

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about the background of the study, thesis statement, research questions, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of the key terms and the limitation of the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

Assessment is described as the process of gathering, interpreting, recording, and using information about the students' response to educational tasks (Lambert, 2001). It is a process of gathering information as the proof of the students' progress and development in learning. More specifically, assessment is the ways instructors gather data about their teaching and their students' learning (Hanna & Dettmer, 2004). In addition, assessment is something of an umbrella term, encompassing a range of methods and techniques (Biggs & Tang, 2009). One way to categorize and organize the numerous approaches is using summative or formative distinction.

The main difference between summative and formative assessment is on their purpose in conducting the assessment. Summative assessment normally takes place at the end of courses (Torrance & Pryor, 1998). Summative assessment occurs at the end of a unit or term to convey the progress and is intended to help teachers make decisions whether students can continue the program or not. On the other hand, formative assessment occurs during teaching and learning to make adjustment on how well their understanding about the material (Popham, 2009; Brown, 2010).

Furthermore, formative assessment facilitates teaching and learning improvement and promotes students learning (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, and Wiliam, 2009; Popham, 2009; Torrance and Pryor, 1998), and also formative assessment is an essential component of classroom work and that its development can raise standards of achievement (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p. 1). As Clark (2012) states

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formative assessment is a potentially powerful learning process for sharing information practices assessment that supports learning embedded into the learning process with design.

Although Indonesia is a developing country it still strives to improve the quality of English education, since the performance of the students in English at secondary school remains poor (Lie, 2007). According to Lie, English instruction in formal schooling, the outcome is not satisfactory. Very few high school graduates are able to communicate intelligibly in English. This indicates teaching and assessment still needs to be improved as most high school graduates could not reach the standards set by the government.

Previous studies have indicated that teachers do not have a clear understanding about assessment for formative purposes (Gearhart and Osmundson, 2008; Heritage, Kim, Vendlinski, and Herman, 2009; Osmundson, Dai, and Herman, 2011). According to Popham (2009) many recent teachers know little about educational assessment. For some teachers, test is a four-letter word, both literally and figuratively. For these teachers, their only exposure to the concepts and practices of educational assessment might have been a few sessions in their educational psychology classes, or perhaps a unit in a methods class (La Marca, 2006; Stiggins, 2006). So, this research reveals some interesting insights about the teachers' understanding and use of formative assessment data.

Too many of today's teachers use summative assessment as a standard of measuring students' achievement and use this in their daily teaching and learning activities. As a result, EFL teachers have problems in performing formative assessment and misunderstand it. Whereas, National Curriculum instructs teachers to implement not only summative assessment but also formative assessment as well in their classroom practices. However, the information of formative assessment is implicitly stated in the National Assessment Standard Policy No. 66 year 2013 that makes teachers tangled.

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Despite its identified benefits to classroom learning and teaching, the implementation of formative assessment in the classroom is very challenging to teachers. Dixon and Williams (2003) state that formative assessment is not well understood by teachers and is weak in practice. Recent research supports the view that conceptually teachers are confused about the nature, purpose and effect of formative assessment. Furthermore, Taras (2008) finds that teachers were not clear on their understanding of formative assessment, nor were they clear or consistent, this will undoubtedly impact on their assessment of their students and transmit mixed and confusing messages.

Yet, as found by Ketabi (2014) and Prawitasari (2014) the clear benefits of formative assessment are noticed, the practice of this type assessment is still a problem. In this case, that conceptually teachers are confused about the nature, purpose and effect of formative assessment. This view is confirmed by Volante, Drake, and Beckett (2010) cited in Clark (2012b), who point out that although research has clearly shown that formative assessment can enhance student success, but too many teachers are failing to utilize the full cadre of formative assessment practices available to them.

In addition, there is a greater need for these studies in the field English as Foreign Language classroom as there are currently so few. As claimed by Cheng, Rogers, and Hu (2004) many studies about assessment were done but very few studies were conducted about formative assessment topic in EFL/ESL context. It had been compared to other topics in language assessment and testing, that formative assessment had received less attention. It may help teachers to have better insights on how to implement formative assessment in the classroom. The writer is intended to conduct a research considering the perception and practices of formative assessment implemented in Senior High School in Kabupaten Kepulauan Meranti – Riau.

However, Harris (2007) states that there is a desire to increase the focus on formative assessment in every aspect of learning and teaching, from written work to

everyday classroom interaction. Writer believes that formative assessment practices can help students make substantial gains in learning. As latest research points out that identifying and analyzing the theories related to the teachers' personal practical formative assessment and the frequency and manner in which they use assessment will serve as a starting point in determining what steps need to be taken to improve these practices (Box, Skoog, and Dabbs, 2015).

1.2. Research Questions

As the problems stated above, the writer formulates the research question as follows:

- 1) What are teachers' perception on the concept of formative assessment in EFL classrooms?
- 2) How do teachers practice formative assessment in their classrooms?

1.3. Purposes of the Study

This research is aimed at obtaining better insights into EFL teachers' conceptual understanding of formative assessment in EFL teaching. Since the teacher is in the front line in education, studying their perceptions of formative assessment can be beneficial in becoming aware of their deficiencies and hence we may be able to influence the way they teach and assess their students.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lays in providing insights into factors that affect the implementation of formative assessment in Senior High School from the exploration of EFL teachers' perception. Moreover, the result of the research is expected to help highlight measures and give suggestions for more effective implementation and to improve teachers' understanding and use of formative assessment in especially in Kabupaten Kepulauan Meranti – Riau. In addition, EFL

teacher candidates and other students especially in English Department of UPI who need to know more about formative assessment in English language classroom and to help them use formative assessment effectively in their future teaching practice.

1.5. Clarification of the Key Terms

There are some terms in this research that need to be clarified to avoid misinterpretation and unnecessary misunderstanding of the terms used in this research. Some terms are clarified as follows:

- 1) EFL: English as a foreign language (EFL) is used for non-native English speakers learning English in a country where English is not commonly spoken (Wikipedia). In this research, it is related to teachers who teach English subject in the Senior High School.
- 2) Perception: Choy and Cheah (2009) state that perception includes senses, feeling, ideas, thoughts, theories, and it is an ability to understand the differences. In this research, perception is focused on teachers' perception. Teachers' perception has a powerful impact on their willingness to develop their capability on formative assessment.
- 3) Practice: A method, procedure, process, or rule used in a certain field or profession. In this research, practice refers to the way teachers teach and assess their students.
- 4) Formative assessment: formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. In this research, it is related to the concepts of formative assessment; such as its definitions and purposes, its principles, its methods, its techniques, and its strategies.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

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In this research, the writer will focus on teachers' perception and practice of formative assessment refer to literature. The writer also uses policy Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation number 66/2013 about assessment standard to find out the techniques on formative assessment. The writer will investigate EFL teachers from Senior High School in Kabupaten Kepulauan Meranti – Riau.