FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS OF TECHNICAL SPECIALTIES

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Abstract

This article explores the features of implementing formative assessment in the teaching of English to students in technical universities. It analyzes key strategies that support the development of both linguistic and professional competencies, including self-assessment, peer assessment, feedback, and reflection. Practical examples of formative assessment in a technical higher education setting are provided. The paper emphasizes the importance of assessment as a tool for motivation and academic performance enhancement.

Keywords: Formative assessment, technical university, English language, students, professional competence, feedback, motivation.

Introduction

Modern approaches to teaching English in technical universities demand not only a focus on professional-oriented learning but also the implementation of effective pedagogical strategies, including innovative assessment formats. One of the most impactful among them is *formative assessment*, aimed at supporting the learning process, fostering metacognitive skills, increasing motivation, and cultivating student responsibility for academic success.

For students in engineering and technical fields, English is a tool for professional communication, essential for working with technical documentation, participating in international collaborations, and producing scientific publications and presentations. In this context, formative assessment becomes a key component in making language learning more adaptive, personalized, and goal-oriented.

Theoretical Foundations of Formative Assessment

Formative assessment differs from summative assessment in that it focuses on the *process* rather than only the final result. It allows both teacher and learner to detect learning gaps early, adjust the instructional process, and develop

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reflective skills. According to scholars such as D. Wiliam and P. Black, formative assessment significantly increases academic motivation and student performance by setting clear goals, providing ongoing feedback, and involving learners in the evaluation process.

Core principles of formative assessment include:

- Clearly defined learning goals and success criteria;
- Continuous feedback from instructors and peers;
- Encouragement of self-assessment and reflection;
- Individualized learning approaches;
- Support for learners throughout the educational process.

Specifics of Formative Assessment in Technical Universities

Teaching English to students of technical majors requires attention to terminology, the application of language in professional contexts, and the development of key communication skills, such as participation in debates, negotiations, and technical presentations.

Formative assessment can be effectively implemented through:

- **Project-based tasks**: such as writing technical reports or preparing engineering presentations;

- **Technical text analysis**: evaluating comprehension of terminology and logical text structure;

- **Discussion activities**: assessing both linguistic performance and reasoning, argumentation, and listening skills.

Examples of Formative Strategies

1. **Written Feedback from the Instructor**

o Example: After submitting a written report, the teacher highlights grammar issues as well as suggests improvements in technical vocabulary, style, and clarity.

2. **Peer Assessment**

o Students evaluate each other's work using pre-established criteria, enhancing critical thinking and understanding of quality standards.

3. **Checklists and Rubrics**

o Help students track progress and identify areas for improvement.

4. **Reflection Tasks**

o After assignments, students write short reflections on what they learned, what they struggled with, and how they plan to improve.

5. **Mini Portfolios**

o Collections of student work with self-evaluations and teacher comments to monitor skill development over time.

Advantages and Challenges
Advantages:

- Boosts motivation;
- Fosters student responsibility;
- Develops self-analysis and metacognition;
- Improves overall language proficiency.

Challenges:

- Requires significant time and effort from teachers;
- Students need to be trained in self-assessment techniques;
- Some students may be reluctant to participate actively.

Conclusion

The integration of formative assessment strategies into English language instruction for students of technical specialties is not merely a methodological choice, but a pedagogical imperative in today's evolving educational landscape. These students are future engineers, IT specialists, and scientists who must be equipped not only with technical knowledge but also with the communicative competence to engage in professional discourse at an international level.

Formative assessment bridges the gap between language theory and practical application by creating a feedback-rich environment where students are actively involved in evaluating their own progress. Unlike summative testing, which often isolates assessment from the learning process, formative strategies embed assessment *within* learning. This approach encourages continuous improvement and fosters autonomy, a critical skill in the fast-paced, problem-solving contexts of technical fields.

Moreover, formative assessment supports the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, self-direction, and digital literacy. Through tasks like peer evaluations, technical presentations, and reflective writing, learners not only master language structures and terminology but also gain confidence in applying English in real-world professional settings.

At a deeper level, formative assessment transforms the traditional teacher-student dynamic into a partnership. The instructor becomes a guide and facilitator, helping students take ownership of their learning journey. This is particularly important in technical education, where analytical thinking and the ability to self-correct are highly valued.

However, for formative assessment to reach its full potential, institutional support, teacher training, and curriculum flexibility are essential. Educators must be prepared to provide constructive feedback, design meaningful assessment tasks, and nurture a classroom culture where error is viewed as a learning opportunity rather than a failure.

In conclusion, formative assessment strategies are not just tools for language instruction—they are catalysts for shaping competent, reflective, and globally competitive professionals. Their thoughtful implementation in technical English classrooms lays a strong foundation for lifelong learning and effective communication in a multilingual, multidisciplinary world.

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