, give the assignments, and give the material detail, especially the subject that hard and difficult to understand the theory.

In my opinion, in this condition, the assessment should be clear or more specific by giving the assignment specific details, so misinterpreted never happened. Sometimes the students don't understand the instructions of the assignment. The students need more details of the instructions.

Furthermore, most of the participants highlight the presence of feedback provision from every task that the teachers assigned; as they stated on the questionnaires:

In my opinion, and also in my case that I need feedback from the assignment. Some assignments did not have feedback, so sometimes it makes me confused like; did I do this task correctly? The thing is I need feedback. For the assignment, I think the assignments should correlate with the material, so the purpose of the assignment is to make us as the student to understand the material.

Menurut saya, assessment bentuk apapun bisa digunakan dalam learning program, dan akan sangat berarti kalau dosen/guru memberikan feedback. (In my opinion, any assessment can be used in a learning program, and it will be meaningful if the teacher provides feedback).

Another participant stated that teachers' feedback should be based on the assessment criteria, which is provided before giving the task. On the questionnaire, one of the participants stated:

*In my point of view, penilaian yang dapat dilakukan, terutama ketika sedang dilakukannya online learning program, seharusnya dosen juga menyertakan rubrik penilaian yang lengkap dengan letak kesalahan serta saran bagaimana untuk memperbaikinya. Hal ini dapat membantu mahasiswa utk mengetahui dimanakah letak plus minus dari work mereka.
(In my point of view, assessment can be carried out online; the teacher should include a holistic rubric and also suggestions on how to improve learning. Thus, students' will be aware of their strengths and weaknesses).*

Surprisingly, none of the participants mentioned the necessity of students' involvement in the assessment process. Also, the most surprising result is that the majority of students considered teachers should include their attendance and participation as part of the assessment process; as they stated in the questionnaire:

The assessment should be based on students' struggle to learn, their attendance, active participation in meetings, and the accuracy of their answers based on what they have learned. While studying, lectures have to make sure that his/her students understand the material or the instruction

*In my opinion, sebaiknya penilaian di lakukan dengan cara dosen melihat siswa yang sering hadir di mata kuliahnya lewat online di berikan nilai yang seperti telah di tetapkan dosen itu sendiri.
(In my opinion, it will be better if teachers include students' attendance as part of the assessment).*

Dengan melihat kehadiran siswa melalui tanggapan siswa misalnya menyukai bahan ajar yg di share atau memberikan tanggapan pada presenter dengan memberikan pertanyaan atau membantu menjawab pertanyaan (Teachers should assess students' attendance such as whether or not they like the learning materials or whether or not students responded and/or give comments to the presenters)

In my opinion, while doing online classes, the teacher should notice students who are active in assessing students properly. Not only assess students through the tasks given throughout online learning.

Menurut saya penilaian dalam PJJ ini bisa menggunakan metode yang sama dilakukan dalam kelas.dengan menilai kehadiran dan mengerjakan tugas yang dikerjakan. (In my opinion, assessment can be carried out similar to face-to-face learning, such as by including students' attendance and whether or not students submit the assignment).

Turning now to students' difficulties during ERT, this study found that most participants were overwhelmed in this ERT because some of their teachers' assignments required much time to complete. In the questionnaire, one of them stated:

One point that makes me so bored in the online learning program is the assignment always given by the lecturers every week. I mean, every meeting, the lecturer always gives an assignment that students must finish before next week or the next material. This has happened to not only one lecturer. They give it and make the deadline in a short time. We have a schedule like usual we're in class. Every day we have a class in online learning. So, the time for us to finish the assignment is only at night.

Another challenge stated by almost all the participants is the lack of support systems, such as internet connection and the amount of money they need to spend on this ERT. The present study was designed to identify students' perceptions of how assessment should be carried out in ERT. The current study found that students considered that teachers should apply formative assessment strategies despite different learning media. However, none of the students mentioned students' involvement in the assessment. This finding was unexpected and suggests that teachers have not yet supported self-regulated during ERT.

Self-regulated learning is defined by Boekaerts and colleagues [29] as a multi-component, multi-level, iterative, self-steering process that targets one's cognition, affects (i.e., emotions) and actions, as well as features of the environment, for modulation in the service of one's goals'. Several lines of studies argued that educational technology applied for online learning could promote self-regulated learning (for example, [30], [31]); however, findings from this study have shown the opposite results.

This appears to be a learning agency, which is still considered teachers' authority, as documented by several previous studies. For example, Harris, Brown, and Harnett [32] found that the 193 students in New Zealand who participated in their study prefer teachers'-led feedback practices instead of their own or peers. A more recent study conducted by Lee,

Leong and Song [33] in a Singaporean university revealed that teachers' beliefs and learning context are two significant factors that affected how feedback was provided. Besides, students perceived teachers' feedback as quintessential for their writing improvement; hence, developing self-regulated learning can be challenging.

Findings from this study demonstrate that participants encountered difficulties during ERT due to the internet connection and lack of funding support. These results are in agreement with those obtained by several previous studies (for example, [34], [35]).

Overall, this study strengthens the idea that students have a positive perception of formative assessment practice even in the ERT context. Nevertheless, more research is needed to better understand how formative assessment can promote self-regulated learning and how barriers in implementing formative assessment can be overcome. Furthermore, these findings raise intriguing questions regarding the role of technology in education. Further research should be undertaken to investigate to what extent technology improves learning.

4 Conclusion

This research aims to investigate students' perceptions of teachers' assessment practices in higher education in the ERT context. This study used formative assessment strategies as a framework to analyze the data. 193 students from an Islamic university in Indonesia participated in this survey research. One of the most significant findings from this study is that formative assessment strategies are pivotal to be implemented in the ERT context. The second major finding was that even though these students are categorized as adult learners; yet, students' involvement in the assessment practice is relatively modest. This study indicates that further study needs to be done on how to involve learners in the assessment process.

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