



UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT

Formative and Summative Assessment Techniques to Support EFL Students' Motivation and Achievement

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to the English as Foreign Language (EFL) students who embark on the challenging journey of language acquisition. Your resilience, curiosity, and dedication to mastering a new language inspire educators and researchers alike. May your linguistic endeavors open doors to new opportunities and broaden your horizons.

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Abstract

This research investigates the intricate relationship between formative and summative assessment techniques and their impact on the motivation and academic achievement of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in higher education settings. As EFL programs continue to expand globally, understanding how these assessment methods influence the educational experience of students becomes imperative. The study addresses the overarching problem of motivation and achievement barriers faced by EFL students, proposing formative and summative assessments as potential solutions. The primary aim is to explore the nuanced contributions of formative and summative assessments to the motivation of EFL students, examining how these strategies influence academic achievement. Three key research questions guide the investigation: (1) How do formative assessments contribute to the motivation of EFL students? (2) What role do summative assessments play in the academic achievement of EFL students? (3) What are the achievement goals associated with formative and summative assessments for EFL students? The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers about effective strategies to enhance the educational outcomes of EFL students. By defining key terms and employing a systematic research procedure, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on formative and summative assessments, offering practical insights and recommendations for the improvement of EFL programs.

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Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of global education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs play a pivotal role in fostering linguistic proficiency and cross-cultural communication. The expansion of these programs brings to light the multifaceted challenges faced by EFL students, particularly in the realms of motivation and academic achievement. This introduction sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of how formative and summative assessments can serve as catalysts for addressing these challenges, thereby enriching the educational experience for EFL learners. The internationalization of education has led to an unprecedented surge in the enrollment of EFL students in higher education institutions worldwide. These students, often hailing from diverse linguistic backgrounds, bring with them unique perspectives and challenges. One of the pressing issues is the motivation to engage with the English language effectively. Motivation is a key determinant of academic success, and understanding how it can be fostered in EFL students is crucial for educators and policymakers alike. As EFL programs aim to cultivate language proficiency, the assessment landscape becomes a critical domain to navigate. Assessments serve not only as evaluative tools but also as powerful influencers of student motivation. Formative assessments, characterized by their ongoing nature and focus on feedback, and summative assessments, which culminate in a final evaluation of learning, represent two distinct yet interrelated approaches. This research seeks to unravel the intricate dynamics between these assessment techniques and their impact on EFL students' motivation and achievement.

The Problem

EFL students encounter a myriad of challenges in their educational journey, ranging from language barriers to cultural adjustments. These challenges, if not addressed, can lead to diminished motivation and hindered academic achievement. The problem at the heart of this research is the need to comprehensively understand and address these challenges through the lens of formative and summative assessments. By doing so, we aspire to illuminate a path towards fostering an environment that nurtures both motivation and academic success for EFL students.

The Aims of the Study and Research Questions

This study is motivated by a clear set of aims aimed at unraveling the complex interplay between formative and summative assessments and their impact on the motivation and academic achievement of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in higher education settings. By delving into these aims, the research seeks to contribute to the enhancement of educational practices tailored to the unique needs of EFL learners. The primary aim of this research is to investigate how formative assessments contribute to the motivation of EFL students. Formative assessments, characterized by their ongoing nature and emphasis on providing feedback, hold the potential to shape students' attitudes and engagement with the learning process. By exploring the mechanisms through which formative assessments influence motivation, this study aims to shed light on effective strategies for fostering a supportive learning environment for EFL students. Another aim of this research is to understand the role played by summative assessments in the academic achievement of EFL students. Summative assessments, serving as culminating evaluations of learning, provide valuable insights into students' mastery of course material. By examining the impact of summative assessments on academic achievement, this study seeks to uncover the extent to which these assessments contribute to the attainment of learning outcomes among EFL students. Furthermore, this research aims to discern the achievement goals associated with both formative and summative assessments for EFL students. Understanding the goals that underpin assessment practices is essential for aligning instructional strategies with desired learning outcomes. By elucidating the achievement goals inherent in formative and summative assessments, this study aims to inform educators and curriculum developers about the pedagogical implications of these assessment techniques in the context of EFL education.

The following research questions guide the investigation:

How do formative assessments impact the motivation of EFL students?

What role do summative assessments play in the academic achievement of EFL students?

What are the achievement goals associated with formative and summative assessments for EFL students?

The Significance of the Study

This research holds paramount significance within the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, as it endeavors to deepen our understanding of the impact of formative and summative assessments on the motivation and academic achievement of EFL students in higher education. The findings of this study bear relevance to educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, offering tangible insights into the enhancement of pedagogical practices and the overall educational experience of EFL learners. The significance of this study is underscored by its potential to address persistent challenges faced by EFL students, such as language barriers and cultural variations, which can impede both motivation and academic achievement. By scrutinizing the distinct roles played by formative and summative assessments, this research contributes to the development of tailored strategies that foster a conducive learning environment for EFL students. Moreover, the study's significance extends to the global landscape of education, where EFL programs continue to witness unprecedented growth. As institutions strive to provide equitable and effective learning experiences for diverse student populations, the insights generated by this research offer practical guidance on leveraging assessment practices to optimize EFL education. Furthermore, the study's findings hold implications for policy formulation, as policymakers can leverage the insights to advocate for evidence-based changes in educational frameworks and assessment methodologies. By addressing the motivational and achievement-related challenges faced by EFL students, this research contributes to the broader discourse on fostering inclusive and effective educational systems.

Definition of Basic Terms

To ensure clarity and a shared understanding, it is essential to define key terms integral to this study, creating a solid foundation for the exploration of formative and summative assessments in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education.

Formative Assessment: Formative assessment refers to an ongoing, dynamic process of evaluating students' understanding and progress during the learning process. It is characterized by its emphasis on providing timely feedback to both students and instructors, allowing for continuous improvement. As described by Black and Wiliam (1998), formative assessment serves as a diagnostic tool, shaping the learning journey by identifying areas of strength and areas that require further attention.

Summative Assessment: In contrast, summative assessment is a comprehensive evaluation conducted at the end of an instructional period to determine the extent of students' mastery of the content. It often takes the form of final exams, standardized tests, or major projects. As articulated by Nitko and Brookhart (2011), summative assessments aim to summarize and appraise the overall learning outcomes achieved by students.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Student: EFL students are individuals who are learning English in a context where it is not the primary language spoken. This term distinguishes them from English as a Second Language (ESL) student, who are typically immersed in an English-speaking environment. EFL students may face unique challenges related to language acquisition and cultural differences, influencing their educational experience.

Motivation: Motivation encompasses the internal and external factors that drive individuals to engage in learning activities and pursue academic goals. In the context of EFL education, it reflects students' willingness to invest effort in language acquisition. Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985) provides a framework for understanding motivation, highlighting the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Academic Achievement: Academic achievement refers to the measurable outcomes of learning, often assessed through grades, test scores, or other evaluative measures. In the context of this study, academic achievement serves as a crucial indicator of how well EFL students grasp the English language content. Achievement goals can vary and may include language proficiency, communicative competence, or cultural understanding.

The Procedure

The methodology employed in this research is vital to ensure the robustness and reliability of the study's findings. The procedural framework comprises four key components: sample selection, instruments, data analysis, and discussion of the results.

Sample Selection: The process of selecting a representative sample is crucial for the generalizability of the study's findings. To capture the diverse experiences of EFL students in higher education, a purposive sampling method will be utilized. This method allows for the intentional selection of participants who possess the characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The sample will encompass students from various linguistic backgrounds, academic levels, and institutions, offering a comprehensive perspective on the impact of formative and summative assessments.

Instruments: To gather comprehensive data, a combination of qualitative and quantitative instruments will be employed. A survey questionnaire will be administered to EFL students, collecting quantitative data on their perceptions of formative and summative assessments, motivation levels, and academic achievements. Additionally, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of participants to elicit in-depth qualitative insights into their experiences. The questionnaire will be designed based on established scales for assessing motivation and satisfaction with assessments, ensuring validity and reliability.

Data Analysis: The collected data will undergo a meticulous analysis to derive meaningful insights. Quantitative data from the survey will be subjected to statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics and inferential tests such as regression analysis, to identify correlations between assessment experiences, motivation, and academic achievement. Qualitative data from the interviews will be thematically analyzed to uncover nuanced perspectives and recurring themes. The integration of both data types will offer a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between formative and summative assessments and their impact on EFL students.

Discussion of the Results: The discussion of results is a crucial phase where the findings are interpreted and contextualized within the existing literature. This section will explore the implications of the research questions, comparing and contrasting the quantitative and qualitative results. The discussion will also delve into the alignment or disparities between formative and summative assessments, shedding light on their distinct contributions to EFL students' motivation and academic achievement. Further, this section will explore the broader implications of the findings, offering insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers in the field of EFL education.

Section Two

Overview of Assessment and Formative and Summative Assessments

Assessment serves as a cornerstone of the educational process, providing valuable feedback on students' progress and learning outcomes. Formative assessment, characterized by its continuous and diagnostic nature, allows educators to monitor students' understanding and adjust instruction accordingly (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In contrast, summative assessment provides a comprehensive evaluation of students' knowledge and skills at the end of a learning period (Nitko & Brookhart, 2011). Both formative and summative assessments play integral roles in gauging student learning and informing instructional practices.

Formative and Summative Assessments in Higher Education Context

In higher education, formative and summative assessments take on heightened significance as students pursue academic and professional goals. Formative assessments provide students with ongoing feedback, fostering a deeper understanding of course material and promoting active engagement in the learning process. Summative assessments, on the other hand, offer a culmination of students' learning achievements, serving as benchmarks for academic progress and future endeavors (Sadler, 1998). Together, these assessment approaches contribute to the holistic development of students in higher education settings.

Why Formative and Summative Assessments are Beneficial for the Students?

Formative and summative assessments offer numerous benefits for students. Formative assessments promote a growth mindset by emphasizing learning progress rather than final outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). They provide opportunities for self-reflection and improvement, enhancing students' metacognitive skills and self-efficacy. Summative assessments, meanwhile, provide closure to learning experiences and offer students a sense of achievement and accomplishment (Brookhart, 2013). By integrating both assessment types,

students receive a well-rounded evaluation of their learning journey, fostering motivation and academic success.

Five Key Strategies for Assessing EFL Students

When assessing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student, educators can employ several key strategies to optimize learning outcomes. These strategies include incorporating authentic language tasks, providing timely and constructive feedback, promoting learner autonomy, scaffolding language acquisition, and utilizing diverse assessment formats (Brown, 2004). By tailoring assessment practices to the unique needs of EFL students, educators can enhance their linguistic proficiency and overall academic performance.

Achievement Goals by Formative and Summative Assessments

Formative and summative assessments serve distinct achievement goals for students. Formative assessments focus on promoting continuous learning and skill development, emphasizing mastery and improvement over time (Sadler, 1989). In contrast, summative assessments aim to evaluate students' overall proficiency and attainment of learning objectives, providing a measure of academic achievement and readiness for further education or employment (Stiggins, 2002). Both assessment types contribute to students' academic growth and success.

Internal Mechanisms: Students' Basic Psychological Needs

Students' motivation and engagement in learning are influenced by their basic psychological needs, as proposed by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Formative and summative assessments can serve as mechanisms to support these needs by fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Reeve, 2012). Formative assessments provide opportunities for autonomy and competence through self-directed learning and feedback, while summative assessments offer a sense of relatedness by benchmarking students' achievements against external standards and expectations.

EFL Students' Motivation by Formative and Summative Assessments

Formative and summative assessments play significant roles in shaping EFL students' motivation. Formative assessments offer immediate feedback and opportunities for improvement, enhancing students' sense of competence and autonomy in their language learning journey (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Summative assessments, meanwhile, provide tangible goals and benchmarks for students to strive towards, bolstering their intrinsic motivation and perseverance (Brookhart, 2013). By understanding the motivational impact of formative and summative assessments, educators can tailor their assessment practices to optimize EFL students' engagement and success.

Section Three: Practical Part

1. Sample Selection

The process of sample selection in this study is integral to ensuring the representation and relevance of the findings. A purposive sampling method will be employed, allowing for the intentional selection of EFL students who possess diverse linguistic backgrounds, academic levels, and experiences. This method aligns with the qualitative nature of the research, ensuring that the selected sample can provide rich insights into the impact of formative and summative assessments on motivation and achievement (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By strategically choosing participants, the study aims to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives that contribute to the depth and validity of the research findings.

2. Instruments (Questionnaire or Interview with the Students)

To gather comprehensive data, a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments will be employed. A structured questionnaire will be administered to EFL students, incorporating validated scales related to motivation and satisfaction with formative and summative assessments. The questionnaire will include both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, allowing for quantitative analysis of students' perceptions (Dörnyei, 2003). Additionally, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of participants, providing a qualitative exploration of their experiences with assessments. The interviews will be guided by open-ended questions, allowing participants to express their thoughts and perceptions in their own words (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This mixed-method approach aims to triangulate the data and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

3. Data Analysis

The data analysis process is crucial for extracting meaningful insights from the collected information. Quantitative data from the questionnaires will be analyzed using statistical software, employing descriptive statistics to summarize the key findings and inferential statistics, such as regression analysis, to explore relationships between variables (Bryman, 2016). For qualitative data from the interviews, thematic analysis will be applied to identify recurring themes and patterns within participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data will offer a nuanced and comprehensive interpretation of the impact of formative and summative assessments on EFL students' motivation and achievement.

4. Presentation of Results

The presentation of results is a critical aspect of communicating the findings effectively. Quantitative results will be presented through charts, graphs, and tables, providing a visual representation of trends and patterns in students' responses. Qualitative findings will be presented thematically, with illustrative quotes from participants to enrich the narrative (Miles et al., 2014). The results will be organized according to the research questions, allowing for a structured and coherent presentation of the key insights. This transparent presentation aims to facilitate a clear understanding of the findings and their implications for EFL education.

Section Four: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Discussion of the Results

The discussion of results is a pivotal phase where the findings are interpreted, contextualized, and compared to existing literature. The focus will be on unraveling the intricate dynamics between formative and summative assessments and their impact on the motivation and academic achievement of EFL students. By exploring the quantitative and qualitative data in tandem, this section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The discussion will delve into the identified themes, exploring how formative assessments contribute to students' motivation and whether these contributions differ from the impact of summative assessments. It will also consider the role of assessment satisfaction in the overall motivation of EFL students. Additionally, the alignment or disparities between student perceptions and academic achievements, as influenced by formative and summative assessments, will be scrutinized. This section aims to contribute nuanced insights to the existing literature and offer practical implications for educators and policymakers in the field of EFL education.

Conclusion

The conclusion serves as a synthesis of the study's key findings, tying together the threads of the research questions and the implications drawn from the results. This section will reiterate the significance of the research in enhancing our understanding of how formative and summative assessments impact EFL students. It will reflect on the broader implications for educational practices, emphasizing the importance of a balanced and strategic integration of both assessment types. The conclusion aims to leave a lasting impression on the reader, summarizing the research journey and its contributions to the field of EFL education.

Recommendations

Drawing from the research findings, a set of practical recommendations will be presented in this section. These recommendations are designed to guide educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in optimizing the use of formative and summative assessments to enhance the motivation and academic achievement of EFL students. Recommendations may include refining assessment practices, fostering a supportive assessment environment, and integrating student feedback mechanisms into the assessment process. These actionable suggestions aim to bridge the gap between research findings and real-world application, fostering positive changes in EFL education.

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