

**SHIFTING THE FOCUS FROM PRODUCTS TO PROCESS: THE
CASE FOR FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AS A LEARNING TOOL IN EFL
CLASSROOMS**

Abror Nazarov Axror o'g'li

Independent Researcher Tashkent, Uzbekistan

E-mail: a.j.m.nazarov@gmail.com

***Abstract.** This article examines the role of formative assessment in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, arguing that a shift from product-oriented to process-oriented evaluation can substantially improve learner outcomes. Through theoretical analysis and review of pedagogical research, the paper identifies the main contradictions between traditional summative practices and the communicative demands of language learning. It further proposes concrete pedagogical conditions under which formative assessment strategies including peer review, portfolios, self-assessment, and criterion-referenced feedback can be integrated into EFL instruction to support higher-order language competence.*

***Keywords:** formative assessment, EFL classroom, process-oriented learning, feedback, self-assessment, communicative competence, language pedagogy.*

**MAHSULOTDAN JARAYONGA E'TIBORNI KO'CHIRISH: INGLIZ
TILINI CHET TIL SIFATIDA O'RGANISH DARSLARIDA FORMATIV
YOKI SHAKLLANTIRUVCHI BAHOLASHNING O'QUV VOSITASI
SIFATIDAGI AHAMIYATI**

Abror Nazarov Axror o'g'li

Mustaqil tadqiqotchi

***Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqola ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o‘rganish (EFL) sinflarida formative (shakllantiruvchi) baholashning rolini tahlil qiladi va mahsulotga yo‘naltirilgan baholashdan jarayonga yo‘naltirilgan baholashga o‘tish o‘quvchilar natijalarini sezilarli darajada yaxshilashi mumkinligini asoslaydi. Nazariy tahlil va pedagogik tadqiqotlar sharhi orqali maqola an‘anaviy yakuniy (summativ) baholash amaliyotlari bilan til o‘rganishning kommunikativ talablari o‘rtasidagi asosiy ziddiyatlarni aniqlaydi. Shuningdek, unda shakllantiruvchi baholash strategiyalarini, jumladan, o‘zaro baholash (peer review), portfoliolar, o‘z-o‘zini baholash hamda mezonlarga asoslangan fikr-mulohazani EFL ta‘lim jarayoniga integratsiya qilish uchun zarur bo‘lgan aniq pedagogik shart-sharoitlar taklif etiladi. Bu yondashuv yuqori darajadagi til kompetensiyasini rivojlantirishga xizmat qiladi.*

***Kalit so‘zlar:** shakllantiruvchi baholash, EFL sinfi, jarayonga yo‘naltirilgan o‘rganish, fikr-mulohaza, o‘z-o‘zini baholash, kommunikativ kompetensiya, til pedagogikasi.*

Introduction.

In contemporary language education, the purpose of assessment has evolved far beyond simple measurement of what a learner knows at a given moment. Moreover, researchers and practitioners recognize that assessment must be integrated into the learning process itself, not positioned only at its conclusion. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms present a particularly instructive case for examining this shift. Language acquisition is practically developmental: it unfolds through exposure, practice, error, correction, and reflection over time. A learner who produces a grammatically wrong sentence today may produce the correct structure tomorrow if appropriate feedback is provided promptly and in a

form the learner can use. For this reason, the traditional reliance on summative assessment increasingly appears insufficient for supporting real communicative competence.

The concept of formative assessment offers a productive alternative. Unlike summative assessment, which records achievement after instruction has concluded, formative assessment operates within the learning process, generating evidence of learner progress that both teacher and student can act upon. In EFL contexts, this distinction is not merely theoretical. Speaking and writing involve complex cognitive, metacognitive, and communicative processes that cannot be fully captured by a final product score. A student's written paragraph may be grammatically correct but logically underdeveloped; another student may produce an imperfect but intellectually ambitious piece of writing. If assessment pays attention only to surface accuracy, the process that led to the product remains educationally invisible.

The central question of this article is therefore the following: what conditions must be present for formative assessment to function as a genuine learning tool in EFL classrooms, rather than as an additional administrative task? The purpose of the paper is to identify the structural contradictions between product-oriented assessment and process-oriented language development, and to formulate pedagogical conditions under which formative assessment can support the formation of better communicative competence.

Literature Review and Methodology.

The theoretical foundation of formative assessment rests on a distinction introduced clearly in the work of Black and Wiliam, whose landmark synthesis of

research on classroom assessment demonstrated that feedback which informs subsequent learning consistently improves educational outcomes. Their analysis showed that assessment becomes educationally powerful not when it classifies learners, but when it reveals the gap between current performance and desired goals in terms that the learner can act upon [1]. This finding has particular resonance in language learning, where the developmental gap between current and target competence is both visible and motivationally significant.

In Uzbekistan and across the post-Soviet educational region, the dominant assessment culture has historically been oriented toward summative control. Oral examinations, five-point grading scales, and end-of-term tests have structured the evaluation of language learning in ways that prioritize recall and accuracy over communicative fluency and strategic competence. Researchers examining the Uzbek educational context have noted that while national curriculum reform documents increasingly invoke the language of competence-based learning, assessment practices at the classroom level often lag behind these declarations [4]. The tension between curricular aspiration and assessment reality creates a structural obstacle to the development of genuine communicative skill.

In the broader international literature, Harmer argues that process-oriented writing instruction, in which learners plan, draft, receive feedback, revise, and reflect, in turn produces qualitatively richer outcomes than product-only approaches, because it engages the metacognitive dimensions of language use rather than treating writing as a single, terminal act [3]. Similarly, research on speaking assessment in EFL contexts emphasizes that criterion-referenced feedback on interaction strategies, discourse organization, and communicative repair is more developmentally useful than holistic scores [2].

The methodology of this article is theoretical and analytical. The paper draws on comparative examination of formative and summative assessment theory, a review of EFL pedagogical research, and conceptual analysis of the conditions required for formative practices to function in language classrooms. The analytical focus is on identifying structural contradictions between product-oriented evaluation and process-oriented learning, and on deriving concrete pedagogical implications. This approach is justified because the problem begins at the level of educational design: before instruments are changed, the conceptual relationship between assessment purpose, task format, feedback, and learner agency must be clarified.

Discussion.

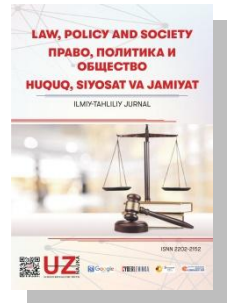
The first contradiction lies between the developmental character of language acquisition and the static logic of product-based assessment. Language competence is not acquired in discrete, measurable increments; it develops unevenly, with periods of apparent regression followed by sudden consolidation. A learner who produces an error-laden piece of writing may be at the edge of a significant breakthrough in syntactic complexity. If assessment registers only the errors and assigns a low grade, the developmental momentum may be interrupted. Formative assessment, by contrast, can acknowledge the attempt, identify the specific gap, and provide scaffolded support for the next step. In this sense, the shift from product to process is not simply a methodological preference but it reflects a more accurate understanding of how language develops [1, p. 12].

The second contradiction concerns the invisibility of process under product-based evaluation. When teachers assess only finished texts or final spoken

performances, the cognitive and strategic processes that produced those outputs remain opaque. Students who succeed through standard reproduction such as memorizing useful phrases, applying surface patterns, reproducing teacher models, may appear to perform well while developing no genuine communicative competence. Conversely, students who take genuine intellectual and communicative risks may produce imperfect but highly instructive outputs that a product-only rubric penalizes. Portfolio assessment, think-aloud protocols, and staged writing instruction are formative tools that make process visible and therefore assessable [5].

A third contradiction involves the timing of feedback. In EFL classrooms, the typical cycle of summative assessment means that learners receive feedback days or weeks after producing a text or performing a task. By that time, the specific cognitive moment in which the error occurred; the moment when a learner was uncertain about a grammatical choice, when a speaker searched for a word, when a writer hesitated between two structures; has passed and cannot be pedagogically reactivated. Formative assessment interrupts this delay. Techniques such as exit tickets, in-class peer editing, teacher conferencing, and self-correction checklists provide feedback while the learning moment is still active and accessible [3].

A fourth contradiction concerns learner agency. Summative assessment is typically something done to students: they produce a text or performance, submit it, and receive a judgment. Formative assessment, at its most powerful, is something done with students. When learners are trained to use assessment criteria actively, they begin to internalize the standards of the discipline rather than merely responding to external demands. In language learning, this internalization is particularly important because the ultimate goal is autonomous communicative



competence: the ability to monitor, adjust, and improve one's own language use without a teacher present [2].

A fifth contradiction, significant in the Uzbek educational context, concerns teacher readiness. Formative assessment requires a different kind of professional skill than summative grading. A teacher who uses formative strategies effectively must be able to design tasks that generate useful evidence of learning, interpret that evidence diagnostically, provide criterion-referenced feedback that the learner can act upon, and facilitate peer- and self-assessment without relinquishing instructional authority. These skills are not automatically acquired through content knowledge or general teaching experience. They require targeted professional development, collaborative curriculum design, and sustained reflection on practice [4].

Results.

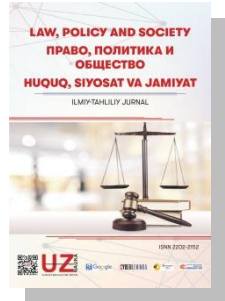
The theoretical analysis allows the main challenge dimensions to be systematized. Table 1 presents the key contradictions between product-oriented assessment and process-oriented EFL learning, together with their typical manifestations and the formative responses they require.

Table 1.

Main challenge dimensions in shifting from product- to process-oriented assessment in EFL classrooms

Challenge	Typical EFL Classroom	Effect on Learning	Formative Response
------------------	------------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------

	Manifestation		
Assessment– learning mismatch	Teachers use summative tests as the only form of evaluation; feedback arrives after units are completed	Students study for grades rather than developing communicative competence	Integrate short formative checks (exit tickets, peer review) throughout the unit
Invisible process	Writing and speaking tasks are graded only on final products; errors in reasoning or planning go unaddressed	Learners do not understand what distinguishes stronger from weaker performance	Use process portfolios and think-aloud protocols to make learning visible
Delayed feedback cycle	Tests are returned with marks but without criterion-referenced commentary	Students cannot identify what to improve; motivation declines	Provide immediate oral or written criterion-based feedback during and after tasks
Passive	Assessment is	Learners develop	Train students in



learner role	done to students rather than with them; self-evaluation is absent	dependence on teacher judgment rather than metacognitive awareness	self- and peer-assessment using shared rubrics
Insufficient teacher readiness	Teachers design tasks that mimic formative assessment but measure only surface accuracy	Higher-order communicative competence is declared but not genuinely cultivated	Develop teacher assessment literacy through collaborative curriculum design and moderation

Systematization of these dimensions supports an important conclusion: the obstacle to formative assessment in EFL classrooms is not the absence of appropriate techniques but rather the persistence of an assessment culture oriented primarily toward grading, ranking, and administrative accountability. When assessment is understood chiefly as a mechanism for assigning marks, formative practices are perceived as supplementary or decorative. When assessment is reconceptualized as evidence-based support for language development, formative strategies move to the center of instructional design.

The analysis further suggests five pedagogical conditions for productive formative practice in EFL settings. First, communicative learning outcomes must be articulated in operational terms: teachers and students need to understand what

counts as progress in speaking, writing, reading, and interaction in specific task contexts. Second, assessment tasks must be cognitively and communicatively authentic: they should require learners to use language for real purposes rather than to demonstrate isolated grammatical accuracy. Third, assessment criteria must be shared in advance and formulated in language that describes communicative qualities rather than surface features alone. Fourth, the results of assessment must be discussed so that students can understand how stronger performance differs from weaker performance in terms they can act upon. Fifth, teachers require sustained methodological support, including training in task design, feedback techniques, and the facilitation of peer-assessment.

From a broader perspective, the shift from product to process in EFL assessment reflects a wider transformation in educational philosophy, more precisely from knowledge transmission to competence formation. In a transmission model, the teacher delivers content, students absorb it, and assessment checks retention. In a competence model, the teacher designs meaningful tasks, students engage in purposeful language use, and assessment supports the ongoing development of strategic and communicative skill. Formative assessment is not merely a technique within this model; it is a structural expression of its underlying values.

Conclusion.

The development of communicative competence in EFL learners cannot be adequately supported by product-oriented assessment alone. Language acquisition is a developmental process, and assessment that attends only to final products misses the cognitive, strategic, and metacognitive dimensions of that process. The

argument for formative assessment as a learning tool rests not on preference but on evidence: assessment practices that generate timely, criterion-referenced, actionable feedback produce better learning outcomes than those that do not.

The analysis presented in this article allows several final propositions to be formulated. Communicative competence cannot be reduced to grammatical accuracy or final-product quality; it must be assessed through tasks and criteria that make the processes of meaning-making visible. Formative assessment should not remain peripheral to EFL instruction; its evidence must be woven continuously into the learning cycle through feedback, reflection, and revision. Teacher assessment literacy is a decisive condition for change, because poorly designed formative tasks can imitate process-oriented pedagogy without genuinely cultivating it. Finally, the shift from products to processes in language assessment must move beyond institutional declarations and individual classroom experiments: it requires systemic alignment between curriculum goals, task design, assessment criteria, teacher preparation, and institutional culture. The question of under what conditions formative assessment can preserve its evaluative validity while also supporting the formation of genuinely communicative, strategically flexible language users defines both the scientific and the practical relevance of the problem examined in this article.

References/Adabiyotlar/Литература:

1. Black P., Wiliam D. Assessment and classroom learning // Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice. 1998. Vol. 5. No. 1. P. 7–74.

