

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effectiveness of Formative Assessment in Task -Based Learning Approach for First Year Master Linguistics

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the efficacy of formative assessment in evaluating task-based language instruction and to increase instructors' understanding of the value of continuous evaluation in improving as well as advancing language acquisition while guaranteeing validity, reliability and authenticity. Besides, this research explores students' attitudes and perceptions towards Formative Assessment within Task-Based Language Teaching. This study hypothesizes that Formative assessment in Task-Based Language Teaching facilitates instructors' roles, and most teachers are not aware of the value of formative assessments in assessing task-based learning. Additionally, formative assessment motivates learners to become more active, engaged, and autonomous. To achieve the research goals, a teachers' interview was conducted with three English high school teachers, and to get a more comprehensive understanding a questionnaire was administered too for 20 master students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla. The data were analyzed quantitatively and

qualitatively, the results revealed that learners are more motivated and reflective. In fact, teachers appear more confident when implementing formative assessment in Task-Based Language Teaching, demonstrating the usefulness of formative assessment in Task-Based Language Teaching.

Keywords: Task Based Language Teaching, Summative assessment, Formative assessment, teacher feedback, peer and self assessment, learner autonomy

Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching is based on the idea that language is best learned through meaningful tasks and authentic communication. It emphasizes fluency over explicit grammar instruction. This communicative nature of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) requires ongoing feedback that focuses on global errors rather than local ones. Accordingly, formative assessment aligns with the principles of TBLT by providing corrective and ongoing feedback and highlighting effective communication strategies and addressing errors (Nunan, 2008; Illis, 2009). Obviously, formative assessment has a crucial role in fostering the effectiveness

of TBLT. It helps monitor progress, encourages learner autonomy, supports collaborations, enhances reflection through peer and self-assessment, and assists teacher feedback, as well as observation (Illis, 2003; Willis 1996). In fact, formative assessment improves language outcomes and promotes learners' engagements and motivation (Willis, 1996; Nunan, 2015)

Task Based Language Teaching

Prubhu in 1987 stated that language is learned more effectively when concentrating on completing the tasks rather than focusing on the language form. Tasks in TBLT are designed to reflect real world communication and activity. Various language skills are integrated in task-based language teaching which ensures a holistic language development. TBLT emphasizes learning through meaningful tasks that mimic real life communication; it is an approach that includes learners in constructive communication and interaction, allowing them to gain grammar knowledge via authentic language use (Richard and Schmidt, 2010). Jane Willis (1996) proposed a detailed framework to guide second language teachers in implementing task based language teaching which includes the following phases: 1-Pre-task phase, the teachers introduces the topic by providing rich exposure to the often includes communicative Effectiveness over perfect grammar.

4- Portfolio: it is the collection of students' work over time to show progress in communicative skills.

5- Formative assessments: is a continuous assessment during classroom activities, it focuses on feedback and self-assessment to encourage reflection and improvements. Formative assessments are more adequate for task-based learning because the lesson is presented in the task that will be assessed at the same time, and the assessment has to be continuous (Bachmann & Palmer, 1996; Nunan,1989; McNamara,1996).

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment as described by (Bennett, 2011) "is a scientifically grounded educational technique that is aimed at evaluating learning outcomes during the educational process often called assessment for learning". It is an ongoing process unlike summative assessment that evaluates students' learning consistently. Formative assessment offers immediate feedback enabling teachers to adjust their instruction style based on students' understanding. It reinforces students' engagement and motivation allowing them to reflect on their learning process. It also promotes learner autonomy by fostering metacognitive awareness and self-evaluation (Carless, 2007). Furthermore, in ELT formative assessment enables teachers to identify learners strengths and weaknesses using a variety of techniques including short quizzes, peer as well as self-assessment, and oral

Questioning. These strategies encourage active involvement and help learners take responsibility for their language development (Nunan, 2015; Cowie, 2005). Formative assessment is a cooperative process that involves the responsibility of both teachers and learners to achieve the learning goal. The importance of feedback is crucial in Formative Assessment. It helps students to improve their learning level and make progress.

Stages of Formative target language.

2- During the task phase, the performance of the tasks focuses on meaning and interaction.
3-Post-task phase activities that focus on form.

The Nature of Task-Based Approach and its Assessments

Task-based approach focuses on meaningful communication where learners are engaged in authentic tasks, like role play, interviews, and problem solving using real life language. In TBLT learners take an active role whereas teachers act as facilitators or guides

rather than lecturers. Grammar is taught implicitly and the four skills are taught in an integrated way. Language is learned in context and activities are done in real life situations (Richard & Rogers, 2014; Littlewood, 1981; Brown, 2007). Therefore, assessment in Task-Based approach should align with its goals since it focuses on performance and communicative competence rather than just linguistic accuracy."Task-based Language Assessment is an approach that attempts to assess as directly as possible whether test takers are able to perform specific language tasks in a particular communicative setting"(Coplin and Gysen, 2006, p.152). The assessment in Task-Based Language Teaching is described as "can do"/ performance oriented rather than "ability" oriented (Bachman, 2011). The assessment of Task-Based Language Teaching allows for dynamic interaction between cognitive, contextual, and linguistic variables that cover real life language performance (Skehan, 1998). Assessment is a crucial element within Task-Based Language Teaching (Van Den Braden, 2006; Norris, 2009). It is an approach to language assessment that focuses on what learners are able to perform, not on how competent they are.

These are some types of Assessments that prove its adequacy in TBLT approach:

1- Performance based assessments: include tasks like presentations, group projects, dialogues, debates, and role play. Teachers evaluate how well learners use the language to communicate.

2-Authentic assessments: it is a task that mimics real world communication, for example, writing an email, giving directions, ordering food.

3- Rubrics and criteria: it is the use of rubrics to assess fluency, coherence, interaction, and appropriateness. **Criteria Assessment**

1-preformative assessment (Green, 2010) noticed that the role of teachers in this phase is to design instruction based on pre-assessment

tasks which provide evaluative information about students' background knowledge of the subject matter. These pre-assessment tasks help teachers to focus on areas of misunderstanding and to determine their instructional objective based on the outcomes of this phase. Furthermore, this stage helps learners to develop their learning through their learning strategies and to be more motivated and engaged.

2-formative assessment during instruction: in this stage formative assessment occurs during the instruction in the classroom. It seeks to provide information about how well students are progressing and make decisions about the learning process. (Green, 2010) stated that assessment during instruction helps teachers to identify students who are struggling to learn. formative assessment in this stage relies on many strategies like questioning to identify learners' state of knowledge. Questions offer opportunities for discussion and interaction in the classroom. Therefore they should be an integral part during instruction (MacMillan, 2007).

3- Formative assessment after instruction has been defined by (MacMillan, 2007) as "last assessment" (p.103) it represent the last stage of Assessments. According to McMillan (2007) it seeks to "identify areas in which students could use a bit more clarified practice or reinforcement before a summative assessment" (p,10). In this phase teachers apply questioning strategies to highlight students weaknesses in order to be avoided in summative conclusion.

Formative Assessment in Task-Based Language Teaching

Formative Assessment aligns naturally with Task-Based Language Teaching because both approaches emphasize process oriented learning. Task performance feedback helps learners of language clarify misunderstanding and enhance task outcomes. Ellis pointed out teachers will benefit most from Formative Assessments in Task-Based Language

Teaching (2003). It allows teachers to be responsive to learners' needs by indicating what learners have learned or still need to learn by providing information about curriculum planning as well as teaching and eventually offering meaningful learner feedback (Rea-Dickins and Gardner, 2000). Feedback on Task-Based performance can provide students with detailed insights in their current level of the target language development (Van Den Branden, 2006). Van Den Branden emphasizes the importance of Formative Assessment in Task Based Language Teaching; it alerts learners to errors they often make and helps teachers to follow, monitor, and evaluate learners' communicative competence developments.

Methodology

Mixed method design was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data through a students' questionnaire at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla and a teachers' interview at Mubarek Elmili high school, Ouargla City . The questionnaire was designed to gather learners' perspectives on the

usefulness of formative feedback and their engagement with assessment activities. The interview was conducted with four teachers from Mubarak Elmili high school in Ouargla to explore feedback strategies, classroom assessment practices, and challenges encountered in implementing formative assessment. The data were analyzed quantitatively to get a comprehensive understanding of formative assessment in Task-Based Language Teaching.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to 20 students at the department of English at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla. This questionnaire collects data about students' perceptions and opinions concerning formative assessment implementation during task-based English instruction.

Section 1: Background Information

1. Age:

•	5	students	→	22	years
•	6	students	→	21	years
•	5	students	→	20	years
•	2	students	→	23	years
•	2	students	→	26	years

Total students: 20

Average age: 21.7 years

2. Gender:

•	5	males
•	15	females

The majority of students (75%) are females

3. Level of English:

4				advanced
16				intermediate

Most students (80%) are intermediate learners.

4. Years of studying English:

•	10	students	→	5	years
•	10	students	→	4	years

Average years of study: 4.5 years

5. Have you experienced task-based English lessons before?	• 4 students → No
• 16 students	→ Yes

Most students (80%) have already experienced TBLT.

Interpretation

The majority of participants are intermediate level, female students their ages around 21 to 22 years with 4 to 5 years of English study. Most of them have been exposed to task-based language teaching. These results give us a homogeneous group which assists us when analyzing student perceptions on formative assessments in task-based language teaching lessons.

Section 2: Students' Perceptions of Formative Assessment (1–5 Likert Scale)

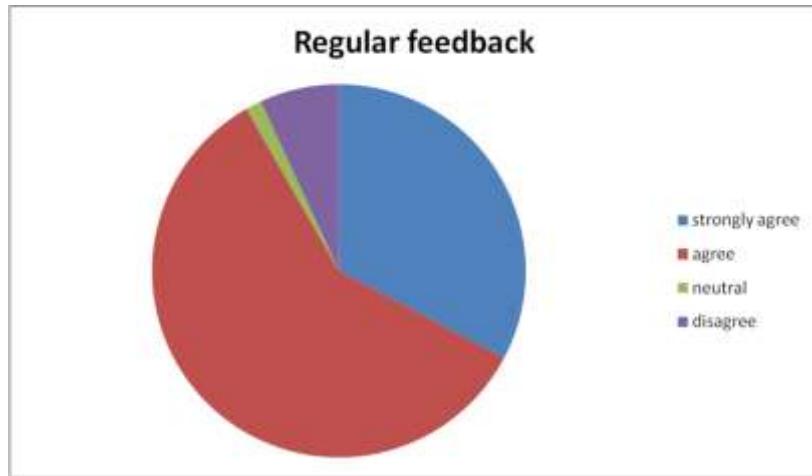
Please rate each statement according to your level of agreement:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1. During English tasks, I receive regular feedback from my teacher.

- Strongly agree: 23.8%
- Agree: 42.9%
- Neutral: 4.8%
- Disagree: 23.8%

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	9	1	5	0

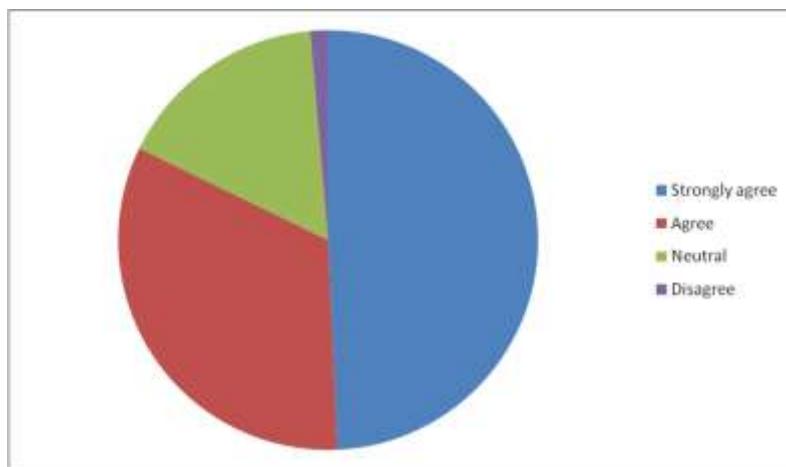


2. The feedback I receive helps me improve my performance.

- Strongly agree: 42.9%
- Agree: 28.6%
- Neutral: 14.3%
- Disagree: 9.5%

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree
9	6	3	2	0

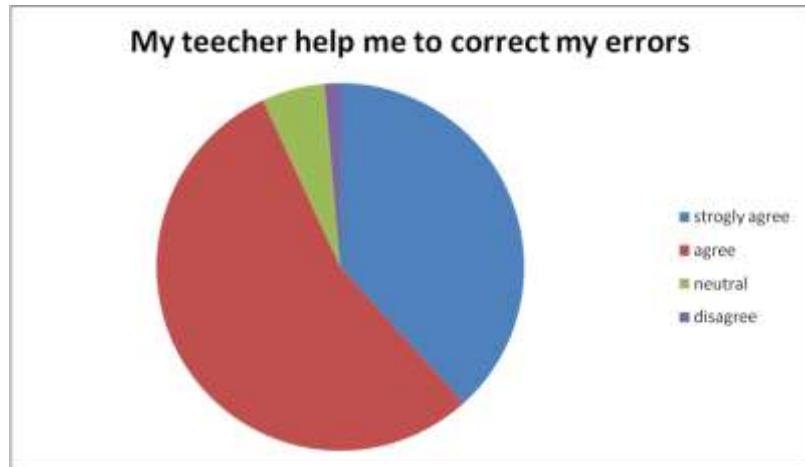
Feedback improves performance



3. My teacher explains my mistakes clearly and helps me correct them.

- Strongly agree: 33.3%
- Agree: 47.6%
- Neutral: 4.8%
- Disagree: 9.5%

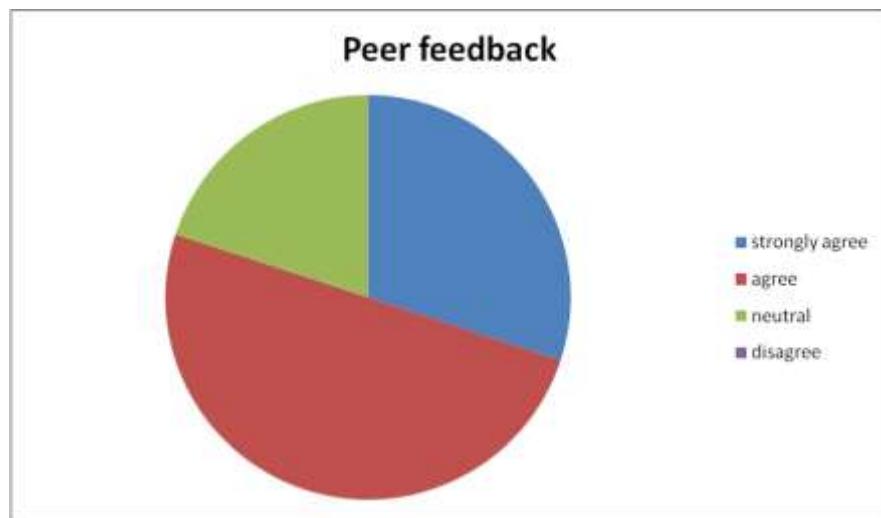
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7	10	1	2	0



4. I can notice my language strengths and weaknesses from my peer feedback.

- Strongly agree: 28.6%
- Agree: 47.6%
- Neutral: 19%
- Disagree: 0%

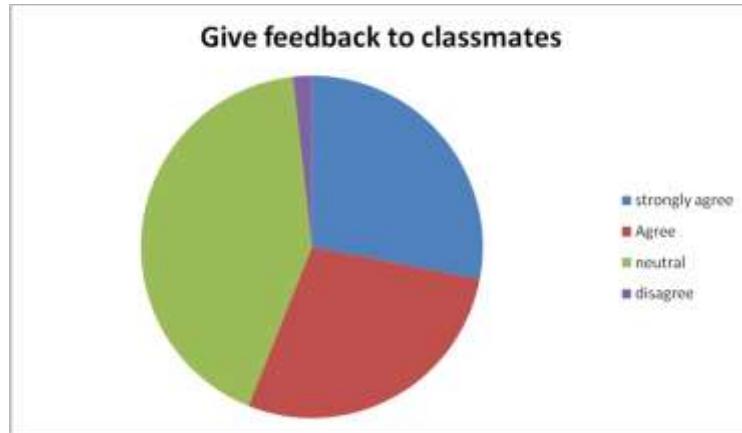
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6	10	4	0	0



5. When giving feedback to my classmates. I feel comfortable

- Strongly agree: 19%
- Agree: 19%
- Neutral: 28.6%
- Disagree: 28.6%

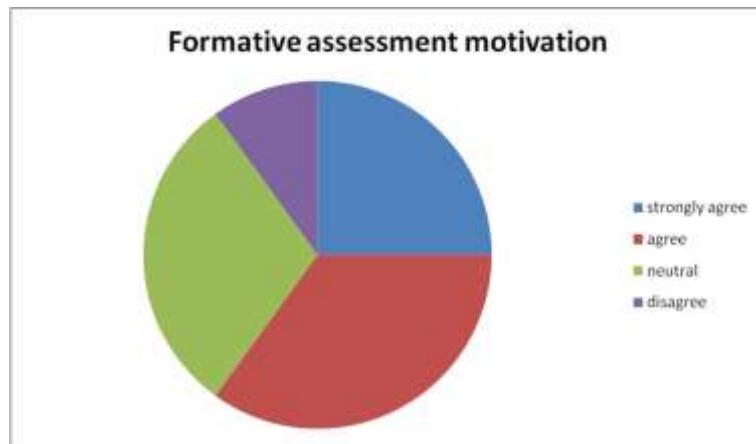
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4	4	6	6	0



6. Formative assessment gives me the motivation to participate actively in tasks.

- Strongly agree: 23.8%
- Agree: 33.3%
- Neutral: 28.6%
- Disagree: 9.5%

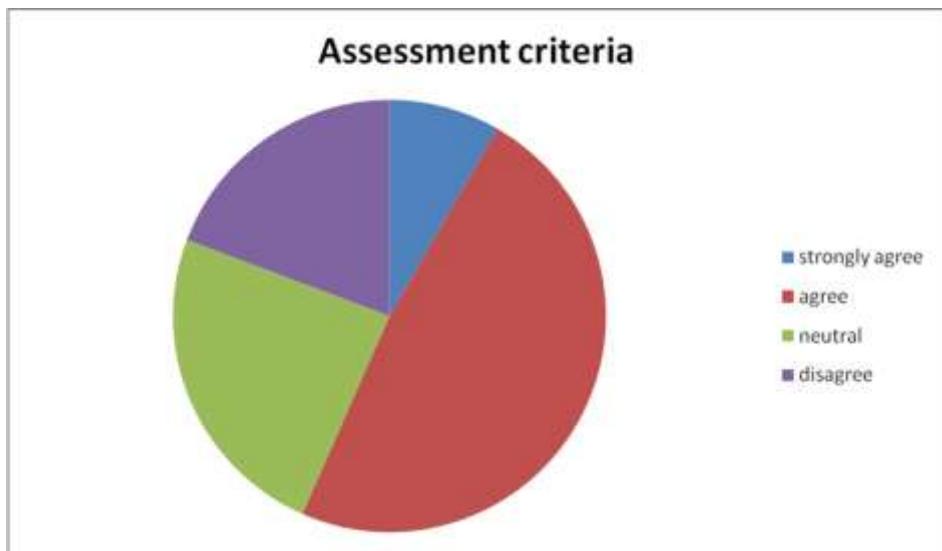
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	7	6	2	0



7. I understand the assessment criteria that my teacher uses

- Strongly agree: 4.8%
- Agree: 47.6%
- Neutral: 23.8%
- Disagree: 19%

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	10	5	4	0

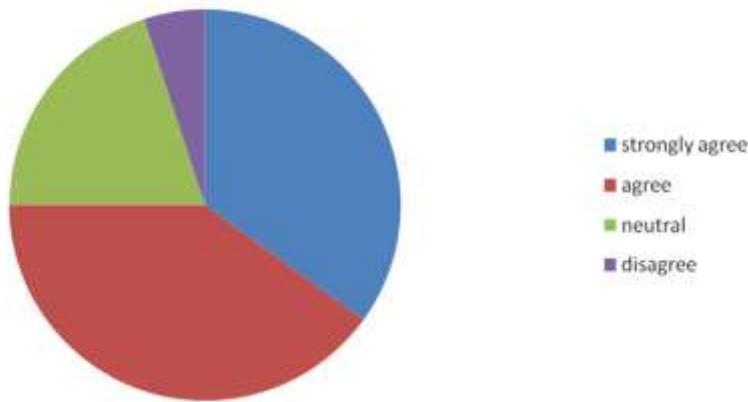


8. I find formative feedback more helpful than grades alone.

- Strongly agree: 33.3%
- Agree: 38.1%
- Neutral: 19%
- Disagree: 4.8%

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7	8	4	1	0

Formative feedback more helpful than grades

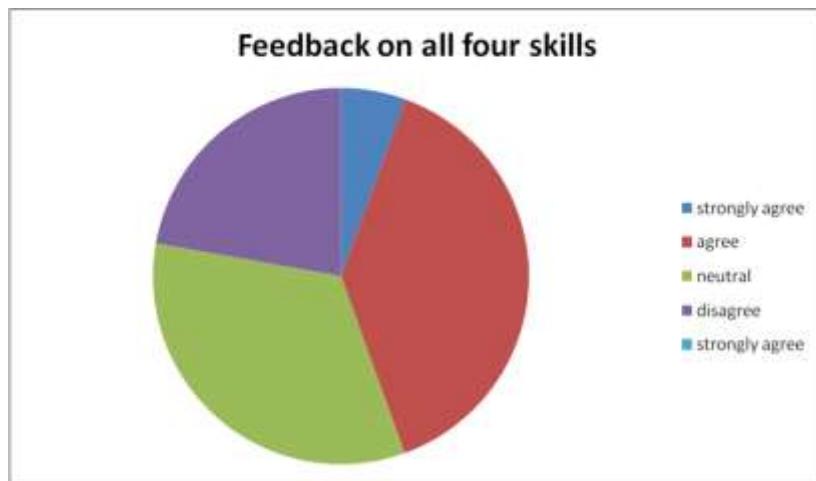


9. In all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) I receive feedback

- Strongly agree: 5.6%
- Agree: 38.9%
- Neutral: 33.3%
- Disagree: 22.2%

- Strongly disagree: 11,1%

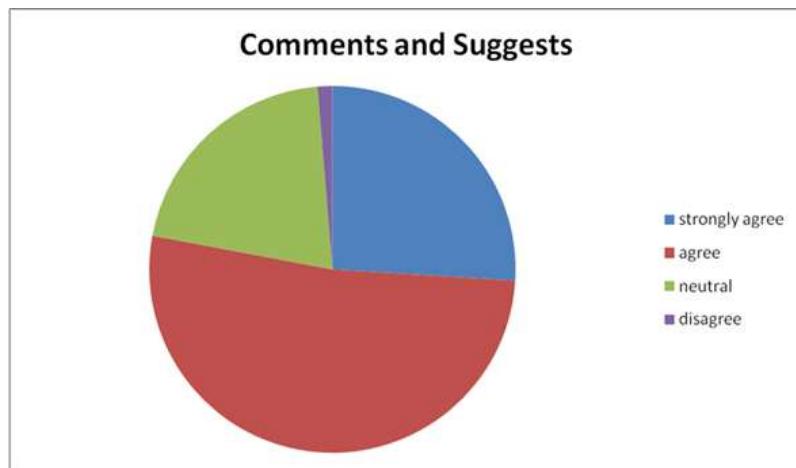
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	7	6	4	2



10. My teacher uses comments and suggestions, not just marks.

- Strongly agree: 23.8%
- Agree: 47.6%
- Neutral: 19%
- Disagree: 4.8%

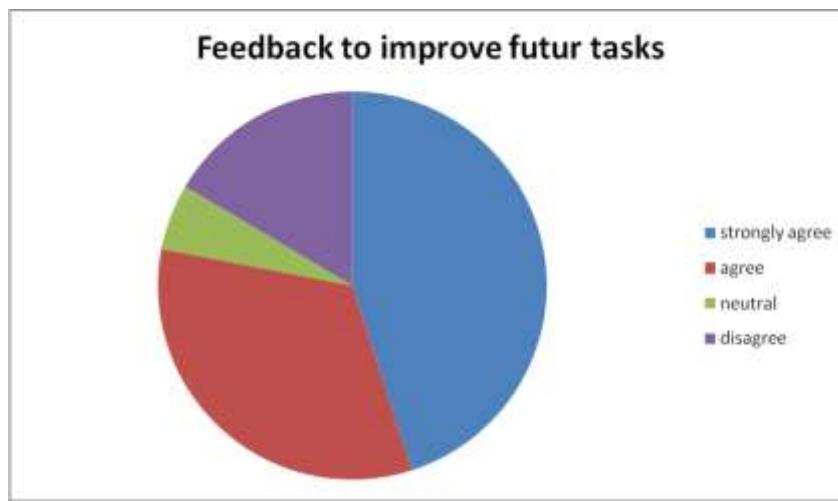
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	10	4	1	0



11. to improve future tasks, I use my teacher's feedback

- Strongly agree: 47.6%
- Agree: 28.6%
- Neutral: 4.8%
- Disagree: 14.3%

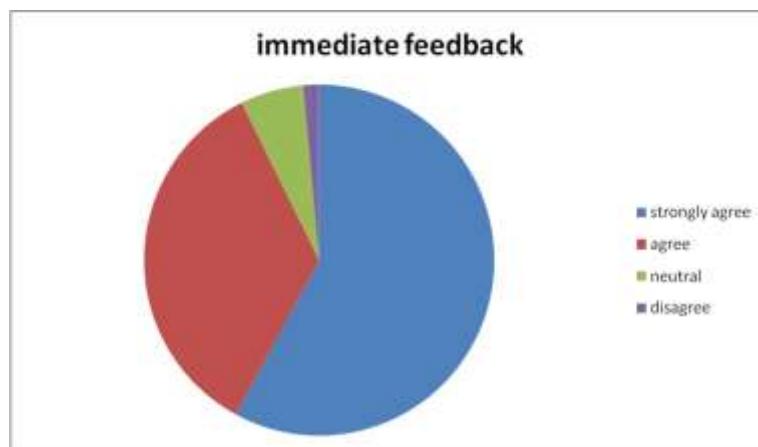
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10	6	1	3	0



12. The feedback is given after the task immediately.

- Strongly agree: 47.6%
- Agree: 28.6%
- Neutral: 4.8%
- Disagree: 14.3%

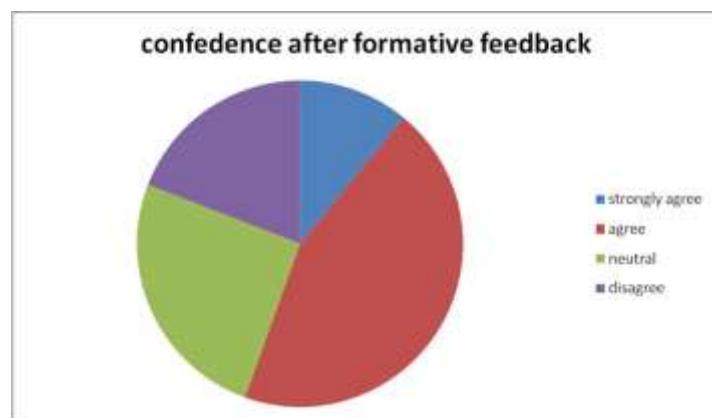
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	8	8	2	0



13. After receiving formative feedback, I feel more confident

- Strongly agree: 28.6%
- Agree: 33.3%
- Neutral: 19%
- Disagree: 14.3%

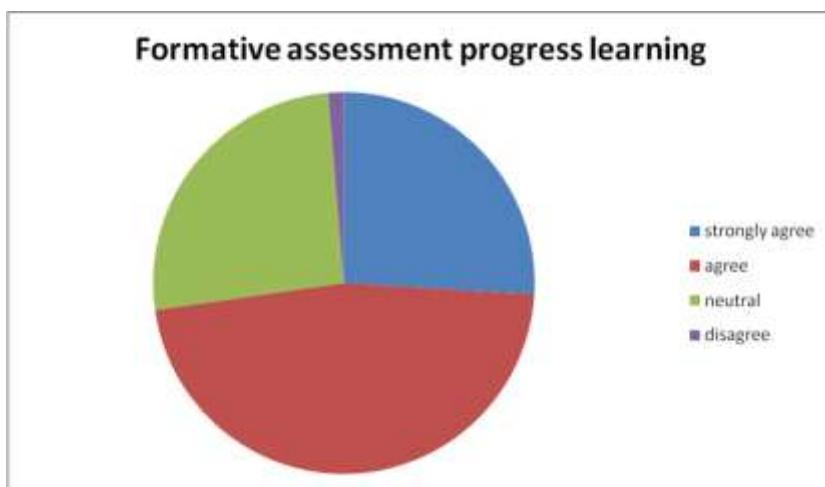
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6	7	4	3	0



14. Formative assessment fosters me to reflect on my learning progress.

- Strongly agree: 23.8%
- Agree: 42.9%
- Neutral: 23.8%
- Disagree: 4.8%

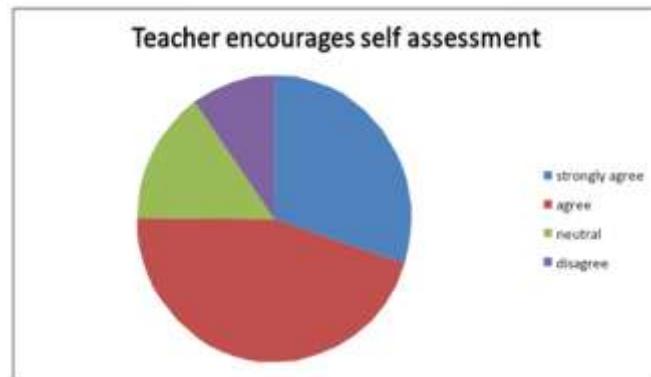
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	9	5	1	0



15. The teacher encourages self-assessment and reflection.

- Strongly agree: 28.6%
- Agree: 42.9%
- Neutral: 14.3%
- Disagree: 9.5%

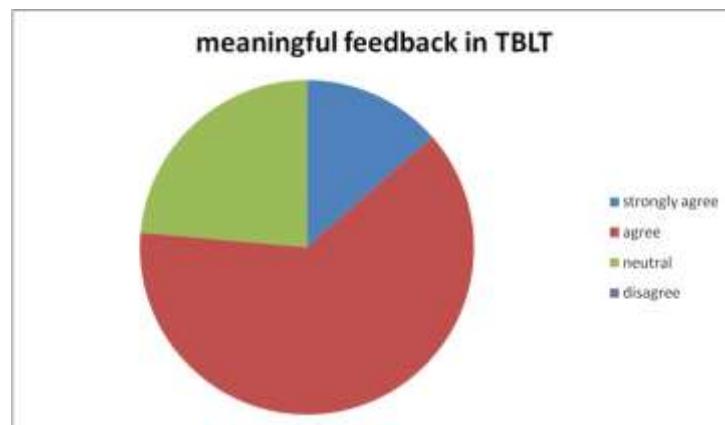
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6	9	3	2	0



16. Task-based activities make feedback more meaningful.

- Strongly agree: 42.9%
- Agree: 38.1%
- Neutral: 14.3%
- Disagree: 0%

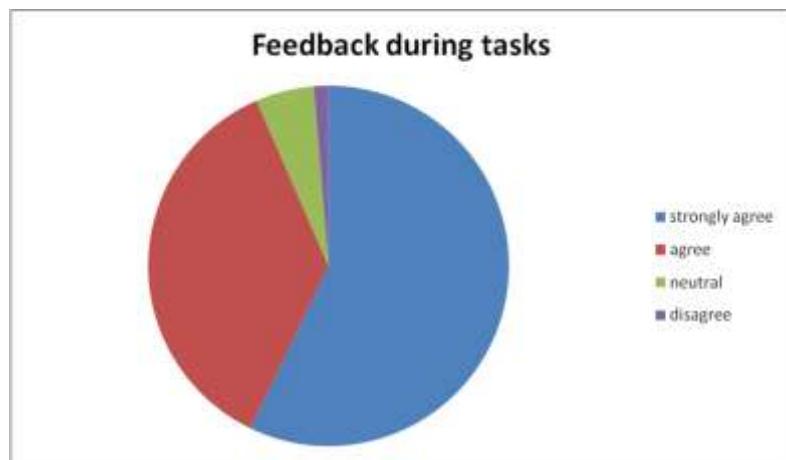
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9	8	3	0	0



17. Feedback within tasks helps me correct mistakes immediately.

- Strongly agree: 52.4%
- Agree: 33.3%
- Neutral: 4.8%
- Disagree: 4.8%

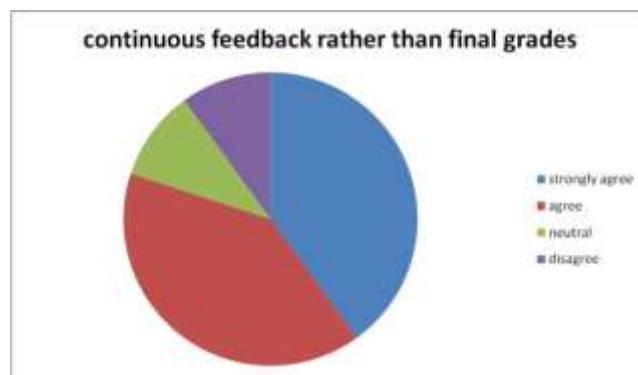
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11	7	1	1	0



18. Continuous feedback is better than final grades.

- Strongly agree: 38.1%
- Agree: 38.1%
- Neutral: 9.5%
- Disagree: 9.5%

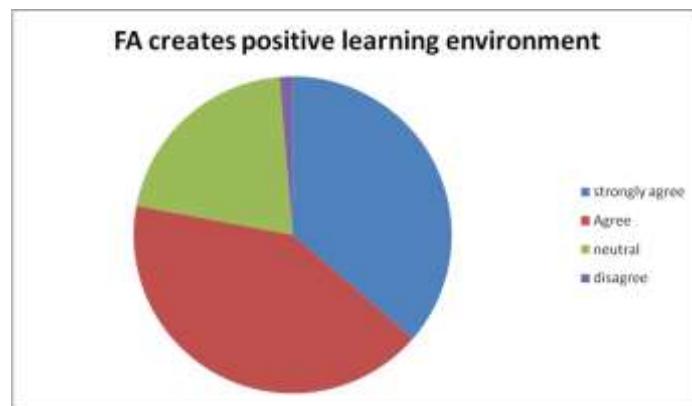
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8	8	2	2	0



19. Formative assessment creates a positive learning environment.

- Strongly agree: 33.3%
- Agree: 38.1%
- Neutral: 19%
- Disagree: 4.8%

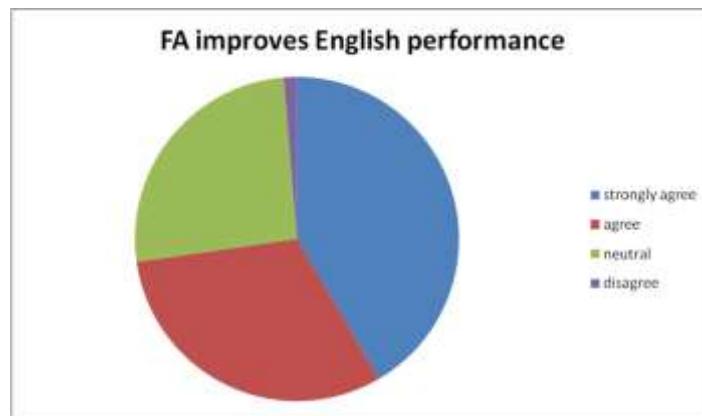
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7	8	4	1	0



20. formative assessment develops my English performance.

- Strongly agree: 38.1%
- Agree: 28.6%
- Neutral: 23.8%
- Disagree: 4.8%

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree
8	6	5	1	



Interpretation

The results show that the majority of students have strong positive perceptions with 70 to 80% agreement across all categories. Increased motivation and confidence, clear teacher feedback and meaningful task based assessment are the key strengths. However, Clarity of assessment criteria, consistency of real time feedback, confidence in peer assessment are the areas that include improvement.

Section 3: Open-Ended Questions

1. In improving your English, what type of feedback do you find most useful?

Strong preference for Clear constructive and detailed feedback are consistently expressed. Most students highlighted the importance of peer and oral feedback that supports immediate understanding and improvements. Moreover, formative assessment and corrective strategies assist them to understand mistakes gradually.

2. When your teacher or peers give you feedback during a task, how do you feel?

The majority of students felt supported, confident, and guided by teacher feedback; many of them confirm that feedback prevents repeated errors and reduces confusion. However, a few students feel embarrassed when feedback is given publicly.

3. In your English classes, what suggestions can you make to improve formative assessment?

To enhance formative assessment students suggested continuous and immediate feedback. Most of them proposed the use of a variety of assessment tools such as checklists, peer assessment, presentation, and questioning techniques. Some students felt that the implementation of formative assessment in TBLT was already effective.

Integrated Interpretation

In their responses students emphasized the value of supportive and constructive

feedback. In addition, they highlighted the importance of continuous, interactive, and varied assessment practices. Together, these findings highlight that effective formative assessment must be timely, supportive, engaging, and learner-centered.

2 Interview

To achieve the objectives of the study, a teachers' interview has been conducted with three teachers at Mubarek Elmili High School in Ouargla. To get qualitative data, semi-structured interviews have been used in a written form.

Question one: which stream do you teach?

Teacher 1: Literature, Science and Languages.
Teacher 2: Literature, Science and Languages.
Teacher 3: Literature, Science and Languages.
From the answers above we infer that the teachers have different experiences with different streams which might enrich our data.

Question 2: How long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 1: 14 years.
Teacher 2: 15 years.
Teacher 3: 24 years.
From these answers we can infer that the teachers have a long experience with teaching, this will provide research with a deep view and different opinions.

Question 3: Which type of Assessments do you apply when adopting the task-based learning approach summative or formative?

Teacher 1: Both of them but formative is much more.
Teacher 2: Both.
Teacher 3: Both assessments should be applied but formative assessment is much more. According to these answers formative assessment is more applied in task-based learning.

Question 4: Did you change it for its inadequacy?

Teacher 1: Yes, I do.

Teacher 2: No, I didn't.

Teacher 3: Based on the students feedback, if a particular assessment does not reflect students' understanding.

We notice that teachers have different answers, they may change their strategies according to the Learners outcomes.

Question 5: What do you feel when your students are assessed on an ongoing basis?

Teacher 1: It is tiring but satisfying.

Teacher 2: Satisfied.

Teacher 3: With formative assessment, I better understand my student needs. It provides valuable insights into individuals and class in general, and leads to developing my students' outcomes.

From the answers above all the teachers inform their satisfaction when they assess their students on an ongoing basis.

Question 6: Is it a tiring process?

Teacher 1: yes, it is.

Teacher 2: Yes, it is.

Teacher 3: yes, it is. Teachers should make plans, design activities, and ask questions which fits the students' level. It differs from one class to another.

In this question, teachers confirm that it was a tiring process.

Question 7: Have you any other comments about formative assessments?

Teacher 1: It is an essential step for a successful teaching and learning process.

Teacher 2: no comments.

Teacher 3: Formative assessment is not just grading. The main goal is to support students for learning.

According to the teachers' answers, formative assessment is effective in a task-based learning approach.

Discussion of the Results

After analyzing students' questionnaires and interpreting teachers' interviews, the results clearly show that formative assessments had an agreement among university students and high school teachers about its effectiveness in task-based learning approach, and they were both satisfied about its benefits. In addition, teachers confirm that although formative assessment is a difficult task and assessing learners on an ongoing basis is a tiring process, it proves its adequacy in task-based learning and its application is inevitable. However, students called for continuous, regular, and immediate feedback, to prevent repeated mistakes and improve their learning. Additionally, they need formative assessment that is ongoing, collaborative, and engaging, using different tools and activities rather than traditional methods only.

Conclusion

Formative assessment has a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of task-based language teaching instruction by providing continuous feedback. It allows learners and instructors to monitor progress, and identify area for improvements. In task basic learning, formative assessment promotes the development of communicative competence by focusing on performance and fluency. It creates reflective learning environments, fosters learners autonomy, and builds confidence through constructive feedback. In conclusion, formative assessment aligns with the principles of task-based language teaching instruction, and makes it more effective in promoting learning acquisition and meaningful communication.

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Biography

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