
Implementing Formative Assessment in Inclusive English Classrooms: From Planned Assessment to Responsive Practice

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Abstract

Formative assessment is important in inclusive English classrooms because it enables teachers to gather evidence of learning during instruction and respond to diverse learning needs. This study examined how formative assessment was implemented in an inclusive Grade VIII English classroom, with particular attention to the relationship between assessment planning, classroom enactment, evidence of learning, feedback, and instructional adaptation. A qualitative case study design was employed using non-participant classroom observation, a semi-structured interview with the English teacher, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using the interactive model. The findings indicate that formative assessment was embedded throughout instruction through questioning, observation, performance activities, feedback, and reflection. A key pattern was the difference between planned assessment and classroom implementation. Although the written assessment plan was primarily designed for the whole class, the teacher adapted instructions, task support, time allocation, and individual guidance in response to students' learning evidence. Thus, in this case, the inclusive dimension of formative assessment was more visible in teachers' real-time responsive decisions than in formal assessment planning. Because the study concerned one teacher and one classroom, the findings are presented as a context-specific account rather than a generalizable claim.

Keywords: *Formative Assessment; Inclusive Education; English Classroom; Responsive Teaching; Assessment Adaptation.*

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is an integral part of classroom instruction because it provides information that teachers can use to understand students' learning and make instructional decisions. Within this broader process, formative assessment involves gathering evidence of learning during instruction and using that evidence to improve subsequent teaching and learning. Rather than focusing primarily on final achievement, formative assessment emphasizes students' ongoing understanding, progress, and learning needs (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Heritage, 2020; Schildkamp et al., 2020). Assessment is therefore closely connected to instruction because evidence gathered during learning can inform teachers' subsequent instructional decisions.

The role of formative assessment becomes particularly significant in inclusive classrooms, where learners may differ in ability, learning pace, participation patterns, and support needs. A uniform assessment approach may not always provide sufficient information about how individual students are learning. Formative assessment can help teachers recognize these differences and respond through flexible instructional and assessment practices. In inclusive settings, fairness does not necessarily mean providing every student with exactly the same support; rather, it involves creating appropriate opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding and participate in learning (Costa Akoyt, 2024).

Formative assessment is most meaningful when teachers interpret evidence of learning and act on it. It can be embedded in everyday teaching through questioning, observation, feedback, and other classroom activities (Halim et al., 2024; Rodrigues, 2007). In English learning, these practices are particularly relevant because students demonstrate understanding through interaction, performance, written work, and responses to language tasks. In inclusive classrooms, implementation may also involve accessible instructions, additional time, visual or

contextual support, alternative response opportunities, individualized feedback, or adjustments to task demands while maintaining the intended learning purpose.

Although previous studies have examined formative assessment practices and inclusive assessment, less attention has been given to how formative assessment is implemented for a whole class while also responding to the needs of a student with special educational needs (SEN), particularly in Indonesian secondary English education. Examining this process is important because inclusive formative assessment involves not only the design of assessment activities but also how teachers interpret evidence of learning and make responsive decisions during classroom interaction. The present study therefore provides a context-specific account of how formative assessment is translated from planning into responsive classroom practice.

The study was conducted in an inclusive Grade VIII English classroom at a public junior secondary school in Bali, Indonesia. The class consisted of 39 students with diverse learning characteristics, including one student with special educational needs. The case was selected because it provided an opportunity to examine formative assessment as it occurred in an ordinary inclusive English classroom. The teacher had not previously received specialized training in inclusive education and had no prior experience teaching students with special educational needs before teaching this class. This context provides an opportunity to examine how formative assessment practices were enacted and adapted in response to students' learning needs within everyday classroom instruction.

This study examines how formative assessment is implemented in English learning in an inclusive classroom. The analysis focuses on the relationship between assessment planning, classroom enactment, evidence of learning, feedback, student participation, and adaptation. By concentrating on implementation, the study highlights how formative assessment operates as part of everyday instruction and how inclusive responsiveness becomes visible through classroom practice.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of formative assessment implementation in an inclusive English classroom. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study examined classroom practices, teacher decision-making, interactions, and adaptations as they occurred in a natural instructional setting. The case focused specifically on how formative assessment was planned, enacted, interpreted, and adapted during English instruction. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification as interconnected analytical activities.

Research Setting and Participant

The study was conducted in an inclusive Grade VIII English classroom at a public junior secondary school in Bali, Indonesia, consisting of 39 students with diverse learning characteristics, including one student with special educational needs (SEN). The primary participant was the English teacher responsible for planning and implementing English instruction and formative assessment. Before teaching the class, the teacher had not received specialized training in inclusive education and had no prior experience teaching students with SEN. The student with SEN was examined as part of the classroom case rather than as an isolated participant, and no personally identifying information is reported.

Data Collection

Three sources of qualitative data were used: non-participant classroom observation, a semi-structured interview, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted

during English lessons from July 9 to July 23, 2026, focusing on formative assessment activities, assessment adaptation, teacher–student interaction, feedback, and student participation, with relevant events recorded through field notes. A semi-structured interview with the English teacher explored her understanding and implementation of formative assessment, decision-making, and support provided for students with SEN; the interview was audio-recorded with consent and transcribed for analysis. Document analysis examined the teaching module, worksheets, assessment instruments or rubrics, students’ work samples, and relevant school documents to identify how assessment, learning progress, accessibility, flexibility, and feedback were represented. The three data sources were compared to strengthen the credibility of the findings through triangulation.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). First, interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents were condensed by selecting information directly related to formative assessment implementation. Second, the condensed information was organized into descriptive categories and displays to facilitate comparison across data sources. Third, patterns were interpreted and verified through repeated comparison of interview, observation, and document evidence. For this article, the analysis was narrowed to the implementation dimension, particularly the relationship between planning, classroom enactment, teacher responsiveness, feedback, and assessment adaptation. The comparison across data sources was used to distinguish what was formally planned from what was actually enacted during classroom instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formative Assessment as an Embedded Classroom Process

The findings show that formative assessment was embedded throughout the learning process rather than conducted as a separate assessment session. Document analysis indicated that the teaching module provided assessment opportunities across several stages of instruction. In the Apperception stage, guiding questions were used to elicit students’ initial responses. During the Collaborative Space stage, students worked through Worksheet 1 (LKPD 1), allowing the teacher to monitor participation and understanding. The Contextual Demonstration stage involved individual work through Worksheet 2 (LKPD 2), while the Guided Reflection stage provided opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and difficulties.

The teacher’s interview account supported this pattern. She explained that formative assessment needed to occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the lesson to identify students who had understood the material and those who still required support. She also emphasized that students’ progress during learning was more important than the final score because evidence gathered during instruction helped her decide whether to repeat explanations or provide additional assistance.

This finding reflects the view of formative assessment as an ongoing process of inquiry and action in which evidence of learning informs subsequent instructional responses (Heritage, 2020). It is also consistent with Black and Wiliam (2009), who emphasize that assessment becomes formative when evidence is used to improve teaching and learning rather than simply recorded as a score. In this classroom, formative assessment was therefore integrated into instruction through questioning, monitoring, individual tasks, and reflection.

From Planned Assessment to Responsive Implementation

A central finding was the difference between planned formative assessment and its classroom implementation. The written assessment plan was largely designed for the whole class, whereas classroom implementation was adjusted in response to students’ learning evidence

and the conditions of classroom interaction. Document analysis showed that the observation rubric included dimensions such as collaboration, critical thinking, and independent learning using a four-point rating scale. However, it did not specify differentiated criteria, modified scoring procedures, or alternative assessment arrangements for the student with SEN.

Classroom observations showed that the teacher did not implement the plan mechanically. For example, a collaborative activity initially planned as a worksheet-based task was changed into a performance activity in which groups created prohibition expressions and represented them through body gestures. During the activity, the teacher moved around the classroom, listened to students' discussions, observed participation, and asked follow-up questions when students appeared uncertain or showed possible misconceptions.

The change in activity demonstrates that the purpose of formative assessment was maintained even when the planned procedure changed. The teacher used information emerging from classroom interaction to determine how the activity should proceed. This supports the view that formative assessment is not simply a fixed set of procedures but involves teachers interpreting evidence and responding to it within specific classroom contexts (Andrade & Beekman, 2023; Furtak et al., 2008). The finding therefore highlights a distinction between assessment as planned and assessment as enacted: the written plan provided a common structure, while classroom evidence enabled the teacher to make responsive decisions.

Monitoring and Feedback as the Link Between Evidence and Instruction

The findings show that continuous monitoring and immediate feedback connected assessment evidence with instructional action. During collaborative activities, the teacher observed participation, listened to students' ideas, and asked questions when students appeared uncertain. During individual work, she examined how students interpreted notices, cautions, and warnings and paid attention not only to their answers but also to their understanding and reasoning.

When inaccurate or incomplete understanding was identified, the teacher provided immediate feedback. In the interview, she explained that mistakes were corrected during the activity so that students would not continue repeating the same errors. Classroom observations supported this account, showing feedback through acknowledgment of correct responses, clarification, correction, and additional guidance.

These practices indicate that assessment evidence was actively used rather than merely collected. Questioning and observation helped the teacher identify students' understanding, while feedback provided an immediate response to the evidence. This is consistent with the view that formative assessment involves using evidence to inform subsequent teaching and learning (Schildkamp et al., 2020). It also corresponds with research emphasizing feedback that helps language learners recognize errors and clarify how to improve (Wolsey & Karkouti, 2024).

Assessment Adaptation in an Inclusive Classroom

A further finding was that the inclusive dimension of formative assessment became most visible through the teacher's responsive adaptation during classroom interaction. Although the teaching module did not explicitly provide differentiated assessment criteria or procedures, the teacher adjusted the form and level of support provided to the student with SEN. During collaborative activities, she approached the student's group more frequently, repeated instructions using simpler language, pointed to the relevant task, and monitored participation step by step. The student's parent also assisted when necessary to help maintain attention and understanding of instructions.

During individual work, the teacher spent additional time beside the student, read questions together, simplified language, when necessary, pointed to relevant parts of the worksheet, and provided additional time. The student was not required to complete the task at

exactly the same pace as other students. Instead, the level of support was adjusted according to the student's responses and progress.

These practices allowed the teacher to gather evidence of learning while reducing barriers to participation. Importantly, the contrast between planning and implementation indicates that inclusion was less visible in the formal assessment instrument but more visible in the teacher's real-time responses. Thus, the inclusive character of formative assessment was enacted primarily through responsive interaction rather than predetermined differentiation.

This finding is consistent with research suggesting that students with exceptional learning needs may require appropriate assessment accommodations to reduce barriers while maintaining alignment with learning goals (Xu & Kuti, 2024). It also supports broader research on formative assessment in inclusive education, which emphasizes the importance of using evidence of learning to adjust support for diverse learners (Weber et al., 2025). At the same time, the absence of differentiated criteria in the rubric indicates that inclusive assessment relied substantially on the teacher's professional judgment. More explicit consideration of inclusive assessment during planning could provide greater structure while preserving the flexibility required during classroom implementation.

Student Participation and Meaningful Evidence of Learning

The findings also show that students demonstrated learning through multiple forms of classroom participation. They responded to questions, discussed ideas in groups, completed individual tasks, performed body gestures to represent prohibition expressions, and reflected on their learning. These activities enabled the teacher to obtain evidence of learning beyond written answers.

For the student with SEN, participation was supported through additional guidance rather than separation from the general classroom activity. Closer monitoring, simplified instructions, and additional time enabled the student to remain involved in the same general learning environment while receiving individualized assistance. The teacher therefore used formative assessment not only to identify students' understanding but also to determine the support needed for continued participation.

This finding illustrates that inclusive formative assessment does not necessarily require identical forms of support for all learners. Instead, students may require different levels of assistance to participate meaningfully while working toward shared learning goals. This is consistent with research highlighting the potential of formative assessment to support diverse learners when teachers use evidence to adjust instruction and support (Costa Akoyt, 2024; Weber et al., 2025).

An Implementation Cycle Emerging from the Case

Taken together, the findings suggest an implementation cycle emerging from the case: eliciting evidence → monitoring → interpreting → providing feedback → adapting instruction or support. Questioning and classroom activities generated evidence of students' understanding and participation, while feedback and adaptation translated this evidence into subsequent classroom action. In the inclusive context, adaptation was particularly visible when the teacher provided simpler instructions, additional time, or closer guidance to the student with SEN.

This cycle should not be regarded as a validated model because it emerged from one teacher and one classroom. Rather, it summarizes the pattern identified in the case and highlights the relationship between planned assessment and responsive practice. The central finding is that formative assessment became more inclusive when assessment evidence was translated into flexible instructional and assessment support.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, it involved a single teacher and one classroom, so the findings describe this particular context and should not be considered representative of

inclusive English classrooms generally. Second, data collection covered a relatively short period, from July 9 to July 23, 2026, and therefore may not capture variation in formative assessment practices across a full semester or different instructional topics. Third, the perspectives of the student with SEN and other students were not directly examined. The findings therefore rely primarily on classroom observations, the teacher's account, and document evidence.

Future research could examine formative assessment over a longer period and across multiple teachers or classrooms. Including student perspectives would also provide a broader understanding of how assessment adaptations, feedback, and classroom participation are experienced by learners with diverse needs.

CONCLUSION

This study found that formative assessment was implemented as a continuous and responsive part of inclusive English instruction through questioning, observation, feedback, performance activities, and reflection. Although formal assessment planning was mainly designed for the whole class, the teacher adapted instructions, guidance, time, and monitoring in response to students' learning needs, particularly for the student with special educational needs. This finding highlights that the inclusive dimension of formative assessment was more visible in responsive classroom practice than in formal assessment planning. Therefore, formative assessment in inclusive classrooms should combine clear planning with flexibility to respond to students' needs. Since this study involved only one teacher and one classroom, future research should examine similar practices across longer periods and multiple classrooms.

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