

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH LEARNING

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### Abstract

The Indonesian government policy due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic requires all students and teachers to carry out the learning process online. Starting from various learning strategies to the assessment process must be carried out by applying an online system. In line with this policy, this study was conducted with the aim of investigating the implementation of one type of assessment, namely formative assessment in online learning situations. This study focuses on students' perceptions of the implementation of formative assessment in English learning. By using a mixed-method research design, data collection was carried out through survey and interview methods. The samples of this study were 215 students of a Junior High School in Bali, Indonesia and involved 8 students from the entire sample as participants in the interview. The survey results showed that students had a positive perception of the implementation of online formative assessment. This is also supported by information obtained in the interview process, in which students feel that this type of online formative assessment is comfortable to carry out, especially because of the use of simple and easy tools. In addition, students also feel that there are things that make online formative assessment less effective, such as the unavailability of feedback which also causes students to be less interested in this type of assessment. Through this study, it is hoped that it can provide various information for students and teachers for the purpose of improving the quality of the implementation of formative assessment in English learning.

Keywords: Perception, Formative Assessment, Online Learning

## **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in 2020 in Indonesia has affected the learning process. The entire learning process that was initially carried out in face-to-face mode must be changed online. As the consequence, all learning activities have to be re-planned according to the context of online learning using technology and internet connection. In relation with the learning activity, it cannot be separated from the assessment process. According to Amua-sekyi (2016), assessment is an activity carried out in the learning process to obtain information about what has been learned which is then used for the continuation of the subsequent teaching and learning process. In addition, Widiastuti, et al. (2020) also state that assessment is a process that aims to evaluate students' abilities, learning outcomes, and get the strengths and weaknesses of students, so that the teacher can provide appropriate learning strategies in accordance with student abilities. Therefore, the assessment process is a vital activity in the implementation of learning with the aim of knowing the extent of the abilities possessed by students after carrying out the learning process.

Based on how the results are used, assessment can be divided into formative and summative assessment (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009). Formative assessment, according to Black & Wiliam (1998), is a form of evaluation that is carried out regularly by providing feedback to help students improve themselves in learning. Meanwhile, Dixson & Worrell (2017) defines a summative assessment as an accumulative form of assessment which is carried out with the aim of obtaining the final assessment results of a lesson. Therefore, the results of the formative assessment are used as a reference for the teacher to determine the appropriate next learning strategy based on the strengths and weaknesses that students have during the learning process. Whereas the results of the summative assessment are used as the final report of a person after carrying out a learning as a whole or the results can be used for certification purposes (TOEFL, IELTS, etc.)

In the learning process in the COVID-19 pandemic which requires students to learn remotely, it is quite difficult for the teacher to observe the students directly, whether they have learning difficulties, whether they understand the material being taught, or even seeing their performance directly related to the learning process. Basically, teachers must always ensure whether students get information from what they teach. Therefore, the concept of formative assessment can be a form of activity to find out the extent to which they are progressing in learning and what their strengths and weaknesses are in understanding a learning material. This is supported by the concept of formative assessment where the teacher can see progress and evaluate students in understanding the lesson and the teacher can provide feedback to students according to the abilities of each student with the aim of improving them in learning (Bayat, Jamshidipour, & Hashemi, 2017). Therefore, it is very important to carry out periodic evaluations through formative assessments to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the students so that teachers are also able to improve their teaching strategies that are adjusted to the conditions of the students' abilities.

The implementation of formative assessment in an online learning environment basically is not significantly different from the formative assessment which is carried out face-to-face. One of the most visible differences is the use of media or technology that is supported by internet access. Various kinds of platforms are available that can support teachers in carrying out formative assessments online, for example Socrative (Sprague, 2016), GradeCam GO! (Kılıçkaya,

2017), eQuip App (Kerr, Muller, Mckinon, & Mcinerney, 2016), and many more. Zakrzewski and Bull as cited in Yulia, Husin, & Anuar (2019) state that there are three benefits of conducting online formative assessment. The first one is that students have flexible time in doing the tasks/assignments as long as they submit them before the due date. Secondly, students have several attempts to take the assessment until they reach the standard of the grade. Lastly, the feedback is given quickly so that students know the shortcomings they have in the learning they get. Therefore, conducting appropriate and effective formative assessment process in an online learning environment requires teachers' knowledge about planning the learning activities including innovative formative assessment methods that can achieve particular goals.

There are several studies that have been conducted by previous researchers that have topics related to this study. Jacob & Issac (2005) conducted a study which investigated students' perception on the implementation of Black Board Learning System as online formative assessment tool. The study resulted that the students had positive perceptions of using the platform as a medium for online formative assessment. The students thought that the platform was very useful and easy to use, and the teacher gave quick feedback to help students find out their ability in learning. Moreover, a study conducted by Kerr et al. (2016) which investigated the implementation of eQuip App as an online formative assessment tool to prepare students for their summative assessment. The result showed that the use of the eQuip App was considered able to support the implementation of the summative assessment. Students were accustomed to using the application for conducting online formative assessments and students agreed that using the platform was very easy and could increase student engagement when working on formative assessments. When it was tested for the implementation of the online summative assessment, the students also considered that its use was quite effective because the implementation format was the same as when doing the online formative assessment, making it easy for students to carry out the online summative assessment. A subsequent study was conducted by Kılıçkaya (2017) which investigated teachers' perception towards the implementation of GradeCam GO! platform as a medium for online formative assessment. The results of this study indicated that teachers had a positive perception of the use of GradeCam GO! for the implementation of the online formative assessment. The platform was very user-friendly with a variety of simple menu facilitating teachers to use the platform effortlessly. From the studies above, it could be concluded that the implementation of the online formative assessment which was carried out using various methods, techniques, and various platforms had its own advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implementation of online formative assessment in English learning by focusing on students' perceptions.

## **METHODS**

### **Research design**

This study was a mixed-method research with an Explanatory Sequential research design. Creswell (2009) states that an explanatory sequential research design is one type of design in mixed-method research which goes through two phases, starting with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The quantitative data that has been collected through surveys are combined with qualitative data from interviews related to students' perceptions of implementing online formative assessments to make the results support each other.

## Participants

The research was conducted at a public junior high school in Bali, Indonesia. The population of this research was the 8th grade students who have experienced formative assessment process in online learning context during the COVID-19 pandemic. A purposive sampling technique was used in this study. Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen (2010) state that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the sample is taken based on a consideration, for example, the characteristics of a typical population or representative of the population itself. In this study, the study population had typical criteria, namely that students had experienced formative assessments in English learning in an online context. Therefore, 215 students were counted as the sample of this research, and 8 students from the total sample were voluntarily participating in the interview process.

## Data collection and analysis

Regarding the purpose of the study, two methods of data collection were used, namely survey and interview. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both data collection methods were done online. A questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect the quantitative data through survey. Meanwhile the qualitative data which supported the quantitative data were obtained through interview session using a Focus Group Discussion technique. Both instruments, questionnaire and interview guide, were designed based on four dimensions of online assessment proposed by Zakaria & Zainualdin (2014). The dimensions were adapted and modified in accordance with the topic of the study, namely Flexibility (F), Usefulness of feedback (FB), Attitude towards online formative assessment (AOFA), and Intention to use online formative assessment (IU). The questionnaire consisted of 17 statement items using the Likert Scale, in which the participants showed their responses to each item, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Furthermore, the data that has been collected was then analyzed using two techniques. The first technique was to analyze quantitative data using Descriptive Statistical Analysis. Furthermore, qualitative data analysis using Interactive Model Analysis method. The data that has been obtained from the survey results were analyzed using the SPSS program, which was then transformed into four classifications of perception based on the following formula criteria:

**Table 1. Four Classification of Perception**

Criteria Formula	Classification of Perception
$X < Mi - 1.5 SDi$	Very Negative
$Mi > X \geq Mi - 1.5 SDi$	Negative
$Mi + 1.5 SDi > X \geq Mi$	Positive
$X \geq Mi + 1.5 SDi$	Very Positive

Therefore, Interactive Model Analysis was used in order to analyze the qualitative data obtained from interview session. The interactive model analysis was proposed by Miles & Huberman which consisted of four steps namely data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2015). The information obtained from the interview session would support the results of the survey that had been carried out, so the final results could be explained more deeply.

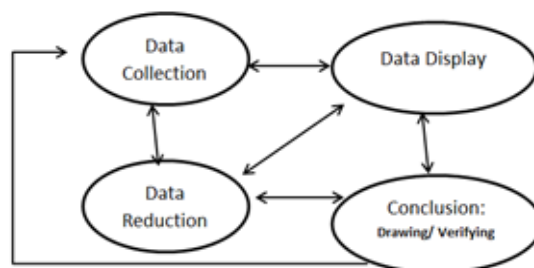


Figure 1. Interactive Model Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

As has been stated earlier, this research aimed to investigate the perception of a public junior high school students towards the implementation of online formative assessment in English learning. The first method used to collect the data was survey with questionnaire as the instruments. The result of the questionnaire is presented in two ways, the first one is the result of students' perception in general and the second one is the result of students' perception based on each dimension regarding online formative assessment, namely, *Flexibility (F)*, *Usefulness of feedback (FB)*, *Attitude towards online formative assessment (AOFA)*, and *Intention to use online formative assessment (IU)*. Therefore, the second method used to collect the deeper information regarding students' perception towards online formative assessment was interview with interview guide as the instrument. The result of the interview would be straightly presented after the result of students' perception based on each dimension of online formative assessment.

The result of students' perception towards formative assessment in online learning context is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. The Students' Perception Towards Online Formative Assessment in English Learning (in general)**

Classification	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Very Positive	35	16.3 %
Positive	174	80.9 %
Negative	6	2.8 %
Very Negative	0	0 %

Table 2 showed that the highest frequency of students' perception towards online formative assessment was in positive category with a percentage of 80.9%. Therefore, based on the result, it can be interpreted that in general, the students positively perceived the online formative assessment in English subject.

The result of students' perception based on each dimension of online formative assessment which continued by the result of interview session is presented in Table 3, 4, 5, and 6.

**Table 3. The Result of Students' Perception Towards Online Formative Assessment based on Flexibility (F) Dimension**

Classification	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Very Positive	80	37.2%
Positive	126	58.6%
Negative	9	4.2%
Very Negative	0	0%

From the result presented in Table 3, it can be seen that the highest frequency of students' perception towards online formative assessment was on the positive category with 126 responses (58.6%). Therefore, it means that the students positively perceived the flexibility dimension of online formative assessment that they experienced in English learning. Other information regarding the flexibility aspect was further investigated through the interview session with 8 students who voluntarily participated. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the interview was conducted online through online conversation platform, *WhatsApp*. The students stated that when they experienced online formative assessment, it was relatively flexible. The platform used by the teacher to conduct the online formative assessment was *Google Form* and mostly in multiple choice and short answer form. The students admitted that the platform was very easy to use and there is no big obstacle during the implementation of online formative assessment. Therefore, when the students were asked whether the teacher gave multiple attempts for students to answer the task, they said that their teacher only gave them one opportunity to answer the task. The students gave several responses regarding their opinion that they were not given multiple attempts to answer the task. Some students said that it was not burdensome nor profitable. Another student said that it was beneficial for their learning process. Here are some transcriptions of students' responses:

*"It's so-so, not profitable nor burdensome, (because of that) we have to be confident with our answers"* – Student W

*"It's not that bad. If we can only answer once, we can be more serious in studying, so that we don't make mistakes when answering, so it might be beneficial for me"* – Student D

Besides that, the students also stated that they had flexibility regarding the time in learning. They said that they are not bound by time when answering tasks given by the teacher. They could answer the assignment given by the teacher at any time as long as it is within the determined due date.

The next one is the result of students' perception towards online formative assessment based on feedback dimension, which is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. The Result of Students' Perception Towards Online Formative Assessment Based on Feedback (FB) Dimension**

Classification	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Very Positive	74	34.4%
Positive	132	61.4%
Negative	9	4.2%
Very Negative	0	0%

The result of students' perception towards online formative assessment based on feedback aspect indicated that the highest frequency was on positive classification with percentage of 61.4%. In other words, it can be interpreted that the feedback dimension of online formative assessment was positively perceived by the participants of this study. Meanwhile, the information obtained from the interview session showed the opposite. The students stated that they did not received any feedback after doing the task. In addition, they were not even given the answer key or the correct answer. Regarding the unavailability of answer key, the students were asked about their opinion. Some students stated it was burdensome, and another student also said it was needed so that they can be motivated to learn. Here are some responses from the students:

*"It depends. Sometimes it's burdensome, sometimes it's not. But it tends to be burdensome, because I don't know which one is right which one is wrong, then sometimes even though the score is large, it just feels unsatisfied."* – Student S  
*"Sometimes I'm okay with that, so I am motivated to learn more"* – Student D

The next result is students' perception towards online formative assessment based on their attitude towards online formative assessment (AOFA) dimension, which is presented in table 5.

**Table 5. The Result of Students' Perception Towards Online Formative Assessment Based on Attitude Towards Online Formative Assessment (AOFA) Dimension**

Classification	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Very Positive	65	30.2%
Positive	135	62.8%
Negative	14	6.5%
Very Negative	1	0.5%

As presented in table 5, it can be seen that positive perception on their attitude towards online formative assessment gained the highest frequency with percentage of 62.8%. On this dimension, the result of the interview showed various responses. Some students felt excited while doing the online formative assessment, and the other said that they were not really into this online-based formative assessment. The students said that during the COVID-19 pandemic, their excitement in doing the online learning depended on their mood. Sometimes they felt excited in learning if the learning strategy was fun and impacted their feeling during answering the task as online formative assessment. They also said that they liked this kind of assessment because its implementation was very simple, in which when answering the questions from the task, they only need to click one of the answers. Meanwhile, sometimes they also felt not excited when the learning process was monotonous. This feeling was felt by most of the students these days, in which they thought it was really tiring to do the online lesson. Here is the transcription of a student's response:

*"In the beginning, online assessments were still enthusiastic, there was still ambition to learn. But the more I come here, I don't feel enthusiastic anymore, the factor was from teacher too. Sometimes the teacher gave assignments without giving clear material, sometimes we were told to summarize a lot, when I did the test there were lots of correct answers, but the teacher blamed it, and also because the attitude aspect couldn't be assessed by teacher."* – Student S

Another aspect to highlight is related to motivation when learning in the online context, including the process of formative assessment. Some students are always motivated no matter what conditions occur in the learning process, including the implementation of online systems in learning, because they always think that every activity in the classroom is very important to experience so they know various things from the learning process. On the other hand, many students stated that their learning motivation decreased during online learning, including the formative assessment process. It was admitted that online formative assessment process did not bring competitive atmosphere between them. When students get high or low marks, they just take it which is quite different from the face-to-face assessment. Dealing with attitude, the students stated that they answered every question given in the task well and some always made sure that the answers were correct to ascertain their score achievement. However, some students admitted to rarely confirm their answers due to time limitation.

The last result regarding intention to use online formative assessment (IU) dimension is presented in table 6.

**Table 6. The Result of Students' Perception Towards Online Formative Assessment Based on Intention to Use Online Formative Assessment (IU) Dimension**

Classification	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Very Positive	43	20%
Positive	146	67.9%
Negative	26	12.1%
Very Negative	0	0%

Table 6 shows the students' positive perception of the intention to use online formative assessment gained the highest percentage (67.9%). In the interview, various statements were admitted in relation with this dimension. Some students stated that they agreed if their teacher used this type of online formative assessment on an ongoing basis, also, they wanted this method to be implemented occasionally when face-to-face learning was re-implemented normally. They argued that the use of technology and internet connection in the formative assessment process was interesting, mainly because of its ease of use. Therefore, some of these students have high intentions in implementing online formative assessments in English learning. On the other hand, there were also students who did not have a good intention in using this online formative assessment. They stated that online learning tended to be boring and complicated. They also stated that the feeling of boredom was due to monotonous learning activities and tended to be unattractive. Some of students' responses are presented below:

*"Yes, I want to have this online formative assessment continuously, because it is fun. Maybe in offline learning, it can be used occasionally"* – Student B

*"No. Because online learning is complicated, stressful."* – Student A

## Discussion

Based on the findings in the previous section, it was found that the students positively perceived the implementation of online formative assessment in English learning in its four dimensions, namely flexibility, feedback, attitude, and intention to use. When the students have positive perception towards these four factors, it could be interpreted that they have positive attitude,



including feeling comfortable to participate in the implementation of online-based formative assessment so they can achieve academic achievement in their English learning. This is in line with statement of Jacob & Issac (2005) stating that most students avoid the difficult tasks and focusing on ranking and the best marks rather than improving their learning. Therefore, formative assessment is needed to improve student learning by focusing on specific problems of their learning and provide appropriate explanations to solve the problems faced by students. Moreover, formative assessment can also help students to build their learning development by guiding them to be more skillful in their own learning journey (Voinea, 2018).

The results of the survey showed that students admitted positive perceptions of the online formative assessment. Moreover, various interesting additional information is obtained regarding each dimension of online formative assessment from the interviews conducted with eight students. The quantitative data distribution of flexibility also revealed students' positive perceptions. This indicates that in general, students felt that the use of online-based methods in the formative assessment process was flexible enough. Aside from these results, students expressed various opinions regarding flexibility aspects of online formative assessment in the interview. Some students stated that using a platform (Google Form) that is easy to use can add to the strength points of implementing an online formative assessment. Thus, the easy use of platforms or technology is one of the strong reasons for students to have positive perceptions of the implementation of online formative assessments. In addition, the convenience provided by the platform as a medium for online formative assessment can increase students' enthusiasm for learning to improve their abilities. This finding is in line with the statement of Elmahdi et al. (2018) in their study, that the platform used for formative assessment can increase the effectiveness of learning, create fun learning activities, and guarantee equal chances for students to participate in the learning process.

Another aspect of flexibility in online formative assessment is the availability of multiple attempts given by the teacher for the students to answer. However, the interview revealed that the teacher did not give multiple attempts to give answer. For students, it is neither too burdensome nor easy. This is because several attempts to answer would indicate that they have given wrong answer, requiring the correct one on the next chance. Therefore, easier standard value is set by the teacher. Meanwhile, it could also be considered not too burdensome for students because having one chance to answer could make them be more careful to avoid giving wrong answers and train their confidence. In this case, the absence of multiple attempts for students contradicts the statement by Shaw, MacIsaac, & Singleton-jackson (2019) stating that by giving several opportunity to answer can actually help students to find out their mistakes on the first try in answering, then on the second chance, they can correct the answer so they can learn from the mistakes they make. In addition, Marden, Ulman, Wilson, & Velan (2013) also argue that multiple attempts at formative assessment provide a non-threatening learning environment. This non-threatening learning environment would greatly affect students' character in learning, including in completing various forms of assessment. With multiple attempts, students should not feel excessive pressure because they have the opportunity to improve themselves and they are likely to learn from their mistakes.

Regarding the availability of feedbacks in online formative assessment, it has been stated that this aspect has a positive influence on the students' learning activities. Although the survey results stated their positive perception of the facility, the results of the interview showed a con-

tradition, in which teachers did not give feedbacks after carrying out an online formative assessment. In other words, students admitted that they never got more detailed explanation after answering the task. This case does not support the concept proposed by Voinea (2018) which states that formative assessment is a key element which play a role as a buffer in learning by making students more engaged in their own learning and be able to regulate their learning based on evidence given. Giving feedback should be a vital thing for teachers to do in the formative assessment process. Feedback can also be given in general to all students in the class or given personally to the student depending on the learning needs. This surely requires more effort in parts of the teacher. This situation is not in line with a statement by Kerr et al. (2016) proposing that providing informative and supportive feedback rather than just giving a final score is very useful for fostering students' responsibility in learning and facilitating their understanding.

In relation with the students' attitude towards online formative assessment, the positive perception indicates their interest for the assessment in English learning. These results were supported by the results of interviews, which stated that some students considered that the implementation was quite easy and simple. This admittedly supported the students' excitement in carrying out the online formative assessment. On the other hand, some students also had a bad impression and lower interest in completing this type of assessment. The students' disinterest was due to the students' negative mood during online learning. The mood admittedly depends on the learning strategy given by the teacher at that time and during the learning process. In addition, students also stated that the learning strategy was monotonous resulting in no competitive atmosphere in the assessment process, which is different from the face-to-face class. The students also stated that when learning in online classes, the teacher did not hold interactive discussions, so that students only received teaching material which was then continued with the implementation of formative assessments through question exercises. The decline of student interest during online learning is strongly influenced by the teaching system, which should be innovative and varied. At this point Zakaria & Zainualdin (2014) offer suggestions for effective online learning by planning and preparing interactive learning activities including teaching materials, as well as a set of qualified and appropriate assessment processes. It is proposed that qualified learning activities are the basis for the formation of a learning process that is fun, active, and effective.

On the last dimension, the intention to use online formative assessment, the results of the questionnaire stated students' positive perception. This indicates that the students have good intentions in implementing this online formative assessment. These results were also supported by the results of interviews, which stated that some students agreed if this type of assessment is carried out continuously, and even agreed that it is used occasionally by the teacher during the face-to-face instruction. This is because the form of assessment using technology is quite easy to use, so that students are more comfortable in completing their formative assessment. Accordingly, Kılıçkaya (2017) proposed that the use of a certain platform to support online formative assessment would help students carry out assessments comfortably because of its simple and easy to use features. Meanwhile, there were also some students who were less interested in the use of this online formative assessment and even disagreed if this type of assessment was used when face-to-face learning returned to normal. This is because some of these students even think that the online formative assessment is quite complicated and ineffective.

## CONCLUSION

In general, the online formative assessment was found out to positively encourage students in their English learning in online environment. The students mostly felt excited during the implementation of this kind of assessment in which one of the reasons most often stated is because its use is quite simple and easy. However, although many students think that the online formative assessment encourages them to be more involved in learning, there are also several things that have become a concern in the implementation of this online formative assessment, so the implementation become less effective in various aspects / dimensions. One of them deals with the availability of feedback, where students do not get feedback from their teachers after working on an online formative assessment. This is quite unfortunate because feedback is essentially a vital component in the implementation of a formative assessment in any form and situation. In addition, the less interactive and innovative teaching strategy is another reason that influences the ineffective implementation of the online formative assessment. In the future, teachers are expected to be able to plan, and prepare strategies for learning activities in online learning that are effective, and beneficial for students, including with the right form of formative assessment to support students to improve themselves to develop in the learning process. It also includes the provision of informative feedback which is very useful for facilitating students' cognitive skills.

There are several suggestions for other researchers to conduct further investigation on this topic. The researcher can investigate the topic by involving teacher's perception. The researcher could also conduct a study to investigate the challenges faced by both students and teachers during the implementation of the online formative assessment. Finally, other researchers can also investigate the relationship of each dimension in the online formative assessment.

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