



## Integration of Motivational Factors to the Formative Evaluation at University

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### SUMMARY

The evaluation of student's work is necessary and indispensable at school. This evaluation may bring satisfaction or disappointment to students depending on the way the teachers qualify their outcomes. The ways that teachers have applied in the assessment make their students more or less demotivated, so the evaluation may become "a burden" to them. Among a variety of majors, English language requires lots of formative assessments which may lead to a success or a failure of teaching/learning of this language. To dealing with this, motivational method plays a key role. Among current assessments, the formative evaluation can be integrated in by motivational factors to optimize the expected results from students, notably undergraduate students.

In this article, we focus on the research on the formative evaluation of students at university. Thence, we suggest some paths to teacher examiners within formative evaluation, which is expected to help teacher examiners with student motivation.

**Keywords :** Motivation; High School; Demotivation

### Introduction

The motivation is a psychological construct studied by many scientists which refers the whole of needs which make an individual act so as to satisfy his goals previously made. The integration of this notion to the evaluation of students is important, notably to the formative evaluation. Many psychologists have studied the question of general motivation at school, but few have specifically researched the formative evaluation of students at university, so more research on this matter is required.

### Motivation

The motivation is the whole of needs which

make an individual act so as to satisfy his goals previously made. This individual has to mobilize his internal and external forces to accomplish his duty. Alain Lieury and Oabien Fenouillet in "Motivation and school success" recognized motivation as The whole of biological and psychological mechanisms which allow launching of orientation action (toward a goal or contrarily to avoid it) and finally that of intensity and persistence: more we are motivated, more the activity is great and persistent" (Lieury and Fenouillet. 1997, pp.1-2). According Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, motivation concerns energy, persistence and equifinality - all aspect of activation and intention (Ryan and Deci. 2002, p.69).

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The motivation is produced by the interaction between an individual and his environment. It greatly affects people's mental and their working results. When they are motivated, they persevere toward the end of activity and the results are accordingly very good.

### Formative Evaluation

The goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. More specifically, formative assessments:

1. help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work.
2. help faculty recognize where students are struggling and address problems immediately.

“**Formative assessment** is defined as assessment carried out during the instructional process for the purpose of improving teaching or learning. What makes formative assessment formative is that it is immediately used to make adjustments so as to form new learning” (Shepard. 2008, p.281)

**Formative assessment** refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. Formative assessments help teachers identify concepts that students are struggling to understand, skills they are having difficulty acquiring, or learning standards they have not yet achieved so that adjustments can be made to lessons, instructional techniques, and academic support.

Harlen and James believed that “Formative assessment, therefore, is essentially feedback both

to the teachers and to the pupils about present understanding and skill development in order to determine the way forward” (Harlen & James. 1997, p. 77).

The formative evaluation instrument is not formative, but the use of information gathered, by whatever means, to adjust teaching and learning, that merits the formative label.

### Achievement Goals

Personal goals were defined as those things that an individual would like to achieve or accomplish in a given situation (Wentzel. 1994, p.173). The goals are important factors of teaching/learning, among them, the achievement goals are recognized as ingredients of school success and student's motivation. There are two types of achievement goals: performance goals and mastery goals.

The performance goals(ego-involved orientation) emphasizes comparison of students' abilities. The students try to demonstrate their superiority or to avoid negative judgments. For these goals, the students easily lose their interest in school. When students don't succeed in school or simply they think they lack the capacity, they give up. The purpose of performance-approach corresponds to the desire to be competent, the performance-avoidance goal is to share the desire to avoid appearing incompetent (Darnon & Butera. 2005, p. 111).

The mastery goals involve an assessment of the competencies based on improving student's mastery of the task, so they correspond to the desire to learn, to understand the problem, to acquire new knowledge. The mastery-goal orientation emphasizes learning, understanding, improving, mastering new skills, and taking on challenges. The mastery goals strengthen the interest of students



in schooling. The purpose of mastery-approach correspond to the desire to learn and try to succeed because success indicates a mastery of the task. And Mastery-avoidance goal is the desire not to be mistaken, to avoid learning nothing from a course, not to forget anything of what he is learning. Students oriented to this type of goals try to avoid failing, not because the failure generates a negative feedback, but because failure indicates a lack of control over the task (Darnon & Butera. 2005, p. 112-113)

#### **Seven practices to integrate motivation into formative evaluation**

1. Provide students with a clear and understandable learning targets

When students have clear learning targets and when the feedback is continuous, students have a foundation that helps them to understand what they are learning, set goals, and self-assess. This practice motivates students and gives them a greater sense of ownership in instructional activities. Students can also phrase standards or expectations in their own words or create their own definitions of quality work (Bruce. 2001).

2. Use examples and models of strong and weak work

Examples and models contribute to the improvement of the clarity of student learning targets. Examples and models enable students to more fully understand where they are going and why the teacher provides feedback. With clear expectations, students can set realistic and attainable goals. The mastery-goals are formed and the targets allow students to set task goals, which focus on learning and meeting standards. An emphasis on task goals improves students' intrinsic motivation (Cauley & McMillan. 2010).

3. Offer feedback about progress toward meeting learning targets.

Feedback to students that focuses on developing skills, understanding, and mastery and treats mistakes as opportunities to learn is particularly effective (Cauley & McMillan. 2010). The teacher should avoid grading students or compare them with others, because it tends to motivate student for extrinsic reasons, promotes performance goals, and can lower expectations for success. Instead of doing that, teacher can use informative comments. To promote mastery goals, feedback from formative assessment should reduce social comparisons and instead emphasize progress toward achieving learning targets (Maehr & Anderman. 1993). For example, the teacher can tell to a student: "Ok, you're just starting the topic, keep going on with it this way, you will succeed."

4. Attribute student success and Mastery to moderate effort

Feedback to students in formative evaluation can also influence how students attribute their success. In the classroom, teachers provide students with important attribution cues through feedback. They can unexpectedly reduce student motivation by communicating a lack of belief in their abilities, which represent the offer by teacher of any of three types of feedback: expressing pity after a student failure; offering praise for a success, and offering unsolicited help, which high-achieving students do not require (Graham. 1990). Thus, when giving feedback for formative evaluation activities, teachers should attribute results to student efforts and then explore changes in instruction and learning tasks, which suggests that a lack of success is also related to a factor that student can modify. Formative



assessment without effort attributions and instruction modifications that support developing understanding can leave students feeling hopeless (Cauley & McMillan. 2010).

#### 5. Encourage student self-evaluation

Formative assessment allows a high level of student self-assessment. Student self-assessment involves much more than simply checking answer; rather, it is a process in which student monitor and evaluate the nature of their thinking to identify strategies that improve understanding (McMilan & Hearn. 2008). Self-assessment can support mastery goals through the notion of developing student autonomy, which strongly support student motivation. In this situation, students are encouraged to make decision about what to do and when to do it.

#### 6. Help students set attainable goals for improvement

Feedback from formative evaluation can help students set attainable learning goals. Goals that refer to specific performance standards are most effective, because self-efficacy is substantiated as students observe their progress toward the goal (Shunk & Swartz. 1993). High self-efficacy is present when students are confident that when they expend appropriate effort, they can be successful.

#### 7. Engage students in self-reflection, and let them keep track of and share their learning

Long-term perseverance and motivation increase when students track, reflect on and communicate about their learning. In this practice, students look back what they did, reflect on it and share their achievement with others.

#### Integration of motivation into formative evaluation of students at University

### 1. Statement of student formative evaluation at Vinh University

Formative evaluation is an important part in student evaluation at the University. It focuses on student efforts and progress in their studies. The proportion of formative evaluation is calculated as follows (Decision No 43/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT dated August 15, 2007 by the Vietnamese Minister of Education and Training):

1.1 Diligence evaluation: 10%

1.2 Formative evaluation (mid-term evaluation): 20%

1.3 Final evaluation (final test): 70%

Despite the proportion, formative evaluation plays a very important role in evaluation process. Firstly, it contributes to the final results of student workload, and secondly, it may change student psychology and finally, it makes students regulate their study strategy or plan. The modality of evaluation is defined by the teachers and approved by the president of the University. To promote the study, teachers likely create appropriate ways of evaluation which assures two elements: evaluation and motivation.

Teachers of English, for example, have their own tactics, instead of a strict paper test, they use classroom activities to qualify the level of effort that students make to grade for some specific subjects. Among four skills, the most creative and effective activity is speaking test. However, the creativity must not diverge from the regulations defined in the Decision No 43/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT. Students are more or less demotivated when facing the reality that their efforts were not reasonably qualified because their grade is inferior than that they expected to get. Interviews of teachers and students of English



show us that the improvement of evaluation modality is needed (51.3% agree that formative evaluation should be done with classroom activities instead of a strict paper test similar to the final test).

## **2. Some paths to improve motivation in formative evaluation**

### **2.1 Usage of seven practices above to design the content of formative evaluation**

Teachers have the rights to create evaluation contents (test), they can propose their modality to concerned administrative offices to change some points according to the goal of evaluation and student motivation. These seven practices are important factors to be considered to develop the autonomy, self-determination and motivation of students. Interesting content and appropriate modality of evaluation shall greatly motivate students to make more efforts for the mastery goals.

For English students, practice and theory of language should be continuously, gradually and dynamically conducted at school as well as outside school. When they are intrinsically motivated, the mastery and performance in English learning will be optimized. Thus, apart from teaching method improvement, teachers always think of the amelioration of evaluation method and content so that students can get highest achievements, keep their motivation for study and persevere with their goals.

### **2.2 Create a competitive classroom ambiance**

Teachers can also create competitive classroom ambiance when conducting formative evaluation. They cleverly encourage students to compete with each other by proposing a topic as

subject to the evaluation and create the stimulus from students. The later can give naturally the response without thinking of being graded. The motivation can be born intrinsically.

### **2.3 Change the grading modality**

Most training institutions in Vietnam apply grading evaluation, they organize examinations and give marks to students. All processes use the same modality: mostly paper based tests. These tests make students nervous, anxious and even stressed. Apart from final tests, teachers can absolutely apply dynamic formative evaluation at school. Formative evaluation should be done within the whole process of student effort, but not only the evaluation of some specific points. Grading is made so that students don't feel like penalization when they get low score.

### **2.4 Grading the tasks basing on student efforts**

Teachers can base on the efforts that students have made to grade students. More they contribute to study, higher score they get. By doing so, teachers can promote student motivation to make efforts; and student mastery and performance can be improved. Students love to study and to persevere their goals.

## **Conclusion**

Formative evaluation can be a powerful technique to promote student motivation and achievement. The information that teachers get can be a reference for teachers to modify their instruction and help students self-assess and improve their performance. Reasonable and dynamic formative evaluation can be an important base for student motivation.



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