

The Impact of Learning Assessment Techniques on Student Motivation: A Case Study of Non-English Majors at Dai Nam University

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the impact of learning assessment techniques on student motivation among non-English major students at Dai Nam University. The research aims to explore how different assessment strategies, particularly formative and summative approaches, influence intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. A mixed-methods design was adopted, comprising a survey administered to 120 students and semi-structured interviews with 10 participants. The survey measured students' perceptions of assessment practices and their motivational responses using a five-point Likert scale, while interviews provided qualitative insights. Quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation, and qualitative data were examined using thematic analysis. Findings indicate that formative assessment techniques—such as self-assessment, peer review, and ongoing feedback—significantly enhance student motivation by fostering engagement and self-regulated learning. Conversely, traditional summative assessments exert limited influence on motivational improvement, often increasing anxiety instead. The study underscores the importance of integrating diverse, student-centered assessment strategies to enhance learning motivation. Implications for teaching practices in higher education and recommendations for future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS: assessment for learning, student motivation, formative assessment, higher education, Dai Nam University

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment has always been a central component of education, serving as a tool to measure learning outcomes and provide feedback to both teachers and learners. Traditionally, assessment has been perceived primarily as a means of grading and ranking students, often through high-stakes summative evaluations such as mid-term and final examinations. While these approaches provide measurable outcomes, they are frequently criticized for creating a performance-oriented culture that prioritizes grades over meaningful learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Recent educational paradigms emphasize learning-oriented assessment, where the focus shifts from assessing of learning to assessing for learning (AfL). Assessment for learning aims not only to measure achievement but also to enhance the learning process by motivating students and guiding their academic development (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Motivation is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing language learning success.

According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory, learners' motivation can be categorized into intrinsic motivation—driven by internal satisfaction and interest—and extrinsic motivation, which is shaped by external rewards or pressures. In language education, particularly among non-English major students in Vietnam, maintaining high motivation is challenging. English is often a compulsory subject rather than a field of passion, leading to low engagement and poor performance (Nguyen, 2022). Thus, innovative teaching strategies, including effective assessment techniques, are necessary to foster motivation and ensure learning success.

Despite extensive research on formative assessment in Western educational contexts, limited empirical evidence exists in the Vietnamese higher education setting, particularly concerning non-English majors. Most studies focus on summative testing practices, leaving a gap in understanding how assessment techniques can enhance motivation in this demographic. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating the effects of different assessment strategies—both formative and summative—on student motivation at Dai Nam University.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Assessment for Learning vs Assessment of Learning

Historically, assessment has been synonymous with grading and certification. However, Black and Wiliam (1998) introduced a transformative perspective by emphasizing the formative role of assessment in supporting learning. Assessment for learning (AfL)

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involves providing timely feedback, encouraging self-assessment, and engaging learners in the evaluative process. This contrasts with assessment of learning (AoL), which focuses primarily on summative judgments of performance.

2.2 Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation in language education has been extensively studied through frameworks like Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and Gardner's socio-educational model (Gardner, 1985). Both models highlight the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors. For non-English majors, extrinsic motivators—such as passing exams or fulfilling graduation requirements—often dominate, leading to surface-level engagement. Formative assessment can counteract this trend by creating opportunities for autonomy and competence, key drivers of intrinsic motivation.

2.3 Assessment and Motivation: Empirical Evidence

Research across various contexts confirms the positive relationship between formative assessment and motivation (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). In Vietnam, studies by Pham (2020) and Nguyen (2022) reveal that summative assessment dominates English language programs, often inducing anxiety rather than motivation.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What learning assessment techniques are commonly used for non-English majors at Dai Nam University?
2. How do these assessment techniques influence students' motivation to learn?
3. Which assessment techniques are perceived as most effective in enhancing motivation?
4. Are there significant differences in motivation levels before and after applying formative assessment techniques?

Objectives:

- To identify the types of assessment techniques currently employed.
- To evaluate the impact of these techniques on student motivation.
- To determine students' perceptions of effective assessment strategies.
- To propose recommendations for improving assessment practices in higher education.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between assessment techniques and student motivation. The rationale for choosing this design is that quantitative data alone may not capture the nuanced experiences of students, while qualitative data alone cannot fully reveal trends across a larger population. Integrating both forms of data allows for triangulation and improves the reliability and validity of the research.

4.1 Research Design

A sequential explanatory design was adopted. The first phase involved a survey of 120 non-English major students to identify general patterns and perceptions. The second phase focused on semi-structured interviews with 10 selected participants, enabling in-depth exploration of the reasons behind the survey results.

4.2 Participants

The study involved 120 students (62 females, 58 males) enrolled in English for General Purposes courses at Dai Nam University. Students were from diverse faculties, including Business Administration, Pharmacy, and Information Technology. For the qualitative phase, participants were selected using purposive sampling to represent both high and low motivation levels based on survey scores.

4.3 Instruments

- **Survey:** A 20-item questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire measured students' attitudes toward formative techniques (peer feedback, self-assessment) and their perceived impact on motivation.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews (25–30 minutes each) were conducted to collect detailed insights into student experiences and preferences regarding assessment practices.

4.4 Data Collection Procedures

The research was carried out over eight weeks. Week 1 involved administering a pre-test motivation survey. Weeks 2–7 integrated formative assessment techniques into classroom activities, including peer evaluations, reflective journals, and teacher feedback sessions. Week 8 featured a post-test survey and follow-up interviews.

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4.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (version 26). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and paired-sample t-tests were conducted to measure changes in motivation. Pearson correlation analysis examined the relationship between satisfaction with assessment practices and motivation scores. Qualitative interview data were transcribed and coded using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality. Data were anonymized, and pseudonyms were used in transcripts. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by Dai Nam University's Academic Research Committee.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Quantitative Results

The quantitative analysis demonstrated a significant improvement in students' motivation levels after the implementation of formative assessment techniques. The average motivation score increased from 3.12 (SD = 0.45) in the pre-test to 4.01 (SD = 0.42) in the post-test. A paired-sample t-test confirmed that this difference was statistically significant ($t = 9.45, p < 0.001$), indicating that the intervention had a measurable and positive effect on student motivation.

A closer look at the dimensions of motivation revealed that:

- **Confidence** rose by 25% on average, suggesting that timely and constructive feedback helped students overcome fear of failure.
- **Engagement** increased by 20%, as evidenced by improved attendance rates and active participation during peer review activities.
- **Perceived value of English learning** improved by 18%, highlighting a shift from extrinsic to more intrinsic forms of motivation.

Table 2 and Figure 2 further illustrate the upward trend across all motivation dimensions. The low-proficiency group demonstrated the largest gain (+1.10), underscoring that **formative techniques are particularly effective for students with initially low confidence and skill levels.**

5.2 Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of 10 semi-structured interviews yielded three major themes:

1. Feedback as a Motivational Driver:

Students repeatedly emphasized the importance of constructive teacher feedback. One student noted: *"When I receive comments about my strengths and weaknesses, I feel more confident and know exactly where to improve."*

2. Peer Review Enhances Collaborative Learning:

Many students found peer assessments to be less intimidating and more relatable. A participant explained: *"Seeing mistakes in my classmates' work helps me reflect on my own learning without feeling judged."*

3. Summative Assessments as a Source of Anxiety:

Traditional final exams were often perceived as stressful. Students expressed that formative activities reduced exam-related anxiety by offering **continuous checkpoints for improvement.**

5.3 Discussion

These findings align with global studies (e.g., Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Carless, 2007) that highlight the motivational benefits of formative feedback loops. By shifting from a purely performance-oriented culture to a learning-oriented assessment framework, students at Dai Nam University became more engaged and self-regulated learners.

A key observation is that feedback frequency and quality had a direct impact on motivation. Students preferred detailed, actionable teacher comments over generic remarks. Additionally, peer feedback fostered a sense of community, which increased engagement and reduced the fear of making mistakes.

From a cultural standpoint, Vietnamese students traditionally come from exam-heavy educational backgrounds. Therefore, introducing formative approaches required both teacher guidance and mindset adjustments. As this study suggests, gradual integration—starting with small peer activities and reflective journals—can ease this transition.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study provides empirical evidence that formative assessment techniques play a critical role in enhancing student motivation, particularly among non-English majors in Vietnamese higher education. By integrating practices such as self-assessment, peer review, and timely teacher feedback, students reported significant improvements in confidence, engagement, and perceived value of English learning. In contrast, summative assessments alone were found to have limited impact on motivation and often contributed

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to heightened anxiety. These findings underscore the necessity of shifting from an exam-oriented culture toward a more learning-centered assessment framework.

The implications of this research are twofold. At the pedagogical level, teachers should embed formative techniques into everyday classroom practices to encourage self-regulated learning and reduce exam-related stress. Training programs that equip instructors with effective feedback strategies will be essential for sustaining these practices. At the institutional and policy level, universities should prioritize balanced assessment systems where formative methods complement summative evaluations. Digital tools, such as online quizzes and feedback platforms, may further support learner autonomy and continuous engagement.

Future research should explore the long-term effects of formative assessment on both motivation and academic performance, as well as its applicability across different disciplines and institutions. By fostering a culture of ongoing feedback and reflective learning, higher education institutions can create more supportive learning environments that empower students to take ownership of their academic development.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Although this study offers valuable insights into the relationship between assessment techniques and student motivation, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the research was limited to a single institution—Dai Nam University—which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other higher education contexts in Vietnam or internationally. Second, the intervention period was relatively short (eight weeks), making it difficult to capture the long-term sustainability of motivational changes. Third, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential bias, as students may have provided socially desirable responses rather than fully accurate reflections of their experiences.

To address these limitations, future research should consider longitudinal designs that track the sustained impact of formative assessment on motivation and learning outcomes over extended periods. Expanding the scope to include multiple universities across different regions of Vietnam would also strengthen the external validity of the findings. Additionally, incorporating objective performance measures—such as exam scores, attendance records, and digital learning analytics—could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of assessment techniques. Finally, future studies should explore the role of digital formative assessment tools and investigate teacher readiness and perceptions in adopting learning-oriented assessment practices, as these factors are critical for successful implementation and scalability.

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Appendix: Tables and Charts Table 1: Paired-sample t-test Results

Variable	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	t	p
Motivation Score	3.12	4.01	9.45	0.000

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Assessment Techniques

Technique	Mean	Std. Dev.
Peer Feedback	4.30	0.52
Teacher Feedback	4.50	0.48
Self-Assessment	4.20	0.55

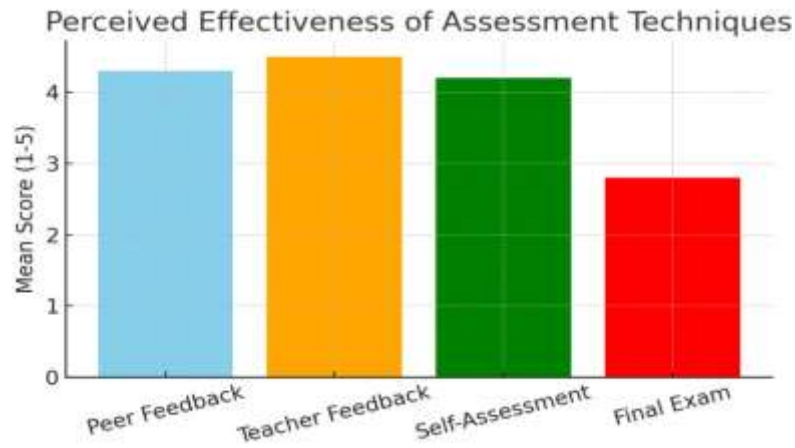


Figure 1: Perceived Effectiveness of Assessment Techniques

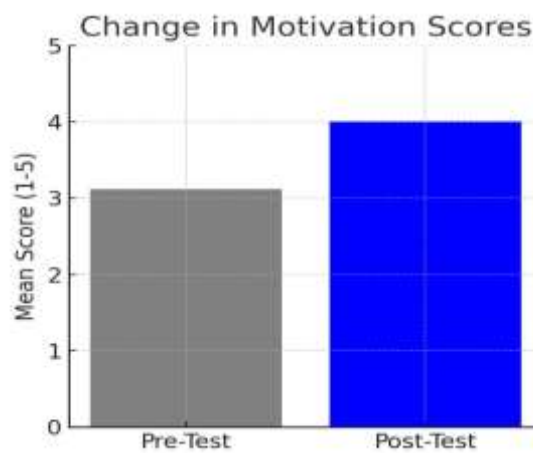


Figure 2: Pre-Test vs Post-Test Motivation Scores



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