Lecture Notes on Language and Literature (2024)
Clausius Scientific Press, Canada

DOI: 10.23977/langl.2024.070725
ISSN 2523-5869 Vol. 7 Num. 7

Study on the Optimization Strategies of Formative Assessment in the Teaching of Basic English Course for English Majors

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Keywords: Formative Assessment, Basic English Course, English Major, Optimization Strategy, Educational Outcomes

Abstract: In English major education, the course Basic English plays an extremely important role in laying a solid foundation for students' language skills and knowledge. With the change in educational methods, the importance of formative assessment has been recognized to improve learning outcomes. However, traditional evaluation practices in Basic English courses often rely heavily on summative assessment, neglecting the continuous feedback and learning process that are crucial to student development. This paper explores strategies for optimizing formative evaluation in college English courses for English majors. First, the current situation of modern Basic English course teaching is discussed, then the optimization strategies of its formative assessment are analysed, and the formative assessment model is tested. Test results showed that implementing optimized formative assessment strategies significantly improved student engagement and overall performance in the Basic English course. Participation levels are between 70 and 80, indicating improved language skills.

1. Introduction

Basic English course is the cornerstone for cultivating basic language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking for English majors. With the development of education, people pay more and more attention to the role of student-centered learning and evaluation in promoting this process. Traditional assessment approaches often emphasize summative assessments at the end of a course, but have been criticized for lacking interest in ongoing learning and feedback. Therefore, this paper tries to explore alternative assessment strategies to better support student growth.

Inspired by these challenges, this paper studies and proposes an optimized formative assessment strategy for basic English course to improve learners' English learning outcomes. This paper is divided into five parts. After the introduction, the second part reviews the relevant research. The third part introduces the methods used in the study. The fourth part presents the results and discussion, analyzing the impact of the optimization strategy. Finally, the fifth part summarizes the research results, points out the limitations of the study, and proposes future research directions. This paper contributes to the field by proposing and validating an innovative formative assessment

strategy tailored to the needs of English major students in a foundation English course. These results provide practical insights for educators seeking to improve assessment practices and improve student learning.

2. Related Work

In recent years, many scholars have studied formative assessment of language learning, and they have focused on its effectiveness in various educational contexts. In order to solve the problem of evaluating the effectiveness of online English learning for college students, Zhang et al. [1] proposed a formative assessment method based on learning behavior analysis. Listiani [2] analyzed the application of formative and summative assessment among EFL teachers. Sunra et al. [3] explored the impact of formative assessment on students' motivation to learn English through meta-analysis. Prastikawati et al. [4] integrated formative assessment and mentoring in pre-service teacher education in Indonesia to promote effective teaching practices. Cobeña et al. [5] studied the use of formative assessment as a systematic practice among higher education students. Xu et al. [6] proposed a formative assessment framework for whole-process learning to develop complex skills. Li [7] described the process of English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher developing formative assessment literacy in the classroom. Wlodarczyk et al. [8] explored students' and teachers' views on assessment-optimized learning strategies through qualitative research. Yan et al. [9] systematically reviewed the factors that influence teachers' intentions and behaviors in implementing formative assessment. Jiang [10] explored the construction strategy of a multi-evaluation system in hybrid high school English teaching. Despite the growing interest in formative assessment, there is still a lack of specific research on the *Basic English* course for English majors. In addition, many studies focus on summative assessment and ignore the potential benefits of continuous feedback and learning. Therefore, this paper optimizes the formative evaluation strategy for the teaching of the *Basic English* course for English majors.

3. Method

3.1 Current Teaching Status of Basic English Course

The current teaching situation of *Basic English* course presents a complex and changeable situation. As a core course for basic English majors, this course occupies an important position in the English major curriculum systems of major universities. It has a long running time, a large amount of class hours, and has a significant effect on cultivating students' whole person. However, some problems have also been exposed in the actual teaching process [11]. First, in terms of teaching mode, the traditional face-to-face teaching method still dominates. Although teachers try to introduce modern information technology, such as multimedia courseware, video, audio and other resources, students still feel bored in class and their enthusiasm for learning is frustrated. This is mainly because the teaching content focuses too much on the inculcation of language knowledge such as grammar, vocabulary, and rhetoric, while neglecting the cultivation of students' actual language application ability. At the same time, the lack of oral environment also limits the improvement of students' English communication ability. Secondly, students' subjectivity is not fully reflected in the teaching process [12]. Although teachers try to let students take the lead in the classroom, students with varying levels of English proficiency often find it difficult to adapt to this teaching model, which undermines their confidence in learning. In addition, some teachers pay too much attention to test-taking skills and score competition in the teaching process, and neglect the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities and all-round development.

In response to these problems, some teachers have begun to try to reform their teaching methods.

They have designed a variety of teaching activities, such as group discussions, role-playing, and scenario simulations, to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning. At the same time, they also focus on cultivating students' cross-cultural communication skills and international perspectives to enhance their global awareness and international competitiveness. However, the implementation of these reform measures still faces some challenges. How to balance the teaching of language knowledge and the cultivation of language application ability? How to ensure that all students can receive adequate attention and guidance in class? These issues require educators to continuously explore and improve in practice. The current teaching status of the *Basic English* course presents a situation with both opportunities and challenges. Only by continuously promoting teaching reform and innovation can we adapt to the requirements of the development of the times and the society's demand for talents.

3.2 Optimization of Formative Evaluation of Course Teaching

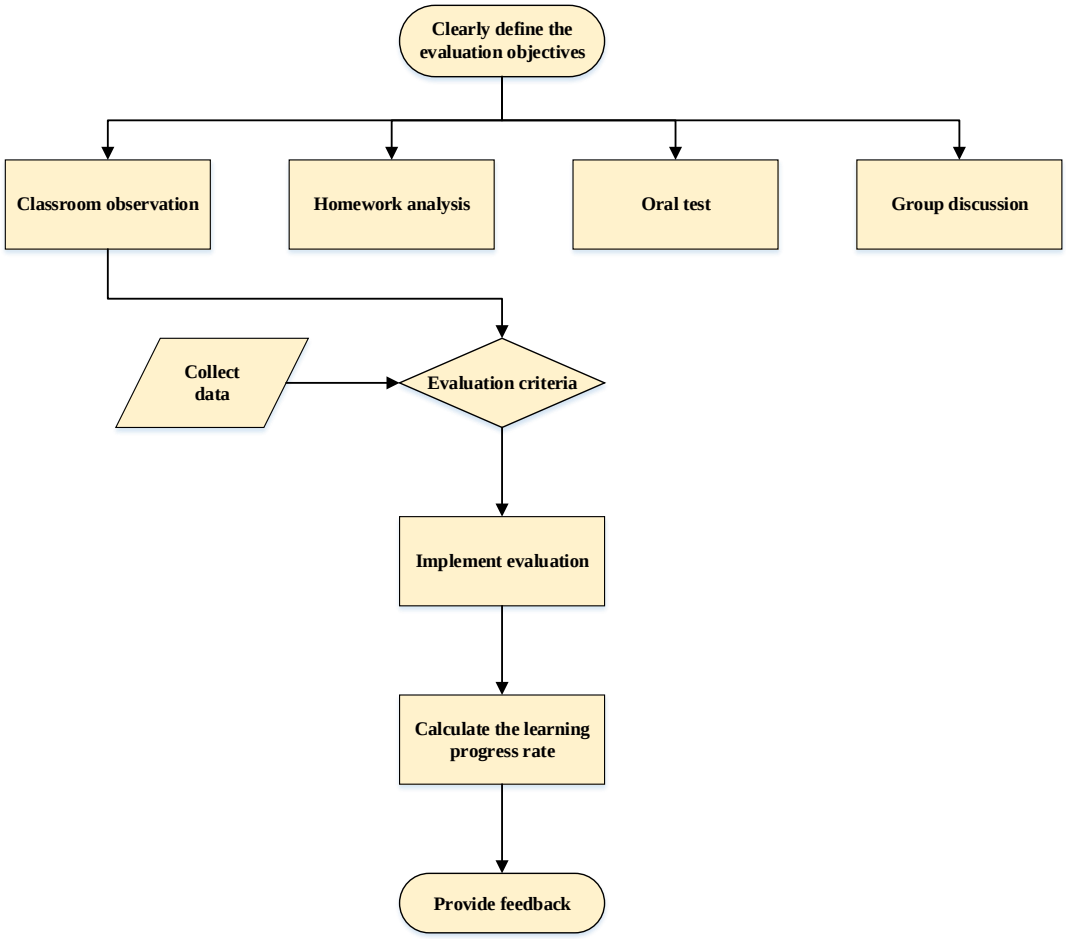

Figure 1: Formative Evaluation Model of Course Teaching

The formative evaluation optimization model for course teaching (as shown in Figure 1) provides teachers with immediate feedback by continuously and dynamically monitoring and evaluating students' learning progress so that they can flexibly adjust teaching strategies according to students' learning needs and changes in the teaching environment, thereby effectively promoting students' learning improvement and all-round development. This model not only emphasizes the systematic and scientific nature of the evaluation process, but also incorporates diversified evaluation methods to ensure that it can fully and accurately reflect students' learning status. When

constructing this model, clarifying the evaluation objectives is the first task. Teachers need to clearly define the purpose of evaluation, which is not only to understand students' learning progress, but also to be able to promptly identify potential problems in teaching and provide strong data support for subsequent teaching decisions. To this end, it is crucial to choose the right evaluation method. The model encourages teachers to flexibly use different evaluation methods such as classroom observation, homework analysis, oral tests and group discussions according to the evaluation objectives, and evaluate students' learning from multiple levels and aspects. The combination of these assessment methods can help teachers gain a deeper understanding of students' learning styles and needs and provide more personalized guidance [13]. Establishing clear evaluation criteria is key to ensuring that the evaluation results are objective and accurate. These criteria should be closely linked to the teaching objectives and course outlines, providing teachers and students with a common reference topic to clarify their learning direction and expected level. When conducting assessments, teachers should conduct tests regularly or irregularly and collect students' learning data. These data will become an important basis for subsequent analysis and decision-making. In order to quantify students' learning progress, the model introduces a practical learning progress formula.

$$Learning\ progress\ rate = \frac{post\ test\ score - pre\text{-}test\ score}{pre\text{-}test\ score} \times 100\% \tag{1}$$

Formula 1 calculates the difference between the test results of students who have studied for a period of time and the first test results, and uses the previous test results as the standard for percentage conversion to intuitively show the student's learning progress. This indicator not only helps teachers quickly identify students' learning performance, but also provides strong data support for adjusting teaching strategies. When implementing the formative evaluation model for the optimization process, the diversity and timeliness of the evaluation should also be emphasized. Diversity means that the evaluation cannot be limited to traditional paper-and-pencil samples, but should combine quantitative and qualitative evaluation, project assignments, oral reports, peer reviews, etc. to more comprehensively reflect students' learning outcomes [14]. Early learning requires teachers to quickly collect and analyze students' learning data, identify problems in a timely manner, and take similar measures to avoid problems accumulating and leading to learning obstacles. Feedback of evaluation results to students and teachers as soon as possible can not only help students recognize their learning strengths and weaknesses, encourage them to actively participate in the evaluation process, and cultivate self-evaluation ability, but also help teachers reflect on the effectiveness of teaching and continuously optimize teaching methods. The feedback mechanism consisting of these two parts helps to create a positive learning atmosphere and stimulate students' learning motivation. Finally, continuous improvement of the evaluation model is essential to ensure long-term effectiveness. With the deepening of educational internship and the changes in the educational environment, the evaluation model based on evaluation results and learners' learning needs should be continuously optimized and improved to adapt to new educational challenges. This includes adjusting assessment criteria, introducing new assessment methods, and optimizing data processing processes to ensure that assessment models always meet educational goals and provide strong guarantees for improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes. These not only help teachers gain a deeper understanding of students' learning progress and problems, but also provide scientific basis for their decision-making, promote the continuous optimization of teaching strategies, and ultimately significantly improve teaching effects [15]. This model not only embodies the concept of modern educational evaluation, but also provides new ideas and ways to promote educational innovation and educational reform [16].

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Effect Test of the Optimization Model of Formative Assessment of Teaching

The effect test step of the optimization model of formative assessment of teaching is an important link to ensure that teaching evaluation can be continuously improved and effectively support student learning. This paper verifies the actual effect of the optimization model through data collection and analysis.

(1) Determining the evaluation objectives and standards

First, clarifying the evaluation objectives of the teaching formative assessment optimization model, such as improving students' independent learning ability and promoting teachers' timely feedback. At the same time, formulating specific evaluation standards to ensure that the evaluation process is operational and objective.

(2) Selecting evaluation tools and methods

Based on the evaluation objectives, selecting appropriate evaluation tools and methods. This includes classroom observation, homework analysis, oral tests, etc., to ensure that the selected tools can fully cover the students' learning process and learning outcomes.

(3) Implementation of pre-test and post-test

Before the teaching is implemented, a pre-test is conducted to understand the students' learning starting point and current status. After the teaching is implemented, a post-test is conducted to collect students' learning outcome data. The comparison of pre-test and post-test data will be used to evaluate the effect of the optimization model.

(4) Data collection and organization

Collecting all students' pre- and post-test data, as well as relevant data generated during the teaching process (as shown in Table 1), such as short text listening, dialogue comprehension, short text reading, long text reading, self-introduction, situational dialogue, descriptive writing and argumentative writing. This paper will organize the data to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data.

Table 1: Test data

Test item		Group A	Group B	Group C
Listening comprehension	Passage Listening	52	72	59
	Dialogue understanding			
Reading comprehension	Passage Reading	23	58	86
	Long paper reading			
Oral expression	Self-introduction	65	57	96
	Situational dialogue			
Writing ability	Descriptive writing	21	42	87
	Argumentative writing			

(5) Data analysis and interpretation

Using statistical software to analyze the collected data, calculate average scores, standard deviations and other statistics, and conduct statistical tests such as t-test or variance analysis to

determine whether there are significant differences between pre- and post-test. At the same time, the statistical results are explained and supplemented by combining qualitative data such as classroom observations and interviews.

(6) Feedback and adjustment

The universities will timely feedback the analysis results to the teachers and students, so that they can understand the effect of the optimization model and the existing problems. According to the analysis results, universities adjust teaching strategies and evaluation methods, and further optimize the formative evaluation model of teaching.

(7) Continuous monitoring and iteration

The optimization of formative assessment of teaching is an ongoing process. After implementing the adjustments, colleges and universities continue to monitor student progress, collect new data, and iterate and optimize as needed to ensure that the assessment model always meets teaching needs and student development.

4.2 Students' English Performance Improvement Rate

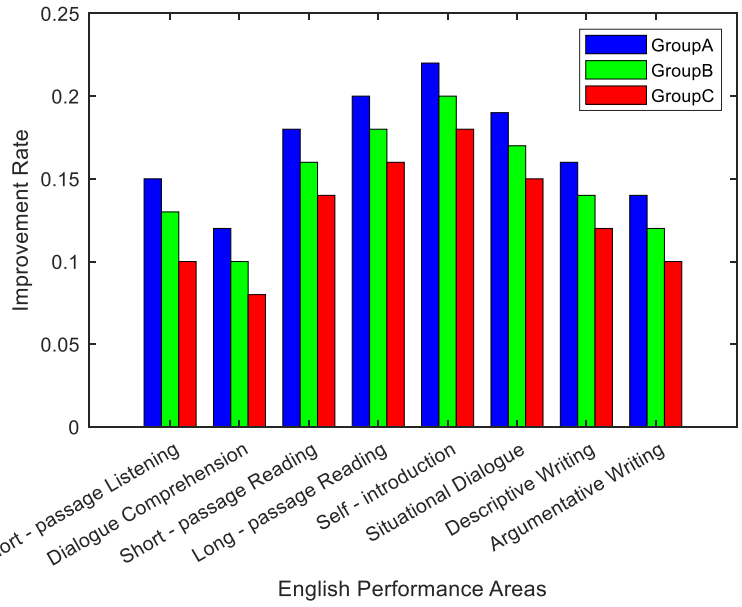

Figure 2: Improvement Rate of Students' English Scores

Figure 2 shows in detail the improvement rates of the three groups of students in different English proficiency areas (including short paper listening, dialogue comprehension, short paper reading, long paper reading, self-introduction, situational dialogue, descriptive writing, and argumentative writing). Specifically, Group A's improvement rate in each ability area ranged from 12% (conversation understanding) to 22% (self-introduction), showing that in areas that require more active participation and expression (such as self-introduction and situational dialogue)) has a particularly significant improvement; Group B's improvement rate fluctuates between 10% (conversation understanding) and 20% (self-introduction), and the overall trend is similar to Group A but slightly lower; while Group C has the lowest improvement rate, 8% (conversation understanding) to 18% (self-introduction), especially poor performance in more passive areas (such as conversation understanding). Overall, the improvement rates for Short Listening and Reading (both short and long) are relatively low across all groups, suggesting that these areas are more challenging or require more intensive practice. Meanwhile, the improvement rates for Descriptive

and Argumentative Writing are moderate, suggesting that these areas received some attention but still require additional strategies to improve performance. However, areas with strong interactivity and expression, such as self-introduction and situational dialogue, have higher improvement rates in Group A and Group B, which means that the teaching in these areas is more effective or more attractive to students, thus leading to higher performance improvements. In summary, this figure effectively demonstrates the performance differences among the three groups of students in different English proficiency areas through specific figures (such as the 22% improvement in self-introduction of Group A and the 8% improvement in conversation comprehension of Group C), and provides educators with targeted intervention guidance to improve students' performance in specific areas.

4.3 English Course Participation

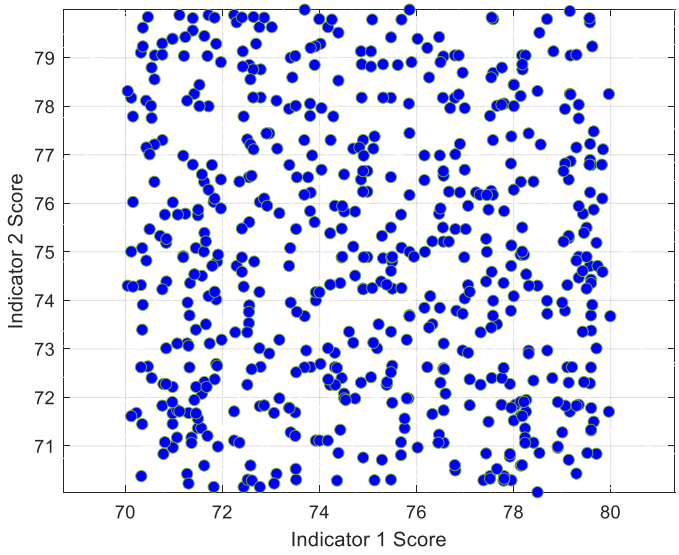

Figure 3: Participation in English Courses

In the analysis of the relationship between English course abilities, this paper is based on the participation data of students in Group A-C in four aspects: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, oral expression, and writing ability. From the data results in Figure 3, the data fluctuates between 70 and 80. This shows that after formative optimization, students' English skills can be maintained at a relatively good level. These data points reflect the scores of student groups on different English proficiency indicators, showing the diversity of students in various abilities, without forming an obvious clustering pattern. For example, students with high listening comprehension scores also have high and low reading comprehension, oral expression, or writing proficiency scores, indicating that the relationships between different proficiency indicators in English courses are complex in the absence of specific interventions or influencing factors.

5. Conclusion

This paper examines the practical application of optimized formative assessment strategies in the *Basic English* course and draws encouraging conclusions. The research results show that through the implementation of these carefully designed assessment strategies, students' classroom participation and English language skills have been significantly improved, fully confirming the effectiveness and feasibility of the proposed strategies. However, these results provide valuable

practical guidance for this study, but there are also limitations that cannot be ignored. The most noteworthy aspect is the relatively small sample size, which limits the generalizability and representativeness of the findings. To evaluate the effectiveness of these optimization strategies, future researchers can begin to expand the sample size to cover a wider range of student groups and educational backgrounds. At the same time, studying the specific mechanisms by which formative assessment improves learning outcomes will help this article gain a deeper understanding of its effectiveness and provide useful references and insights for other educational fields.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by The 2022 Annual Project of the "14th Five-Year Plan" for Educational Science in Shaanxi Province.

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