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ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAM

Implementation of Formative Assessment as a Strategy to Measure the Students'
Performance during English Class Working on Grammar Content with Seventh Year
Students at Instituto of Alajuela during the third Quarter of 2017

PRACTICUM SEMINAR

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1.INTRODUCTORY ASPECTS

1.1. Introductory aspects

1.1.1. Research Proposal

This research is carried out in the Instituto of Alajuela. The institute is a public educational center. The participants are seventh year students of the groups 7-3 and 7-8. The students are between 13 and 15 years old during the third quarter, 2017.

About the geographical zone the high school takes place, it is important to mention it is located in the central district of Alajuela. Therefore, the student population varies in terms of educational background, social, and financial status. These differences set the needs and characteristic of every seventh year group.

Regarding the institution, it was founded in 1887. Along the time it has been located in different building in Alajuela's central district. The current building was inaugurated in 1962. Through its long existence, many important people in Costa Rica's history have studied in Institute of Alajuela; for example: religious leaders, politicians, artists, and athletes.

1.1.2. Mission

Tiene como norte la formación integral del educando en sus aspectos: físico, ético-moral, tecnológico, artístico, académico y social, mediante el compromiso de Institución Benemérita y Centenaria, con procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje orientados hacia la competitividad que promuevan no solo el desarrollo humano sino el pensamiento ético y las potencialidades del estudiante (Instituto de Alajuela, n.d)

1.1.3. Vision

Se concibe al Instituto de Alajuela, como una institución que brinda excelencia académica fundamentada en los más altos valores de la educación costarricense, cuyo prestigio de Institución Benemérita y Centenaria determina las aspiraciones de

competitividad necesarias para el educando que a él ingrese y la calidad de ciudadano que en él se forme: hombre y mujeres de éxito. (Instituto de Alajuela, n.d)

1.1.4. Research Antecedents

In 2011, the thesis “Methodological grading rubrics analysis for a better performance on the conversation teaching in English applied to eighth grade students from Liceo Bilingüe de Belen third circuit first trimester 2011” was presented at Hispanoamericana University by Warner Valle Briceño. In this research, Valle focuses on how the grading rubrics, as summative assessment instrument, are not effective to improve the students’ oral skills. Instead, he finds the students feel nervous and anxious when performing the tasks (2011, p. 111)

On the other hand, Warner Valle explains how the formative assessment can enhance the students learning of English. He considers the formative assessment is “an optimal way of evaluation because it pursuits the goal of helping the students to grown in the use of English language” (2011, p.117). In addition, Valle suggest feedback as the main strategy to provide formative feedback. He thinks “constructive and continuous feedback is one of the main key to help students improve English skills” (2011, p. 117).

In 2017 a study published by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance evaluated the effectiveness of the studies related to formative assessment released between 1988 and 2014. One of the purposes of the investigation was to identify the effect of formative assessment on elementary school student achievement. Also, this study sought to identify the effect of formative assessment in two different approaches: student-directed or other-directed.

One of the conclusions reached in this study confirms the positive effect of formative assessment on the students learning process. The review team concluded “...students who participated in formative assessment performed better on measures of academic achievement than those who did not” (Klute, Aphthord, Harlacher, & Reale, 2017, p. 1)

1.1.5. Problem

The evaluation of English language learning at Institute of Alajuela is purely summative. The students have to work on the copies, and based on what they did in the class, the exam will be created. The problem with this model is that if for some reason, lack of understanding or interest, the students perform badly in the everyday work. This will affect negatively their summative evaluation at the end of the term. Another factor considered a problem regarding the formative assessment is the absence of monitoring of the student progress in the works assigned in the class. This situation prevents the teacher of detecting problems when resolving the exercises given. At the same time, the students are not provided with the necessary feedback to develop their English skills properly. As a result of not having enough feedback from the teacher, the students do not feel comfortable with their answer when checking the exercises, which leads to a low participation of the students in the class.

1.1.6. Justification

The current research is justified by the multiple benefits that formative assessment provides to the learning process of the students. Setting strategies to continuously assess the students formatively is necessary to achieve a better performance of the students in the class and the end of term evaluation. Also, the teachers must get to know the students' weak spots to support them and help them to overcome the difficulties in the subject.

1.2. Problem Formulation

How does the implementation of monitoring and feedback as formative assessment techniques can improve the class when studying English grammar content?

1.3. Research Objective

1.3.1. General Objective

- Implementing formative assessment as a strategy to measure the students' performance during English class working on grammar content with seventh year students at Instituto of Alajuela during the third quarter of 2017

1.3.2. Specific objectives

- Analyzing the concept of formative assessment and how its implementation can improve the study of English grammar content with seventh year students in the English class at institute of Alajuela.
- Designing a guide to implement formative assessment as a strategy to measure the students' performance during English class working on grammar content with seventh year students at Instituto of Alajuela
- Comparing the effectiveness of monitoring and feedback as formative assessment techniques to work English grammar content with seventh year students in the English class at institute of Alajuela

1.4. Scopes and limitations

1.4.1. Scope

The research takes into consideration the groups of seventh year of Institute of Alajuela that attend to classes with María José Espinoza Castro. These groups are the 7-3 and 7-8. The research is developed during the third trimester of the school year in 2017.

1.4.2. Limitations

The main limitations faced during the development the research were the following:

- The groups missed a lot of time during the period the research was done. Both groups lost many lessons due to exams and teachers' congresses.
- The attendance of the students was not constant in both groups. There were students who took the first quiz, but did not do it the second time. This situation might have affected the results in some way.
- The students' attitude towards learning was not the best for the developing of the research. Some students did not work or showed to the class. This made the gathering of information a little difficult.

2.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. State of the Art

2.1.1. What is assessment?

Assessment is a process usually confused with evaluation. In the education field, the assessment of the students consists, basically, in recovering information about the students' performance in the class to improve their learning experience. According to the Canadian Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture (2016) the assessment process gathers the information on the students' learning; and the evaluation process consists of making decision based on the information gathered (p. 46). The assessment process has 2 different kinds: summative and formative.

The process of assessing the students provides the teachers the necessary feedback to make decision over the learning path of the students. This process is not only responsibility of the teacher; students' participation is also necessary. This means that both, teachers and students, must be compromised to the assessment process in order to make it worth. Harlen & James (1996) argue that both parties must be involved in the decision, and the learner is expect to take responsibility to make the necessary effort (p. 6).

2.1.2. Summative assessment

Summative assessment can be easily related in education. It has to do with exams, among other strategies that have as final purpose to measure the students' knowledge through a specific period of time. Its results provide a bigger picture of the current status of the learners after the instructional process. This means the information recovered measures the group as a whole. Warner Valle (2011) says "summative assessment aims to measure or summarize, what student has grasped" (p. 48).

Summative assessment's results are usually used to inform the student and parents about the progress during the term. Also, these results represent a quantitative record of the learning of the students along the time. On the other hand, the outcome of the summative assessment is a great indicator for educational authorities to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs. Chappuis & Chappuis conclude that the purpose of summative assessment "... is to measure the level of student, school, or program success" (2007, p. 15). To sum up, the main purpose of summative assessment is to inform the results of a teaching process or an educational program as it represents a quantitative representation of the students' learning.

Because summative assessment intends to measure the knowledge of the students during a period of time, this is usually made at the end of the instructional period. Dixson & Worrell include final exams, state tests, final performances, and term papers as summative assessment examples (2016, p. 156). In Costa Rica's context, the best example of the summative assessment are the standardized tests that high school students take to get the high school diploma. The results are gathered and analyzed by the MEP authorities to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs in every subject.

2.1.3. Formative assessment

The formative assessment is the task the teacher performs on daily basis, and most of the time no one sees. However, it is the most important assessment because unlike the summative assessment, formative happens inside the class every day. Formative is related as everything the teacher does to enrich the students learning. The data collected during formative assessment is taken into consideration to measure the student learning and make decisions to enhance their learning. About formative assessment, Greenstein (2010) believes the information recovered in the formative process can be used to improve the learning while

it is still in progress and the outcome can be influenced (p. 2). It can be said that the formative assessment focuses on the process of acquiring knowledge rather than the knowledge itself.

Regarding the purpose of the formative assessment, there is no actual difference with summative. The goal is to gather information of the students learning throughout the instructional time; what changes is the use of the information collected. The recovered data helps the teacher to be aware of the pupils learning problems during the time they acquire knowledge. Therefore, teachers can improve the teaching strategies to reach for a significant learning. Harlen & James state that “formative assessment is essentially feedback to the teacher and student (...) to determine the way forward” (1996, p. 4). Because this assessment takes place during the instructional period, this means it is carried out by the teacher during the time before the assessment. It is a process that requires the teacher to be constantly monitoring the students, providing feedback, checking exercises, or clearing doubts. All this have to be done with the entire group or individual students. Chappuis & Chappuis emphasize that formative assessment “is an ongoing, dynamic process that involves more than frequent testing” (2007, p. 15).

2.1.4. Formative assessment techniques

2.1.4.1. Monitoring

Providing formative assessment to the students requires certain class management skills. Among the all the techniques related to class control, monitoring is the key in the formative assessment. Since formative measuring demands the teacher to spot for weaknesses in the learners’ acquisition of knowledge process, monitoring gives the instructor the information needed to gather the information. The Ministry of Education of Spain summarizes the purposes of monitoring in the following statements:

- Assess learners' performance on tasks or more generally on their language progress/recent skills development.
- Be able to decide what to do next (revise, re-explain, go on, give up!).
- Give ourselves opportunities to micro-teach individuals or pairs who need additional help.
- Provide appropriate feedback and correction, either during or after the activity (2011, p. 158-159).

Considering the purposes proposed by the Ministry of Education of Spain, monitoring not only helps the teacher to identify the flaws of the students, but also creates the opportunity to correct the possible issues right on the spot. An opportune adjustment in the student's task, or the instruction, makes the learners to feel comfortable with their performance; as a result, aspects like participation and peer-assessment seem benefit from it. Even though monitoring is as simple as walk around the classroom, listen and answer questions of the students during the task, its contribution is vital to the formative assessment process.

2.1.4.2. Feedback

The concept of feedback can be broadly understood as any given comment on the student work. This means that whenever the teacher checks or corrects their job, it is considered feedback. In 2009, Marks defines feedback as "any comments, questions, or error corrections written [or delivered orally] on the students' assignment (as cited in Agbayahoun. 2016, p. 1896). A very common example of feedback are comments such as "Great job!" or pointing out mistakes. However, in the formative assessment process, feedback must be meaningful for the students. Therefore, the comments by itself are not effective for the formative purpose. According to Martínez-Gudapakkam, Mutch-Jones, & Hicks (2017) the

meaningful feedback validates the students' understanding and helps them to move forward in the learning process (p. 91)

Another consideration about feedback is the way it is given. The observations of the teacher must be delivered in a constructive and suggestive tone. A destructive manner of informing the areas of improvement of the students can discourage them to keep working in the task. On the other hand, feedback is not giving the answers; on the contrary, it is about letting the students know what needs to be fixed, and provide the opportunity to correct themselves. Agbayahoun (2016) states that feedback "instead of taking the form of instructions or criticism, (Wolf, Dunlap, & Stevens, 2012) it should offer suggestions for improvement" (p. 1896). In the formative assessment, feedback's goal is to give the students a preview of their learning and a chance to fix for the better before the summative assessment.

Providing meaningful feedback to the students makes them realize what to amend during the instructional period. This practice in the long term creates awareness in the students about their learning process. At a level of the work in the classroom, feedback can influence in the participation of the students in the class. Because feedback tell the students what to improve and how to approach the limitations, it can be a tool to engage the pupils in the tasks performed during the instruction. At the end of the instructional period, if the student embraced the feedback and made the necessary correction, it is expected a meaningful learning in the students learning process.

2.1.4.3. Self-assessment

The self-assessment process is students centered, but it requires close guidance of the teacher. Its main objective is to allow the student to think critically about his/her performance during the instructional period. About self-assessment, Wolf, Dunlap, &

mention that “when students self-assess, they develop a deeper understanding of their own performances and what they need to do to improve” (p. 75). This strategy allows the student to empower in their own learning process by giving them the opportunity to actively participate in their own assessment. A meta-analysis by Sebba and colleagues showed that students who participated in self-assessment strategies were more likely to have a greater engagement in learning and developed independent learning skills (2008, as cited in Greenstein, 2010, p. 115). The self-assessment as a formative assessment strategy works in terms of making the students think about their own learning. The learners must consider what they learned, what represented a problem, and also to foresee future predicaments in the subject.

2.1.5. Timing of formative assessment

As stated before, formative assessment takes place during the instructional period. However, this time is considerably long, and the results of an unplanned formative assessment process could be not effective for the purposes of this process. Taking this into consideration, Laura Greenstein divides the instruction period in 3 stages, and provides objectives in each stage. The stages are:

- **Prior instruction:** In this stage the students have not had any contact with the subject to be developed. The author proposes a pre assessment strategy that has a final goal to determine the students’ background knowledge. Once the teacher knows this, the classes can be planned using this information to reinforce the weaknesses and explode their virtues in the subject to be studied.
- **During instruction:** While the time the instruction is given, the teacher can measure the level of understanding of the students about what is being studied. In this stage,

the author proposes activities that help to survey the students' understanding at a specific time of the instruction.

- After instruction: This final stage is intended to tie all the loose ends. The goal is to identify what the students find difficult at the end of the instruction and reinforce it before the summative assessment or the standardized tests. The author mentions home works or quizzes to identify these flaws (Greenstein [Part 2: Using Formative Assessment], 2010).

These stages at different times of the instructional period help the teacher to organize the formative assessment. Also, in every stage there are objectives and aspects to identify related to the students learning.

3.METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Research type

3.1.1. Magnitude

The magnitude of this research is micro. This project only considers the results of the implementation of formative assessment to work grammar content in the English class of 2 seventh year groups at Institute of Alajuela.

3.1.2. Temporal scope

The research has a cross-cutting temporal scope. It only considers the results obtained during the third quarter of 2017 at Institute of Alajuela.

3.1.3. Condition

The research is considered a filed research. It implied the observation and implementation of strategies were performed at the English classroom.

3.1.4. Quantitative approach

The quantitative approach was used to process the results obtained in the standardized test applied to the students. Using this approach the answers given by the students can be easily sort out, express them in a numeric way, and compare the data collected.

3.1.5. Qualitative approach

The results gathered in the observations are processed using the qualitative approach. The use of this approach intends to analyze the specific behavior of the students at specific moment of the observations.

3.1.6. Nature

The research belongs to the descriptive nature because it gathers and analyzes the basics to implement the formative assessment in the English class. The theoretical support is based on previous researches and literature about formative assessment subject. Also, it describes a specific situation and the effects of the implementation of formative assessment in the English class.

3.2. Subjects and sources

3.2.1. Primary sources

The primary sources consist of a thesis and an investigation found online in EBSCOhost and e-library webpages

- Methodological grading rubrics analysis for a better performance on the conversation teaching in english applied to eighth grade students from Liceo bilingüe de Belen third circuit first trimester 2011, Universidad Hispanoamericana, Costa Rica, 2011.
- Formative assessment and elementary school student academic achievement: a review of the evidence, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, United States of America, 2017.

3.2.2. Secondary sources

The secondary sources are academic publications and magazine articles found in EBSCOhost, e-library and google academic webpages.

3.3. Sampling selection

3.3.1. Population

The population considered in this research are students of seventh year of Institute of Alajuela.

3.3.2. Sample

The population taken into account in this research are students of seventh year of Institute of Alajuela. These students are from the 7-3 and 7-8 groups. In the 7-3 there were 16 students between the 13 and 14 years old. In the 7-8 there were 16 students between the 13 and 15 years old.

3.4. Instruments and strategy for information gathering

3.4.1. Instruments for information gathering

The technique used to carry out this research included 2 groups. One of the groups, the 7-3 was the control group, this means that these students were exposed to the formative assessment strategies. The other group, the 7-8, was the group where no formative assessment strategies were implemented. The selection of these groups was because they were at the same level in terms of contents and time. Also, the amount of students was similar.

The instruments used to conduct the research are standardized test and observations.

Standardized test: The use of standardized test is to quantify the learning of the students at specific moment of the instruction. The instrument consisted of 15 questions about the use of “be going to”. This instrument was applied two times to each group. The first time it was applied, it gathered information about the students learning at two specific times: prior and during the instruction. The second time it was applied to measure the understanding of the

students after the instruction. The results obtained the first time were used to identify common mistakes, areas of improvement, and students who were struggling with the content. The results obtained the second time were used to measure the students understanding after the instruction.

To sort out the students results, these were classify in the following scale:

- Failed: 0-5 correct answers.
- Needs improvement: 6-11 correct answers
- Passed: 11-15 correct answers.

Observation: During the instructional period the students were subjects of observations. Each group was observed one time after taking the quiz (instrument) with the objective to record the reaction of the students once the formative assessment were implemented. This observation had as main purpose to identify the behavior of the students in 3 different levels: understanding of the content, engagement in the task, and participation in the task. Both observations lasted 2 lessons (120 minutes). To obtain more relevant facts about the groups, the following observation guide was used.

Criteria	Observations
Students' understanding of the content.	When monitoring, observe if the students actually understood. Check if the exercises of the task are done correctly, or common mistakes to be corrected right away. Also, mind the amount of feedback required by the students. For example, if all the students or just a few required it.
Students' engagement during the task.	When monitoring, identify the students that are working and those who are not. For those that are not working, check the reasons why (maybe they did not understand or simple do not care)
Students' participation during the task.	When checking the exercises of the task, keep track of the students that are participating. Identify the students that do it constantly and those who do not do it. Find out the reason why they do not want to participate (they might feel embarrassed or do not have the answers)

3.4.2. Strategy for information gathering

The gathering information required the comparison between 2 different seventh year groups. One of the groups was the control group which means this group was exposed 19

to the formative assessment strategies performed by the teacher. The other group was not exposed to the formative assessment strategies. As stated above, the objective was to compare the results of the implementation of formative assessment to work with grammar contents in the English class.

In the control group, the teacher implemented monitoring and feedback as formative assessment strategies for the students to work the grammar content studied at that specific time. The role in the teacher required more interaction with the students when monitoring and giving feedback. Meanwhile, in the other group the students had to walk to the teacher's desk for clearing doubts of checking their work. The role of the teacher was passive as the students were the ones who had to seek for assistance.

For the observation, there were not specific activities for the students. In the two groups, they kept working on the task assigned by the teacher as usual. After the explanation of the content and the task, the teacher started to observe the students' performance. When observing, the teacher had the observation rubric at hand taking notes about the class development throughout the 120 minutes English lesson. The role of the teacher was to observe and to pay attention to the specific information suggested in the observation guide.

4.DATA ANALYSIS

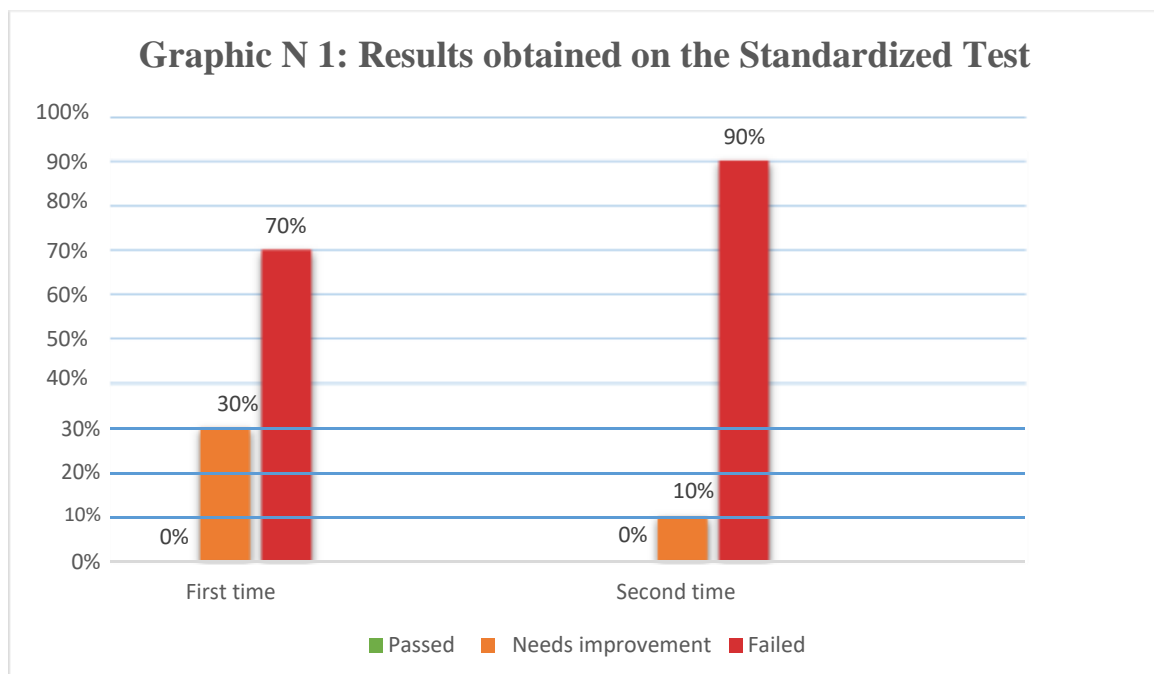
4.1. Quantitative analysis

4.1.1. Standardized test results: Group 7-8

The following results belong to the 7-8 group only.

Chart N 1: Results obtained on the Standardized Test

Criteria	First time results	Second time results
Failed (0-5 correct answers)	70% (10 students)	90% (8 students)
Needs improvement (6-10 correct answers)	30% (4 students)	10% (1 student)
Passed (11-15 correct answers)	0% (0 students)	0% (0 students)
Total	100% (14 students)	100% (9 students)



The results of the first time the students took the quiz show that a 0% passed the quiz, a 30% of the student needed improvement in terms of understanding of the content, and a 70% failed at answering the quiz. On the other hand, the second time they faced the quiz shows that 0% of the students passed, a 10% of the students needed improvement in terms of understanding of the content, and a 90% failed the test.

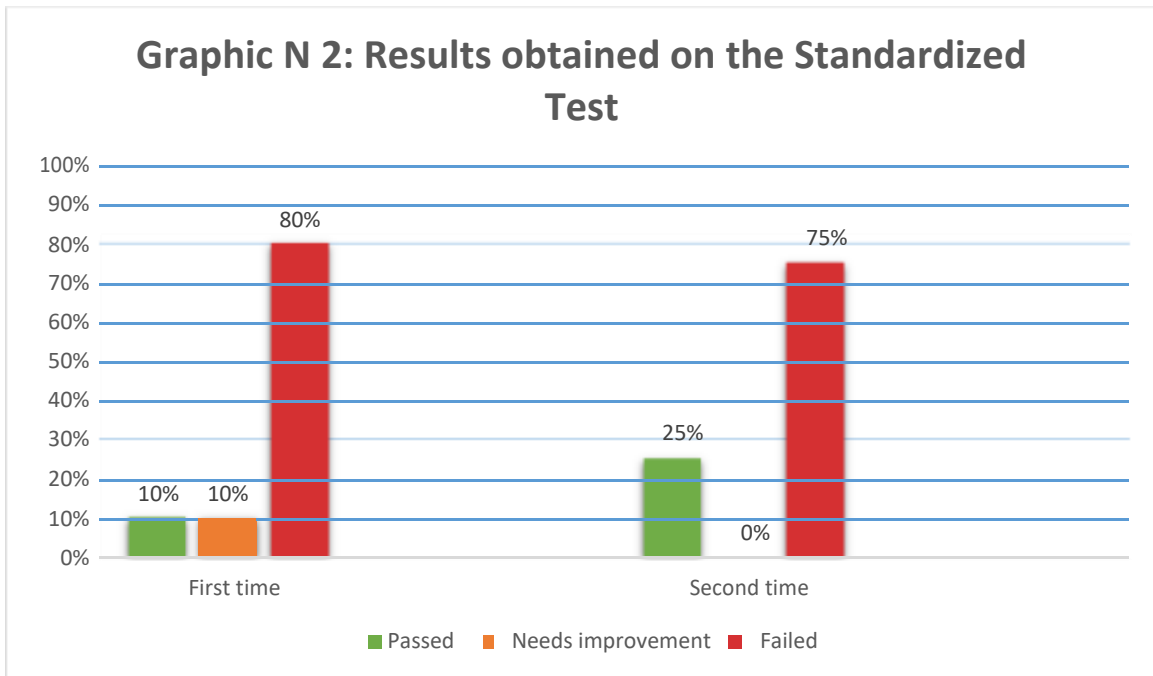
Therefore, based on the results these students showed no improvement in the understanding of the content studied. Also, because of the increase of students who failed, it seems that the students who needed improvement lowered their performance.

4.1.2. Standardized test results: Group 7-3

The following results belong to the 7-3 group only.

Chart N 2: Results obtained on the Standardized Test

Criteria	First time results	Second time results
Failed (0-5 correct answers)	80% (6 students)	75% (9 students)
Needs improvement (6-10 correct answers)	10% (1 student)	0% (0 students)
Passed(11-15correct answers)	10% (1 student)	25% (3 students)
Total	100% (8 students)	100% (12 students)



The results of the first time the students took the quiz show that a 10% of the students passed the exam, another 10% needed improvement in terms of understanding of the content, and a 80% of the students failed the quiz. On the other hand, the second time the students faced the quiz a 25% of the students passed the exam, a 0% of them needed improvement, and a 75% of the students failed the quiz.

Therefore, based on the results some students improved in terms of understanding of the content. Also, the students who passed the quiz the first time seem to maintain the level of understanding.

4.2. Qualitative analysis

4.2.1. Observation results: Group 7-8

The observations were performed while the students were working on the exercises assigned by the teacher. This analysis of the observations takes into account 3 main aspects: the understanding of the content, engagement in the task, and participation in the task.

The following results belong to the 7-8 group observation. This observation to the 7-8 group was performed on October 19th, 2017. On this date, the students were working on exercises about the use and meaning of “going to be” as future form. The formative assessment techniques were not implemented with these students. The results are the following:

The observations on the understanding of the content reflected that most of the students did not understand the content. Many of them worked on the exercises, but the answers were not correct, and just a few students requested an extra explanation. On the other hand, just a few students clearly understood the content and worked with no further problem. In terms of the students’ engagement on the task, it can be said that a few students were working on the task assigned. There were students who were not working because of the lack material, or understanding. Some other students were reluctant to work on the task. About the students’ participation, there were not an active participation of the students during the task assigned. Most of the students did not ask the teacher if there were doubts about the content, instead they waited for the teacher to check it with the rest of the class. Also, when checking the exercises of the task, the students did not want to answer the exercises in a volunteer way, as a result the teacher called out their names to answer, and still there were students who did not participated at all. There were just a few students who participated, and these were the same students who did not have any problem with the content.

4.2.2. Observation results: Group 7-3

The following results belong to the 7-3 group observation. This observation to the 7-3 group was performed on October 20th, 2017. On this date, the students were working on

exercises about the use and meaning of “going to be” as future form. The formative assessment techniques were implemented with these students. The results are the following:

Understanding of the content: Monitoring revealed that most of the students worked on the assignment; however, most of them were struggling with the content. At that exact moment, the feedback was provided for the students to start working or correct their work. On the other hand, few students clearly understood the content and worked with no further problem. In terms of the students’ engagement on the task, most of the students were working on the exercises. There were few students who were not working because of the lack of material, at that moment they were assigned a classmate to work with. The students who received feedback kept working on the assignment and requesting the teacher’s assistance when needed. There were not students unwilling to work. About the students’ participation, it was observed that there were an active involvement of the students in the task. Most of the students asked the teacher if there were doubts about the content or the task. When checking the exercises, the students were willing to volunteer to share their answers; however, there were students who did not participated in the checking of the exercises. It is important to mention that few students wanted to participate more than the rest, so it was necessary to ask the student to pick turns to answer the exercises.

4.3. Contrasting of the observation results

The results of the observations of these two groups show a difference in the performance of the students. When it comes to the understanding of the content, there were not much difference. In both groups the grammar content was not clearly understood and required extra explanation of it. However, in terms of engagement of the task, the students exposed to the formative assessment strategies performed by the teacher engaged better than

the students who were not. Also, based on the observations, the students who were provided feedback kept asking the teacher whenever they had questions. While on the group with no formative assessment strategies, just a few students asked the teacher for an extra explanation. Regarding participation of the students, there was a much bigger difference. The students in the group with a formative assessment participated more than the other group; which means that by the time of checking the exercises, most of the students had finished their work. Something completely different happened in the group with no formative assessment process. In this group a great part of the students did not participate in the checking or did not work at all.

5.FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Findings

The formative assessment process pursues the formation and guidance of the students throughout a period of time before they face the summative assessment. That is why monitoring and feedback are essential in this process. The following findings are related to the implementation of the previous mentioned strategies as part of this process.

When using monitoring as part of formative assessment, it is not only to have a better class management but also to create opportunities to assess the students. As cited before, the ministry of Spain assures that monitoring allows the teacher to assess the students, make decisions, or provide feedback (2011, p. 158-159). When teaching, monitoring is really important as it let the teacher know if the students are working, if they are lost in the content, or if the students have the necessary material to work. It is really hard to do it all sitting in the desk. Related to the research, the most significant finding on the implementation of monitoring is that the students communicated better with the teacher. Because the teacher was walking around, helping the students, and providing feedback, it made the students know they could ask for help if needed. Also, monitoring kept most of the students working on the task. This is something that did not happen when the teacher stayed at the desk.

Regarding the use of feedback in the formative assessment process, this strategy is fundamental during the development of the instructional period. The main goal is to amend the possible troubles before the summative assessment. Besides the importance of feedback to the formative assessment process, it is also important the learning process of the students. The research proved that providing meaningful feedback to the students actually enhanced the participation of the students. When providing feedback to the students who were struggling with the content, they involved more in the task. Based on the results, the students

engaged more and were more willing to participate when checking. In addition, as Agbayahoun mentioned, the feedback has to be given in a suggestive way (2016, p. 1896). This way of commenting and suggesting changes in the students' progress helped to encourage the students to keep asking how to improve their work and to increase the students' participation in the class.

The timing of the assessment is also important to keep in mind when formative assess the students. About this aspect, Laura Greenstein suggested three specific moments to assess: prior, during and after instruction (Greenstein [Part 2: Using Formative Assessment], 2010). Using the information collected prior instruction, the planning of the class was better oriented in terms of looking for the more suitable activities to work with the students' background knowledge. Also, during the instruction the students brainstormed about the content at the beginning of every class. This exercise let the teacher know the students' understanding at a specific time during the instruction. However, the results of the assessment after the instruction could not be confirmed due to multiple interruptions in the process.

In terms of the process of formative assessment it can be said that it is nor simple nor difficult. This process, as stated above, is an everyday process carried out inside the class. Therefore it requires the commitment of the teacher to do it the best every day. This compromise with the students involves planning and accommodating the class for the different needs of the students, being constantly monitoring the students looking for areas of improvement among the students and providing feedback for the students. This task becomes difficult when there are approximately 180 students in 8 different groups or even more. However, monitoring and providing feedback is part of the teacher's role inside the class. Therefore, it does not represent an extra effort for the teacher, but a responsibility. In addition,

the research showed that the usage of these two strategies together the participation and engagement of the students in the task improved. Knowing this, the learning environment could improve at a long term making the formative assessment process easier for the teacher.

Finally, another finding of the use of these strategies together is how it improved the timing of conclusion of the exercises. This improvement in the time the students complete the exercises is good in terms of making a good use of the lessons. The improvement was mainly because the students, thanks to the monitoring and feedback performed by the teacher, understood better the content and the task they were assigned. On the contrary, the group with no formative assessment tended to last longer on the same exercises.

5.2. Recommendations

The following suggestions are given to improve or to keep in mind when implementing the formative assessment process:

- The first recommendation, and the most important, is to use the results of the formative assessment process to make decisions on the students learning process. The whole idea of this process is to identify the flaws in the learning and correct them. Therefore, the results might be good hints when planning the class or looking for activities to work with the group.
- When monitoring, it is important to let the students know you are there. However, it is also necessary to keep distance. Therefore, it is suggested that the teacher stays in a neutral position when monitoring. Walking in the rows or by the students' desk without getting too close is just fine. Also, some students might find monitoring overwhelming as they think the teacher is judging their work. To avoid this, it would be better if the teacher do

not stare at their copies or notebooks. The teacher can also ask for permission to take a look.

- Regarding the recommendations when using feedback, it is necessary to remember that is better if the feedback is given in a suggestive and constructive way. There is no case in pointing out the mistakes or giving the answers when the process is about constructing the knowledge. Also, avoid writing directly in their papers, instead the instruction can be written on the board for the student who needed it and the rest of the class.
- The class arrangement is something to take into consideration when formative assess the students. The suggested arrangement is the semi-circle one. In this position, the teacher has a better look of the students. This way is easier to identify the students who are working and those who are not. Also, it facilitates the participation of the students because they can all look at each other making the communication, among them and with the teacher, easier.
- It is also recommended to do further research about the implementation of formative assessment in different areas other than grammar. The implications of implementing this process to work with reading or listening skills might be different. Also, the strategies and techniques might differ as well.

6.ANNEXES

6.1. Annex 1

The standardized test applied to the students

Name: _____ Date: _____ Group: _____

Practice

Write sentences with the information provided using “be going to”

He _____ play soccer.

We _____ eat pizza.

They _____ visit Machu
Picchu.

She _____ be a teacher.

You _____ go to the
Eiffel Tower.

Write negative sentences using “be going to”

You _____ walk in the
park.

She _____ eat pizza.

They _____ travel to

Petra.

He _____ be in Canada

for two weeks.

We _____ swim in

Manuel Antonio beach

Write the questions with the information provided using “be going to” You are going to walk in the park

She is going to remember this trip for a long time.

They are going to drink apple juice.

He is going to buy many clothes from France.

We are going to swim in Manuel Antonio beach.

6.2. Annex 2

The observation guide used for the class observations.

Criteria	Observations
Students' understanding of the content.	When monitoring, observe if the students actually understood. Check if the exercises of the task are done correctly, or common mistakes to be corrected right away. Also, mind the amount of feedback required by the students. For example, if all the students or just a few required it.
Students' engagement during the task.	When monitoring, identify the students that are working and those who are not. For those that are not working, check the reasons why (maybe they did not understand or simple do not care)
Students' participation during the task.	When checking the exercises of the task, keep track of the students that are participating. Identify the students that do it constantly and those who do not do it. Find out the reason why they do not want to participate (they might feel embarrassed or do not have the answers)

6.3. Annex 3

The formative assessment guide designed.



INSTITUTIONAL PROJECT

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT
BOOKLET**

ALBERTO GARCÍA QUIRÓS



HISPANOAMERICANA UNIVERSITY

ENGLISH TEACHING MAJOR

TEACHING PRACTICUM

**INSTITUTIONAL PROJECT:
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT BOOKLET**

ALBERTO GARCÍA QUIRÓS

NOVEMBER, 2017

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Introduction

The formative assessment of the students is very important to make use of the students' skills. Evaluating the students' progress constantly will lead them to an improvement in the performance in the classroom. On the other hand, teachers also learn by assessing their students. Therefore, the benefits of the formative evaluation are not only for the students' development, but also the teachers seem benefited from this practice. Besides improving learning and teaching processes, it can also prevent many problems in the future. For example, if a student struggles with any specific content studied in the English class and never receives a formative assessment, it is more likely that this student will have a bigger issue when facing a standardized test. It is important to always assess the students as it has many benefits that will help both, the students and the teachers.

There is no doubt the formative assessment of the students is, more than important, is necessary and responsibility of the teachers. Every time the students are assessed, they gain confidence and improve their skills. And not only that, the teachers get to know which strategies suit best for a determined population. The formative assessment should not be taken light, it has to be a permanent process inside the classroom so they students can become better every day. The formative assessment of the students, besides preparing them for the summative evaluation, it also prepares them for the rest of the learning process.

This booklet is the result of the research project about formative assessment. Its purpose is to provide the teachers the basics and ideas to implement the formative assessment process in the English class in order to enhance the learning experience of the students

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Objectives

General Objective

- Providing the guidelines of formative assessment to raise awareness of the importance of the implementation of formative assessment in the English class.

Specific Objectives

- Analyzing key concepts related to the formative assessment theory.
- Suggesting activities to implement formative assessment in the English class.
- Offering recommendations to facilitate the development of the formative assessment strategies and activities.

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What is Assessment?

Assessment is a process usually confused with evaluation. In the education field, the assessment of the students consists, basically, in recovering information about the students' performance in the class to improve their learning experience. According to the Canadian Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture (2016) the assessment process gathers the information on the students' learning; and the evaluation process consists of making decision based on the information gathered (p. 46). The assessment process has 2 different kinds: summative and formative. This guide focuses on the formative process of assessment.

Formative Assessment

The formative assessment is the task the teacher performs on daily basis, and most of the time no one sees. However, it is the most important assessment because unlike the summative assessment, formative happens inside the class every day. Formative is related as everything the teacher does to enrich the students learning. The data collected during formative assessment is taken into consideration to measure the student learning and make decisions to enhance their learning. About formative assessment, Greenstein (2010) believes the information recovered in the formative process can be used to improve the learning while it is still in progress and the outcome can be influenced (p. 2). It can be said that the formative assessment focuses on the process of acquiring knowledge rather than the knowledge itself.

Regarding the purpose of the formative assessment, there is no actual difference with summative. The goal is to gather information of the students learning throughout the instructional time; what changes is the use of the information collected. The recovered data helps the teacher to be aware of the pupils learning problems during the time they acquire

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knowledge. Therefore, teachers can improve the teaching strategies to reach for a significant learning. Harlen & James state that “formative assessment is essentially feedback to the teacher and student (...) to determine the way forward” (1996, p. 4). Because this assessment takes place during the instructional period, this means it is carried out by the teacher during the teaching time before the summative assessment. It is a process that requires the teacher to be constantly monitoring the students, providing feedback, checking exercises, or clearing doubts. All this have to be done with the entire group or individual students. Chappuis & Chappuis emphasize that formative assessment “is an ongoing, dynamic process that involves more than frequent testing” (2007, p. 15).

Formative Assessment: Strategies

The following strategies will help you out to carry on with the formative assessment process:

Monitoring

Since formative measuring demands the teacher to spot for weaknesses in the learners’ acquisition of knowledge process, monitoring gives the instructor the information needed to gather the information. The Ministry of Education of Spain summarizes the purposes of monitoring in the following statements:

- Assess learners’ performance on tasks or more generally on their language progress/recent skills development.
- Be able to decide what to do next (revise, re-explain, go on, give up!).
- Give ourselves opportunities to micro-teach individuals or pairs who need additional help.
- Provide appropriate feedback and correction, either during or after the activity (2011, p. 158-159).

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Feedback

The concept of feedback can be broadly understood as any given comment on the student work. A very common example of feedback are comments such as “Great job!” or pointing out mistakes. However, in the formative assessment process, feedback must be meaningful for the students. Therefore, the comments by itself are not effective for the formative purpose. According to Martínez-Gudapakkam, Mutch-Jones, & Hicks (2017) the meaningful feedback validates the students’ understanding and helps them to move forward in the learning process (p. 91).

The stated above suggests that the comments must be meaningful for the students’ learning. However, feedback is not giving the answers; on the contrary, it is about letting the students know what needs to be fixed, and provide the opportunity to correct themselves. Agbayahoun (2016) states that feedback “instead of taking the form of instructions or criticism, it should offer suggestions for improvement” (p. 1896). In the formative assessment, feedback’s goal is to give the students a preview of their learning and a chance to fix for the better before the summative assessment.

Self-assessment

This strategy allows the student to empower in their own learning process by giving them the opportunity to actively participate in their own assessment. About self-assessment, Wolf, Dunlap, & Stevens (2012) mention that “when students self-assess, they develop a deeper understanding of their own performances and what they need to do to improve” (p. 75). The self-assessment as a formative assessment strategy works in terms of making the students think about their own learning. The learners must consider what they learned, what represented a problem, and also to foresee future predicaments in the subject.

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Timing and activities for formative assessment

Timing

As stated before, formative assessment takes place during the instructional period. However, this time is considerably long, and the results of an unplanned formative assessment process could be not effective for the purposes of this process. Taking this into consideration, Laura Greenstein divides the instruction period in 3 stages, and provides objectives in each stage. The stages are:

- **Prior instruction:** In this stage the students have not had any contact with the subject to be developed. The author proposes a pre assessment strategy that has a final goal to determine the students' background knowledge. Once the teacher knows this, the classes can be planned using this information to reinforce the weaknesses and make use of their virtues in the contents to be studied.
- **During instruction:** While the instruction is given, the teacher can measure the level of understanding of the students about what is being studied. In this stage, the author proposes activities that help to survey the students' understanding at a specific time of the instruction.
- **After instruction:** This final stage is intended to tie all the loose ends. The goal is to identify what the students find difficult at the end of the instruction and reinforce it before the summative assessment or the standardized tests. The author mentions home works or quizzes to identify these flaws (Greenstein [Part 2: Using Formative Assessment], 2010).

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Activities

The following activities can be used to formative assess the students at specific moments of the instructional period

The following activities can be used to formative assess the students at specific moments of the instruction

Activities prior instruction

In this stage, the main objective is to determine how much the students know about a certain subject before they are actually exposed to it. These activities can be applied:

- **Brainstorming:** Having the students speaking out their minds about a topic is a good way to survey their opinion. When doing this is important to write the answers on the board, and ask them if they agree with the answers obtained. Also, the teachers can ask them to write down the answer so they get familiar with the subject and the different opinions.
- **Entrance slips:** This activity consists of having the students answer a question, provided by the teacher and related to the subject, before the instruction begins. The answers are given anonymously to the teacher in a piece of paper. Then, the teacher reads the answers and discuss them with the class.
- **Diagnostic test:** Testing the students before the facing the subject provides the teacher an overlook of the group current level of understanding. This information can be used to identify the virtues and areas of improvement of every single student. This test can be reapplied at the end of the instruction to compare the progress achieved.

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Activities during instruction

At this point, the objective of the activities is to survey the understanding of the students after facing the subject. Some examples to achieve this are:

- **Quizzes:** Even though quizzes are often used as summative assessment, these can be formative as long as they do not represent any percentage of the students' grade. Also, it is important not to grade the quizzes after looking at the results, instead those can be checked orally or between the students. The idea is just to measure how the students are at this specific moment.
- **Exit ticket:** To implement this activity the teacher provides a question about what is going to be developed in the class. At the end, the students have to answer the question in order to get out of the classroom. The question can be change to a summary of what they learned at the end of the class. The answers are given to the teacher in a piece of paper.
- **Check understanding:** While the teacher is explaining, he/she can stop and ask the students whether they are understanding what is being explained or not. The teacher can ask the pupils to raise their hands if everything is fine or if they have doubts about it. This becomes useful especially before the students start practicing the new content.

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Activities after instruction

By the end of the instructional period, the teacher needs to identify how much the students grasped throughout the time. These activities can be useful to recover this information:

- **Exit test:** This is a test that includes what was covered during the instructional period. This instrument can actually be the same diagnostic test, if applied, given to the students prior the instruction. Also, this test can include items of the actual exam to prepare the students for the summative assessment.
- **Self-assessment:** As mention before, self-assessment main goal is to make the students reflect on what they learned, what represented a problem, and also to foresee future predicaments in the subject. In the recommendations below there is the MEP's suggested self-assessment rubric for the students.
- **Reviewing:** Take the time to go over the content studied in class. Involve the students in this activity by asking questions to them, encouraging participation, and listening to their concerns about the subject. The reviewing can be adapted to a game in order to engage the students in this task.

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Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to take full advantage of the formative assessment process. At the same time, these comments are aspects that could be taken into consideration when leading this process. These are the suggestions:

- The formative assessment activities are supposed to be done fast. These should not substitute the mediation activities of the planning. Remember this process is performed at the same time of the instruction.
- Evaluate the information gathered. It is pointless to recover the information if the changes in the planning or teaching decisions are not made. Keep in mind the formative assessment is all about improvement.
- Have the students sitting in a semi-circle. This class arrangement gives the teacher better visibility to monitor the students and also makes easier to reach to all the students in case they need help.
- When monitoring the students, do not stare at the students' notebooks or copies. Some of them might feel uncomfortable when the teacher does it. Instead, try to be as close as possible to make them know you are there when they need assistance.
- Compare the results obtained prior instruction with the ones after instruction. This comparison shows whether the students improved or not. Also, contrasting this information can point out specific areas of improvement.
- Inform other teachers about the findings of the formative assessment process. The information recovered might be useful for the development of other subject, making this a more integral process.

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Recommended self-assessment rubric

Self-assessment rubric suggested by MEP.

Learner Self-Assessment			
I can...	Yes	No	In progress
Listen and recognize specific information when heard in presentation about nature			
Read and recognize specific details when reading illustrated texts			
Ask people information related to places, tours, and plans			
Identify, pronounce and indicate the meaning of all the vocabulary (including social language) for the week Show			
how I have worked with others this week			

Rubric taken from “*Teacher Guide 7th grade*” by MEP (2017, p. 223)

Note: This is just a template. It is necessary to adapt the statements to the teaching objectives set for the instructional period. This can be translated into Spanish to ensure the students understanding.

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Recommended observation guide

Observation guide during the implementation formative assessment strategies. In order to recover more and precise information, this observation guide might be useful when using the monitoring and feedback strategies.

Criteria	Observations
Students' understanding of the content.	When monitoring, observe if the students actually understood. Check if the exercises of the task are done correctly, or common mistakes to be corrected right away. Also, mind the amount of feedback required by the students. For example, if all the students or just a few required it.
Students' engagement during the task.	When monitoring, identify the students that are working and those who are not. For those that are not working, check the reasons why (maybe they did not understand or simple do not care)
Students' participation during the task.	When checking the exercises of the task, keep track of the students that are participating. Identify the students that do it constantly and those who do not do it. Find out the reason why they do not want to participate (they might feel embarrassed or do not have the answers)

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