

# Characterizing Indonesian EFL Teachers' Questioning as Informal Formative Assessment Strategy

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## Abstract

Challenges in providing an effective formative assessment in the EFL context has remained uncovered at higher education levels. This study aimed to investigate the informal formative assessment practices of EFL teachers at tertiary level in Indonesia. In the study, qualitative research design was adopted, and the sequence of Eliciting, Student responding, Recognizing students' responses, and Using the information gathered (ESRU), developed by Furtak (2011), was used to illustrate every single step to diagnose students' actual knowledge and gap found. The survey was distributed randomly to 59 EFL teachers at tertiary education institutions in Indonesia, after the analysis of their responses, five of them were selected via criterion sampling method as the participants of the study. The data were collected through video recordings, classroom observation, and interviews. The result revealed that teachers with complete ESRU sequences tend to use questioning technique more effectively as an informal formative assessment. The more complete ESRU sequences they practiced, the more information they collected to provide appropriate feedback to students. Besides, teachers' strategy in making use of information gathered was worth noting to enhance students' learning. Hence this study can contribute as a continuum base of formal formative assessment to construct better learning instruction as well as consideration for decision and policy making in EFL higher education context.

**Keywords:** EFL Teachers' questioning, tertiary level, formative assessment, informal formative assessment

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Up to now, some studies have investigated formative assessment due to its practicality and effectiveness in different contexts. The challenges are providing appropriate actions to feedback follow-up that is still uncovered in EFL formative assessment within the higher education context (Widiastuti and Saukah, 2017; C n Daskin, 2017; Gotwals and Birmingham, 2016; Bailey & Heritage, 2014; Jiang, 2014; Heritage & Heritage, 2013; Ruiz-Primo, 2011). Perhaps, inadequate understanding of the assessment of teachers (Rasyidah et al., 2020; Box et al., 2015) and the slow pace of changes in teaching strategies (Widiastuti and Saukah, 2017; Black, 2015) have resulted in inability to make a proper decision. By giving attention to informal formative assessment practices, teachers could minimize the inadequate knowledge of this assessment and focus on various assessment practices rather than on benchmark or other on-demand assessments.

The shift to informal formative assessment is firmly embedded in daily teaching and learning activities. It enables the teacher to gather information about students' strengths and weaknesses during classroom interactions although the information collected is transient and remains unrecorded (Rui-Primo, 2011). In particular, C n Daskin and Hatipoglu (2019) draw a typical dimension of informal formative assessment by breaking down several classifications of informal assessment practices as a continuum of the formal formative one (Ruiz-Primo, 2011; Rea-Dickins, 2001). First, classifications are under circumstances of why the formative assessment should be carried out informally in daily teaching practices

(in various forms and from various sources) rather than being planned. As their study was concerned about classroom interactions as the form and source of the assessment, planning was not observable in the interaction analysis. Second, both formal and informal assessments may involve planning to a particular degree (as cited by Torrance & Pryor, 1998 in C n Daskin and Hatipoglu, 2019). In this sense, C n Daskin and Hatipoglu (2019) provide an example of assessment activities for writing assignments made by a teacher for students. Although the assessment conceptualization may go under formal steps, feedback may be transferred through informal interactions with students. Writing activity will be carried out and assessed through interaction. The interaction during the assessment activities is unplanned and spontaneous. On the other hand, formal formative assessment (e.g., use of tests and

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assignments) is more deliberate in timing and tasks. From this point of view, interaction can be part of planned or impromptu assessment activities.

Several studies have found the importance of informal formative assessment. Most informal formative assessments take place in a scientific context at primary and secondary levels (Furtak et al., 2016; Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006; Gattulo, 2000). Meanwhile, informal formative assessment practices within the EFL context remain rare. Studies conducted by Lee (2011), Gattulo (2010), and Gotwals and Birmingham (2016) show the potential of Initiation, Response, Follow-up (IRF) classroom interaction for creating informal formative assessment activities at primary and secondary schools. Other studies on informal formative assessment in the higher education context lead to minimizing the gap between the current students' knowledge and the expected knowledge in different EFL contexts. For instance, Heritage and Heritage (2013) investigated interactions that could reflect formative assessment in the Australian context. In this case, the teacher used questioning in the IRE/F sequence collected as a data source. The findings presented that respectful pedagogical questioning is a crucial resource for eliciting students' current learning status and making decisions on the next learning steps. However, the students' responses during the informal formative assessment practice had not been classified yet. Unlike Heritage and Heritage's (2013) research, Jiang's (2014) study discovered the classification of students' responses in informal formative assessment. Jiang does not clearly state the information students received. As a result, the EFL teacher can not proceed to the appropriate follow-up action based on the information collected. Hence, the information of the informal formative assessment in the EFL higher education context was not still adequately acquired.

Due to the shortcomings in the previous studies, a further investigation of informal formative assessment is paramount. In the Indonesian context, few studies on this topic are rarely conducted in the EFL context. Previous studies still relied on formal formative assessment practice (Widiastuti and Saukah, 2017). Consequently, some revisions on particular dimensions of the informal formative assessment stages are pointed out from Jiang's study which comes up with new findings. Due to the shortcomings of Jiang (2014) and Heritage and Heritage (2013), the IRF classroom interaction patterns did not give clear information of informal formative assessment, particularly, whether questioning can posit an assessment tool to diagnose where the learners are, where the learners are going to, and how the learners achieve their goals. Though, it is believed that questioning in the context of formative assessment practices may help students be more participative in the assessment and learning practices (Burns & Myhill, 2004). However, not all questions are considered formative, even when teachers use questioning to diagnose learning. Questions are only

considered formative if teachers provide follow-up questions to the questions (Black et al., 2003).

There is a need to go beyond the IRF sequence to have a comprehensive description of questioning as an informal formative assessment strategy. The ESRU model is believed to give better descriptions of questioning in informal formative assessment practices (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). The previous study conducted by Ruiz-Primo and Furtak (2007) mentioned four ESRU sequences in which the teacher elicited information, and then the student responded. After that, the teacher recognized the responses and then used them as data to enhance students' learning. First, eliciting questions is used to initiate a sequence that potentially provides information about students' current knowledge (Richard & Lockarts, 1994). Second, the teacher recognized students' responses to indicate their contribution (Jiang, 2014). In other words, teachers have the opportunity to pull out the students' responses and react to them, while the students can evaluate the accuracy of the teacher's judgment of the students' contribution (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). Third, students can use information from teacher's feedback to achieve their learning goals (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006). Fourth, the ability to employ informal formative assessment can be comprehensively illustrated. However, of the four ESRU sequences, the teacher missed the initiation step, i.e., clarifying the learning goals. Furthermore, the study did not record some other students' responses. Teachers can clarify students' learning goals and integrate them into the existing informal formative assessment strategies to minimize the gap between the current students' knowledge and expected knowledge. As a result, teachers can proceed with accurate follow-up action towards the existing data.

To sum up, this present study aimed to investigate informal formative assessment strategies in EFL classroom interactions at the higher education level. It also intends to describe the detailed characteristics of how the five EFL teachers implemented informal formative assessment through the ESRU sequence. Since the current implementation of informal formative assessment strategies is still superficial, this study poses some practical benefits, such as understanding how questioning is used as an assessment tool rather than a teaching technique. Practically, the evidence that this study generates would also be beneficial for the agents of informal formative assessment involving EFL teachers, students, peers, and the official policymakers. Besides, it also facilitates the EFL teachers to determine and modify their teaching strategies that can promote students' critical thinking.

### Classroom Questioning

Classroom questioning takes a fundamental role in informal formative assessment. It is used when a great deal of information from informal formative assessment is obtained (Martinho, et al., 2014). The IRF/IRE sequence has occasionally been

used for a pedagogical context in the classroom talks. This sequence enables a teacher to initiate a conversation to which a student will respond to. After that, the teacher provides feedback or evaluation (Rea-Dickins, 2001). Despite its practical use, it has been criticized because it involves students more on "procedural" rather than "authentic" (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991) as cited in Ruiz-Primo and Furtak (2007). Besides, it is also mentioned that the teacher initiates questions they can answer. Occasionally, questioning is used to make the interaction more dialogic than one-way (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991) as cited in Ruiz-Primo and Furtak (2007).

Due to constraints in the use of IRF, Furtak (2011) highlights three critical issues concerning informal formative assessment practices. First, in the informal formative assessment context, both teachers and students can initiate the conversation. Second, the teacher as a facilitator may allow other students to participate in dialogic interactions. In that way, teachers, students, and peers can act or use responses by following the ongoing classroom interaction pattern. Third, informal formative assessment has multiple iterations of incomplete sequences to facilitate productive thinking. The ESRU sequence was selected under three circumstances to fulfill the incomplete sequence of IRF as Furtak (2011). The ESRU requires a teacher to elicit responses, and then students respond before the teacher recognizes and uses those responses to enhance students' learning. To elicit students' responses, the teacher asks students to share ideas, conceptions, opinions, or interpretations. A teacher could deploy some strategies such as a reaction, clarification, elaboration, or explanation to initiate responses on students' understanding of the given materials (Furtak et al., 2016). While students respond to the teacher's questioning, the teacher can recognize students' responses in different ways such as rephrasing, revoicing strategies, and elaborating on students' responses. Finally, the teacher can use them to provide students with specific information which enables students to reach their learning goals. The sequence works when the teacher redistributes questions to the whole class and connects new ideas with familiar ones.

### **The practice of teachers' questions as informal formative assessment in the classroom**

Informal formative assessment can take place in any classroom interaction. In the EFL context, this assessment is embedded firmly in teaching and learning activities (Anton, 2015; C n Daskin, 2019). Dialogues produced and embedded in the assessment are identified as assessment conversation (Furtak, 2011). The earlier studies that concerned about classroom talk have identified the potential of questioning technique inturn-taking patterns of classroom interactions (Milawati & Suryati, 2019) through observation and coding schemes (Suryati, 2015; Suryati & Archer, 2013). Although most studies have concerned

about CBA, the findings do not reflect formative assessment (Parsons, 2017; Hill & McNamara, 2012; Rea-Dickins, 2001).

This study argues that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning aspects. It mainly becomes evidence in the classroom interaction analysis (Anton, 2015) and also integrates the gaps found in those three previous studies (Heritage & Heritage, 2013; Jiang, 2014; C n Daskin & Hatipoglu, 2019) concerning the implementation of informal formative assessment in the EFL context. Therefore, this study focuses on classroom talks in which activities reflect the use of informal formative assessment.

The theories of the ESRU model proposed by Ruiz Primo-Furtak (2007) are developed to scrutinize informal formative assessment practices in the EFL context. The first step, clarifying the learning expectation, is a crucial activity in informal formative assessment practices. The earlier studies missed this aspect from the informal formative assessment (Sheris, 2011; Heritage & Heritage, 2013; Bailey & Heritage, 2014; Jiang, 2014; C n Daskin, 2017). Only Ruiz-Primo (2011) stated that clarifying the learning expectation was a prerequisite to collect other informal formative assessment information. Further, clarification enables a teacher to explain the learning goals and discuss the success indicators with their students. The second step is eliciting which most researchers consider the initial activity in informal formative assessment. However, the questions deployed were varied based on their purposes in different contexts (Sheris, 2011; Heritage & Heritage, 2013; Bailey & Heritage, 2014; Jiang, 2014). Eliciting enables the teacher to initiate students' responses. This present study used a questions model classified by Richard and Lockharts (1994). Regarding its potential benefits in the EFL context, formative assessment can encourage students to think rather than just check students' understanding (Jiang, 2014). The questions used in the formative assessment are procedural, convergent, and divergent. The procedural questions have something to do with what is going on in the classroom and to enhance student's focus on the lesson, facilitate their learning, and promote classroom interaction. While the convergent questions are used to encourage students' responses to recall information. Last, divergent questions are performed to find answers in a higher-level way of thinking. In that way, students are motivated to answer questions based on their knowledge, experience, and opinion rather than the learning materials.

The third step, responding to eliciting questions. Unlike other previous studies, Jiang (2015) classified students' responses into several categories: no answer, individual response, no response, and choral response. In line with this, Doug Lemov (2010) specifically classified students' responses into two: correct and incorrect responses. The correct response may be in the form of short answers, words, or phrases which match one of the teacher's acceptable answers. While incorrect students' responses, indicated by Whessel (2015) as a partially

correct answer, correct answer at the wrong times, and an incorrect answer for correct principle.

The fourth step is recognizing students' current knowledge. In particular, it indicates that students' responses have been observed and accepted during ongoing classroom discussion (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006). By recognizing students' responses, a teacher potentially can act on them and accurately interpret the students' participation the students' participation.

The last step is using the information gathered to assist students to achieve their learning goals (Ruiz Primo-Furtak, 2006). It enables the teacher to elaborate on students' responses, redirects students' thinking and communication model, as well as connect new ideas to the familiar ones. Those activities occur quickly and spontaneously at a flexible time through daily classroom interactions (Cân Daskin& Hatipoglu, 2019; Heritage & Heritage, 2013; Ruiz-Primo, 2011).

## METHOD

### Research Design

This qualitative research investigates the implementation of teachers' questioning as an informal formative assessment at the higher education level. Due to the use of this design, the study collected most of the data by conducting non-participant observation in a classroom setting (Cresswell, 2014). Reports of the classroom research give teachers insight about what happens in the classroom, thereby enabling them to compare it with the classroom situation. In particular, the research design was applied as an approach to identify and describe the phenomena of the current informal formative assessment strategies in the EFL classroom context. Therefore, any conclusion of this study would only be effective in the particular observed conditions and settings.

### Participants

Online Survey questionnaires were distributed to randomly selected 59 EFL teachers at the higher education level in Indonesia. Five volunteer EFL teachers were included in the study due to their positive attitudes towards a formative assessment. The teachers had also received assessment training or classroom testing in the past three years. The teachers also gave consent for participating in the next stages of the research. Two of the participant teachers were from a state university, two from a private University, and one was from an Islamic state university. The teachers (coded as T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5) were then involved in the classroom observation process.

### Data Collection Tools and the Process

The data collection instruments of the study were composed of a google form, video recordings, an observation form, and an interview form. The data collection tools were developed by the researchers based on the opinions of three experts from the

field of English language teaching and assessment. The experts were professional lecturers whose interests were Testing and Assessment and ELT Methodology. Three main instrument parameters including survey questionnaire, interview guide, and observation checklist were used to judge the content and language construction of the interactions. First, the data were collected through the survey questionnaire distributed randomly to 59 EFL teachers in the higher education level in Indonesia. Five of these EFL teachers were selected purposefully and on voluntary basis into the final data collection process due to their positive attitude towards formative assessment. These 5 teachers had received trainings on testing and assessment for three years. These five teachers were from different universities. Two were from a state University, two from a private university, and one from an Islamic state university. The five teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5) were then involved or participated in the classroom observation. As the study started, a non-participant observer served as the primary data collector. The video recording, as well as observation checklist, were used to record the verbal data of the participants. It was aimed to investigate what was going on in the process of teachers' questioning as informal formative assessment strategy study. The number of meetings with each participant varied. It depended on the saturation data gained from each participant. To complete what was uncovered during classroom observation, an in-depth interview was conducted. Moreover, a cross-check was utilized for the data obtained through the classroom observations.

### Data Analysis

To analyze the data, a thematic coding process based on ESRU model developed by Furtak (2011) was used to identify, classify, and categorize the essential data from classroom observation. Observational data were analyzed through recordings, sorting out episodes involving teacher-student interaction, and transcribing the interaction verbatim. To show a clear result of informal formative assessment during classroom observation, it was described based on each theme. The descriptions, then, were counted and displayed in the table. Crosschecking out data including participants' check of transcript and analyses, and constant comparative analysis between data and emerging proposition were also taken.

## FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented via related tables as given in the following:

Table 3.1 represents the frequency of using questioning as informal formative assessment based on the ESRU model sequences in the EFL classes.

Table 1 presents the frequency of informal formative assessment sequences during the EFL classroom observation. Both complete and incomplete informal formative assessment (ESRUs) sequences were discovered in the classes. The

Table 1. The Frequency of informal formative assessment sequences performed by the EFL teachers

Teachers	Informal formative assessment sequences		
	ES	ESR	ESRU
T1	6	19	21
T2	5	6	20
T3	9	9	44
T4	50	13	66
T5	5	30	10

Notes: T1,..T5= The EFL teachers' pseudonym, ES= Eliciting, and Student responding,

ESR = Eliciting, Student responding and Recognizing, ESRU= Eliciting, Student responding,

Recognizing, and Using the gathered information.

incomplete sequences refer to when the teachers only applied eliciting student's response and allowing student responding (ES), as well as eliciting student's response, allowing student responding and recognizing students' participation (ESR). While for the complete ESRU sequences, the teachers did eliciting student's response, allowing student responding, recognizing the student's participation, and using the gathered information. The informal formative assessment practice of each teacher is presented in the following sections.

### T1's teaching practice

T1 had 6 ES, 19 ESR, and 21 ESRU sequences. This study highlighted T1 was the third with the most frequent use of incomplete informal formative assessment sequences compared to other EFL teachers. Meanwhile, T1 was ranked the fourth for using complete sequences. During the classroom interaction, T1 involved a complete ESRU sequence when discussing an instructional design for ESP classes with the students (see appendix 1).

Usually, T1 clarified the learning goal in each meeting first before asking questions to the whole class. Further, T1 explained the task instructions clearly. T1 often repeated individual or overall students' responses to give a clear idea. T1 also guided the students to find correct answers although some other time she did not give enough wait time for the students to answer HOTS. Hence, she provided information more to follow up the students' unresponding to the questions. She did not use questioning as an informal formative assessment strategy, but such questioning seemed to incite the discussion which the teachers involved more than the students.

Although the proportion of complete ESRU sequences was much less than the incomplete one, T1 still proceed the results of the informal formative assessment to measure

students' performance. The evidence is shown in the following interview extract.

*"My assessment is still under the standard of MECA. There's still Mid-term, and final test but I always tell them about the importance of what I focus on, like assessment for daily learning, even though I didn't show them directly. So when there are presentations or discussions and then Q & A, the discussion itself is a part of my assessment. But for the assessment, most of them already know, it means when they contribute, it always gives them points. The problem is for the assessment, we mix it like we use some kind of formula in counting their scores. Actually, I use that for assisting their mid-term and final test, if only they don't have enough scores, then it will help in raising their scores." [T1.6]*

This study demonstrated T1 constructed the learning goal with the students and discussed the ways to achieve it at the beginning of the class. The interview data described that T1 used the results of the informal formative assessment to improve students' final scores.

### T2's teaching practice

Similar to T1's teaching practice, T2 utilized informal formative assessment in the class (see Appendix 2). However, the frequency of complete and incomplete ESRU sequences applied by T2 was relatively less than T1 possibly due to less frequent classroom observation. There were 5 ES, 6 ESR and 20 ESRU noticed in T2's class. The ES sequence mostly happened when the teacher asked LOTS questions by recalling questions which did not require elaborative responses. Meanwhile, another incomplete sequence such as ESR sequence occurred when the students presented a discussion topic, and then a student from another group asked a question. Finally, the group presenter directly answered it without teacher feedback. Whereas, the complete ESRU sequence can be observed from how the teacher initiated HOTS after the presentation. T2 stimulated the discussion where one student responded to another student in long taking turns. When a gap was noticed during the discussion, T2 usually guided the students by modeling the teaching process, i.e., providing analogue to scaffold student's answer. Different from T1, T2 rarely set up the learning goal with the students, except sharing the basic course outline in the early meeting. The results also showed T2 employed questioning to investigate the gap between students and find the solution during the teaching-learning process.

*"Sometimes at the end of the course, I give some questions to them, the week before the next material begins. The purpose for me as teacher is just to make sure that the material which has been delivered to them. In this case stimulating them, we don't know if they understand about the material that has*

*been given to them. The second is, it's for them, questions could deepen, strengthen their understanding. I told them when they're in the mid-term test. For instance, after the test, we will meet. We meet even though it was brief talking about the mid-term test, we talk about what's the answer or the questions in the test, what should be the answers for the questions." [T2.2]*

The results observed from T1 also were seen from the fact that T2 used informal formative assessment results to score students' performance. T2 did not have any fixed formula to grade students' performance as T2 valued the process that the students had to get to the answer more rather than just writing the answer descriptively. Therefore, from T2's perspective, the students who tried to answer deserved higher scores.

*"I don't have any special form about grading. Actually, for me I only read about them, it's simple, as simple as quad reading pattern. The pattern is about the writing, of course, the writing pattern is still as academic writing system. So, students write, for instance following the academic writing pattern, there are main idea, then supporting idea or evidence, it has more score than students who only descriptive. So when I ask about why they can show about telegraphic speech. So, when they were asked with "why", there are some students who only describe it for example the development of their languages, there are some speeches, what's the first speech, the second speech, and then next, so he/she didn't really focus the explanation on telegraphic speech. Telegraphic speech should be "2 years old", what are the characteristics, for example, the characteristic is using 2 vocabularies and normally its only subject and verb, and it is assumed as a representation, one word represents some meaning. So, if the students can explain more, focus explaining the reason why, then the evidence, It is surely better than only being descriptive." [T2.3]*

Although T2 had no specific assessment procedures, T2 could record the students' strengths and weaknesses not only from the written tasks but also certain questions that T2 asked to discover which parts the students felt difficult or capable of. The following interview extract describes the situation.

*"To know the strengths of my students, the weaknesses, I determined it like, "oh this student, good, need some forward." I can do that, but if it's like asked about how I know, yes indeed, I know. Students when they're doing presentation, mid-term test, and final test, I know from the presentation, which one is good, some of them only aware, what I mean is I don't know when I was asked about the data. So when I got the name, then I call the name. Take one of the examples. Her name is Afifah, she got great at speaking, her vocabulary is good, her presentation is also good, she can control the floor*

*But when she's speaking or presenting, I often find some grammatical error, so sometimes the subject-verb argument is not good as her fluency, it is different with fluency, she's good, in terms of fluency and proficiency but I usually listen to her saying, "I will doing." That is her weakness. So for the strength and weakness is more to how I teach about the content, is she/he understand, understand about parent is, telegraphic speech, those stages. So more on to that, but for grammatical, at last, it will be more on self-evaluation. I see her just like the problem with Afifah, good at presentation but the subject-verb argument and her "I will doing", it's different." [T2.4]*

After recognizing students' strengths and weaknesses, T2 somehow discussed with other teachers to gather insights about the strengths and weaknesses of some students T2 perceived.

*"But in case of identifying the students who already have good speaking, like who are good in grammar, then I do some evaluation. I made a specific form to assess their progress in 1<sup>st</sup> semester, specifically for the generation of their semester and the next generation we already start since the beginning to address their problems as students, so we, as teacher can do real action to solve their problems." [T2.5]*

Further, shown in the excerpt above, T2 used the information regarding the students' performance. Despite being an EFL teacher, T2 was in charge as the coordinator of English study program. T2 usually collected and recorded students' performance and progress in a specific form. The data in the form would be used just in case T2 was required to select students with good track records to perform or join competition.

In summary, T2 used questioning as the informal formative assessment strategy to monitor students' progress, notice their strengths and weaknesses, and also utilize the gathered information. These objectives would help the teacher improve students' learning and participation in the class. Further, grading was not the main focus of learning assessment in T2's class, but T2 was concerned more about relevant feedback to overcome students' difficulties.

### T3's teaching practice

In contrast to T1's and T2's teaching practices, T3 had the most complete ESRU sequences (44). Only a few of the sequences such as ES (9) and ESR (9) were incomplete. T3 conducted more drilling activities in class to train students about the English advanced structure. Before exercising the main activities, T3 often asked the students to do brainstorming about the previous materials (see appendix 3). Once the students had the entire idea, it means that they were ready to learn new materials. In the process, T3 clarified the learning goal at the

beginning of class. Moreover, she frequently elicited students' responses by asking questions. The long turn-taking was also found during the observation. T3 often asked the whole class to comment on the questions given. This process allows the teacher to gather evidence of students' actual knowledge and difficulties of understanding the materials given.

“to me, I am the kind of teacher who strongly disagrees with remedy in the end so I keep reminding the students from the beginning, I try to remind them every week, or every meeting about their scores “you guys are good at this and so on, you need to learn more, and you are weak at this part, you are bad at this quiz, bla bla bla . . .” but, in the end, because I refuse to give remedy at the end of the semester is because. . . our students, I don't know, our students seem to take the subject easy, *mbak*, so I avoid it by not sharing the final result to them. I share it to the admins, I turn it in, but I give the students a week period which they can confirm it to me, the can ask why my score is like that, mom..” [T3.2]

The interviewing extract above reveals that T3 always recorded students' performance writtenly at every meeting as T3 attempted to facilitate students with better performance. The written recording then was used to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in the class. The students had no second chance to improve scores as the teacher and the students concurred with the course agreement at the beginning of the semester. Such the rule would allow the students to be more prepared to join the class and not take the class for granted.

Further, the use of modeling and debugging was frequent during the classroom observation to solve the gaps or the weaknesses of the students.

“When the average students have understood this part but having difficulties in the other part. That is the thing I could find. ee.. I tried, I tried to find out why “oh, why is this part difficult?” and then I take the average “oh, actually, most of the students don't get this point only a few students get it” for instance, and then, I tried to..discuss it again, finding out why is this difficult, why you guys don't get it, yet. I give more examples. So, uh, I give more varied examples so they could find the pattern like understand the pattern, like that.” [T3.3]

The results affirm the findings in T3's classroom observation. Occasionally, the complete ESRU sequences would emerge when the modeling and debugging strategies were in use. More than two complete ESRU sequences possibly occurred since most of the students participated in

the discussion. T3 through a series of iterations encouraged the students to give chances to a student or the whole class to comment on the discussion topic. When the answer was not correct, T3 then provided feedback to the students.

#### T4's teaching practice

Teacher questioning as informal formative assessment in T4's class was characterized by the dominance of 50 ES, 13 ESR, and 66 ESRU sequences. The ES sequence mostly occurred when T4 asked LOTS, for instance, convergent questions for recalling previous topics. Meanwhile, the ESR sequence was dominated by student-initiated questions either to the teacher or the class. Convergent questions are usually aimed to confirm the students' understandings. T4 had the highest number of complete ESRU sequences among others. In each session, T4 had sensitivity in recognizing student barriers in the class.

“I saw the expression of the student, we mean that being a lecturer cannot deny it with an expression that the children understand or not and we can judge, the student understands it or not? For example ... I think the material is rather heavy. I saw the student's expression as if he was showing confusion and others, of course, you didn't ask, do you understand? Not. he does not understand which part, I will repeat it, I'm a typical person who won't move on so I mean I finish everything until it turns out that at the end the student doesn't understand, the typical thing is, I don't ask first, understand what, in which part, I repeat until they really understand, then I move on or continue to the next one.” [T4.4]

The excerpt above shows T4 encouraged students' engagement to gather information of students' actual knowledge. Hence, T4 employed more various strategies such as repeating due to unclear response or leading students to find the correct answer by themselves. Besides, T4 often promoted students' learning by asking HOTS, comparing and contrasting each response. At the end of the teaching session, she always added more information to enrich students' understandings and gave a task to keep student learning. In short, the informal formative assessment could be a reference for T4 to reflect on the teaching process, method, and learning materials. The descriptions of the situations are presented in the following extract.

“I am a typical person who likes to work on my teaching method, if for example in speaking 4 yesterday I used a method like this, oh it worked, then I will use it again and I will develop it again, in the next semester if I teach. However, if it doesn't work well, I feel stressed, how come it doesn't work? but sometimes it doesn't work because of the student factor too, right? they were able to follow or not. if it doesn't work, I will be more like reducing the material again, oh it turns out

*that if it's made like this, they can't follow. it means I have to use the usual method, for example, my style of conveying it to students means that I have to get used to it more. that's how I usually think about it." [T4.5]*

In another point, T4 also shared the same strategy as other teachers (T1, T2, T3 and T5) who used informal formative assessment results to support students' final scores. However, T4 always kept reminding the students to not complain about their score just yet as T4 recorded and reminded them of the weaknesses. . In spite of teacher motivation, T4 suggested the students to evaluate their own learning as well.

*"So at the beginning, if you feel that your score is not satisfying, then you should evaluate yourself, if you think that it's not your fault then you can protest." [T4.6]*

The excerpt above indicates that the informal formative assessment practice was useful for both T4 and the students. Using the assessment, T4 had an opportunity to plan and modify the teaching process and learning materials, while students were expected to do self-assessment of their learning style. Hence, both T4 and students engaged in better teaching and learning activities.

### T5's teaching practice

T5 used questioning as an informal formative assessment which was characterized by 30 ESR sequences, 5 ES, and 10 complete ESRU sequences. Those sequences indicated that during the teaching-learning process, the teacher began the ESRU sequence with very few student-initiated questions. In other words, the teaching-learning process was characterized by teacher-centered which the teacher took dominantly role/ authority of the students' learning. In particular, the ES and ESR sequences mostly emerged when T5 clarified students' understandings by asking yes/no questions. Meanwhile, the complete ESRU sequence occurred when the teacher received new information/knowledge. T5 trained the students to create a connection of previous topics to new ones. The instruction language that T5 used in the class was mostly in Indonesian, and sometimes T5 explained in English, mostly leading to student misunderstanding. As a result, T5 scaffold student learning by repeating questions and switching the English instruction into Indonesian, and then guiding the students to the answer. In this case, T5 asked many questions to employ questioning as a teaching technique but not to assess the students informally. However, T5 could detect silence signaling the student's performance after T5 used questioning.

*"I give them time. So they all just stay silent, "oh my god, what happened? I think you don't understand about it" so, I just directly said to them, "ok, so it goes like this and this..." I explain it directly." [T5.3]*

The above excerpt indicates that T5 applied questioning strategies appropriately, gave enough wait time, and guided the students to find the expected answer. However, T5 rarely delivered HOTS to promote and challenge students' critical thinking, while the feedback given was only focused on acquiring the correct answer. In terms of using information about students' weaknesses and strengths, T5 further adjusted their teaching method to students' performance in each class. In particular, T5 stated that each class had different performance and background.

*"Just like what I said that did I record E class or not, I can conclude that for example in my listening course in B class. B class is capable and C is not bad, moreover C class they are more capable like in replying my words, they're better than A class or E class. But for E class, I understand because most of them are night class and employees, so I give them that but they will still be evaluated, like today they are not good enough, needs improvement, then the next meeting I have to try that again, "I think we don't need to use that method. How about we just go straight to spread into small groups, I'll give you another assignment outside of my model" yes, I have to try that." [T5.4]*

T5 used the results of informal formative assessment to compare students' performance in each class by considering the students' background as well. The information was then considered to help T5 choose appropriate method and materials to each class. Other situation also showed that the information about students' performance was useful to formulate suitable mid-term test, final-term test, and quiz items to each class.

*"so, to be honest, I can't say that not all students have improvements, there some of them who still stuck with their scores, so I understand, his/her capability is like this, and it still stays that way, and back then I try to lower the difficulty, the quiz was held pre Mid-term and Final test, so when it comes to pre-Final test quiz, I try to lower it, will he be able to improve? So, it still stays like that, then it means it is what it is, maybe it's just his skill or another factors because there are some of them who have shown some improvements" [T5.5]*

The interview indicated that the informal formative assessment only assists the teacher to modify teaching practice and testing, but not to encourage students' learning independency. Therefore, it seems that the collaboration between the teacher and the students did not really appear in the informal formative assessment practice.

To summarize, this study found teachers conducted an informal formative assessment through ESRU sequences in two ways. Teachers considered students' performance for teaching practice and testing. Although they applied the



functions for those purposes, they still required to challenge student's self-assessment to achieve the learning goal. It will build collaboration among teachers, students, and peers for more viable learning and better instructions.

## DISCUSSION

Using gathered information refers to how teachers immediately utilize the information gathered from the students' responses. Opposing formal formative assessment, this finding showed teachers used immediate and unplanned actions during classroom interaction. Instructional dialogue may result in informal formative assessment during classroom interaction (CânDaskin & Hatipoglu, 2019; CânDaskin, 2017a; CânDaskin, 2017b). Follow-up actions are unpredictable and spontaneous in classroom interaction as indicated by informal formative assessment (Cân Daskin & Hatipoglu, 2019).

To clarify learning activities using the gathered information, teachers use the ESRU sequences during classroom interaction. The sequences are clarifying the learning objectives (Ruiz-Primo, 2011), eliciting students' responses through teacher questioning, interpreting students' responses (Jiang, 2014), reacting towards students' responses, and using the information gathered (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006). In relation to these sequences, four strategies for clarification in the sequences involve providing feedback, comparing and contrasting student(s)'s ideas, modeling, and debugging.

### Providing feedback

Providing feedback is one of the teacher's strategies in using the gathered information. This present study indicated that the teachers provided positive affective feedback and positive cognitive feedback towards students' responses to promote students' thinking.

In contrast to other previous studies on informal formative assessment (Jiang, 2014; Heritage & Heritage, 2013; Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006), this current study noticed the effects of both positive affective and positive cognitive feedback towards the students. The two feedbacks could promote students' learning. For example, positive affective feedback could help students express their ideas, and consequently, the teachers could gather information about students' actual knowledge and learning difficulties. Hence, early notice will help teachers decide immediate actions to reduce the learning gap.

In addition to positive affective feedback, positive cognitive feedback could accommodate peer feedback. This finding contradicts Jiang's (2014) findings that peer feedback mostly occurred in the content class since teachers valued more about how students attained the correct answer. Peer feedback was found in all main teaching activities. This accords to the fact that the teaching-learning process in higher education mostly involves a group discussion. Peer feedback comes

up when a group cannot answer peer questions. Then, the teachers allowed peer feedback to scaffold the group to find the correct answers. It infers that peer feedback functions to identify student's actual knowledge, the learning objectives, and strategies to use (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Besides, peer feedback enables students to reach a new level of understanding as peers may inspire them during the discussion (Ruiz-Primo, 2011).

Another finding also revealed that the teachers elicited positive cognitive feedback by directly commenting and answering questions once students' answers were wrong. Teachers are aware of student's mistake, especially in pronouncing certain words or phrases and correct them directly (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Apart from teachers' spontaneous correction, positive cognitive feedback is delivered when teachers give new information to students. It pushes them to directly correct or comments on student(s)' responses (Parsons, 2017). When the students were aware of his making mistake, they revised their earlier concept so that their mistakes were not fossilized anymore. In short, both feedbacks employed give positive impacts on teacher, students, and peers (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). For instance, the students improve their understanding and confidence in answering questions as they receive feedback. Meanwhile, teachers can detect students' strengths and weaknesses soon during classroom interaction.

In relation to formative assessment, teachers can provide feedback in effective formative assessment in three stages: (1) establishing where the learners are in their learning, negotiating the language learning target, objectives, standards, or criteria for success; (2) establishing where they are going and gathering information about students' learning, and checking whether they have already met the learning target or not; (3) establishing ways to achieve the learning objectives. Those principles are slightly similar to what have been noted by some previous formative assessment studies (Gotwals & Birmingham, 2016; Ketabi & Ketabi, 2014; Clark, 2012; Gattulo, 2010; WIDA, 2009).

Generally, it can be implied that teachers provide feedback to adjust the teaching-learning process, while peers act as instructional resources and students who take the ownership of their learning.

### Comparing and contrasting

Comparing and contrasting are strategies as follow-up actions to information gathered from students. This study demonstrated when the teachers frequently redirected questions to peers to comment, the process allows students to compare and contrast responses. Commonly, it occurs when a student gets stuck at an initial question. Afterward, the teachers asked peers or the whole class to respond to that question. This kind of situation is also in line with the argument of Goodwin

et al. (1992). Comparing and contrasting allows teachers to gather more information of students' actual knowledge and clarify student's answers.

Once a student cannot answer peer's questions, teachers need to redirect the question to the whole class. The teachers will say "no" when the student's answer is incorrect, while they still can redirect the question by saying "but". It means that teachers promote more student-centered pedagogy and encourage peer collaboration (Carless, 2011). Furthermore, comparing and contrasting make students more responsive to cooperate with different students in classroom interaction (Clark, 2012). It is important for teachers to also foster students' autonomous learning through simultaneous responding (William, 2011).

### Modeling

Modeling is used to describe a certain concept to scaffold students' learning and promote students' critical thinking. It was indicated from this study this strategy was performed when the teachers explained the thought of process through example. However, this strategy was less frequently used by the teachers to follow up the information gathered. Hattie and Timperley (2007) mention that to practice modeling, teachers should consider the goal of modeling and relevant examples which can meet the students' needs.

In particular, modeling occurs when a gap is found after teachers' explanation. Usually, teachers clarify the gap by repeating the students' responses. However, if they have no response from students, they will explain the materials again by adding more examples. This present study uncovered the fact that the teachers modeled their explanations using relevant familiar examples. As a result, such modeling may encourage students to do the same thing as teachers do (Furtak, 2016). In other words, modeling formative assessment activities through examples are relevant to the arguments of Roehler and Cantlon as cited in Ruiz and Primo (2011).

### Debugging

Debugging is a teacher's strategy to prompt students to guess correct answers by giving hints related to questions (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). It usually occurs when teachers initiate HOTS and receive no correct answers or no answer at all.

Hints are used to identify prompting questions, but debugging is not always done after teachers receive unsuccessful responses, but they can also prompt at any time if necessary (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). Usually, they give an alternative answer or show some media such as presentation slides to support students' learning (Goodwin, 1992). It can be said that debugging is one of the questioning techniques that can help students become confident in giving replies, develop higher-level cognitive skills, and increase their participation in classroom (Sherris, 2011).

However, in other situations, teachers fail to debug students perhaps because students do not know answers to divergent questions. This finding is in line with the research by Ruiz-Primo (2011) stating that debugging did not scaffold students to acquire appropriate answers, but modeling did.

From the overall activities carried out by the teachers during classroom interaction, it can be inferred that they are in line with the principles of formative assessment practice. Five sequencing strategies in formative assessment practices include (1) clarifying and sharing learning objectives and criteria for success; (2) implementing effective classroom discussion and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of student understanding; (3) providing feedback that moves learners forward; (4) activating students as instructional resources for one another; and (5) activating students to take ownership of their learning (Black and William, 2009). In addition, the assessment activities in this study are considered more informal rather than formal because this study employs classroom interaction as the source of observation (as cited by Torrance & Pryor, 1998 in Candaş and Hatipoğlu, 2019).

### Teachers' questioning as informal formative assessment

The findings revealed the potential use of teachers' questions in EFL classroom interaction. Marsh (2007) has noted teacher questioning as a technique which can be integrated with formative assessment. It enables teachers to facilitate students' higher-level thinking, problem-solving, peer assessment, feedback and comments rather than grades, oral feedback from teachers, sharing about assessment criteria, communication skills development and teaching inclusiveness. On the other side, this study supports the previous studies which stated that formative assessment was potentially implemented in various education contexts (Widiastuti & Saukah, 2017; Candaş, 2017; Gotwals & Birmingham, 2016; Bailey & Heritage, 2014; Jiang, 2014; Heritage & Heritage, 2013; Ruiz-Primo, 2011).

Particularly, this study revealed the formative assessment event occurred during classroom interaction. It is firmly embedded in daily teaching and learning activities (Candaş & Hatipoğlu, 2019; Antón, 2015). It is believed that informal formative assessment can yield evidence of students' learning and occur in any teacher-student interaction in the classroom (Heritage & Heritage, 2013). It enables teachers to gather information about students' strengths and weaknesses during classroom interaction. The information collected is transient and remains unrecorded (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). Besides, the assessment form and source are derived from teacher's and students' utterances during classroom instruction (Candaş, 2017a; Candaş, 2017b), and these make the assessment become informal. Moreover, the interaction during

classroom discussion cannot be planned and observable in the interaction analysis (CânDaskin & Hatipoglu, 2019).

On the other hand, informal formative assessment in this study can be classified as a continuum of formal formative assessment. For instance, T3 and T5 planned certain structure tasks either individual or group presentation as formal steps, while the feedback may register through informal interaction with students. It means that the timing to use informal formative assessment is usually unpredictable in interactions entailed to teacher and students. Thus, interaction can be part of any assessment activities, either planned or not. It naturally happens and thus makes informal formative assessment a rather more spontaneous incident (Ruiz-Primo, 2011; Rea-Dickins, 2001).

Regarding the stages of formative assessment, this study is different from previous studies done by Gattulo (2000) and Gotwals and Birmingham (2016) who used questioning in formative assessment. Both previous studies found the information related to the essential cause of students' responses was not clarified yet due to less effective of questioning patterns. Theoretically, it is believed that formative assessment practice can be well practiced as teachers follow the three stages of formative assessment namely eliciting, interpreting and using the information about students' learning (Black and William, 2009). Despite the different manner of both formal and informal formative assessments, eliciting, recognizing, and using are more appropriate to describe informal formative assessment activities instead of gathering, interpreting, and acting in formal formative assessment (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2007).

Similar to Jiang's study (2014), this study supports the three stages as Black and William (2009) have claimed. Unlike Jiang's study (2014), this study employs the ESRU sequences instead of IRF sequences to get a detailed sequence of teacher questioning as informal formative assessment. First, eliciting sequence enables both teacher and students to initiate sequences which potentially provide information about students' actual knowledge. Teachers employ procedural, convergent, and divergent questions to elicit students' responses. Second, recognizing students' responses has a positive impact on both teacher and students as it gives the teacher notice and clear interpretation of student's responses either individual answer, choral answer, no answer, or teacher answer. At the same time, the teacher has opportunities to act on students' responses by repeating, rephrasing, displaying, and giving wait time. Third, the stage of using information gathered allows the teacher to provide a specific action based on students' responses to achieve the learning goal. At this stage, the teacher may provide feedback, compare and contrast students' responses, modeling, and debugging.

Other previous studies on informal formative assessment point out that teachers clarified the objectives (Ruiz-Primo, 2011) before going to the three stages namely eliciting,

recognizing, and using. It is believed that having a clear learning objective at the beginning would help both teacher and students to determine evidence of achieving the learning objectives (Sadler, 1989 in Ruiz-Primo, 2011). Furthermore, it also benefits the teacher to determine students' learning progress, objectives, and strategies to achieve their objectives (Clark, 2010). Indeed, the complete ESRU sequences were varied between teachers. The more skillful assessment strategies teachers had, the more complete ESRU sequences existed in their teaching practices. It indicates that the number of complete ESRU sequences suggests the teacher's quality in practicing informal formative assessment. Hence, the teachers used the results of informal formative assessment as a continuum of formal formative assessment to construct better instructions as well as consideration for decision and policy making in designing a better assessment.

Finally, this study agrees with other previous studies which stated informal formative assessment was embedded in teacher-students interaction in daily teaching activities (Antón, 2015; Popham, 2008). It gathers evidence of students' strengths and weaknesses that teachers can use to plan the next instructions, develop students' autonomy, build self-evaluation skills, and provide feedback for better instructions (Black & William, 2003). Moreover, it may increase teacher involvement, encouraging peer discussion to negotiate the learning objectives (Black & William, 2003; Lee, 2011), determine and modify strategies to improve students' learning achievement (Widiastuti & Saukah, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

Since this study aimed to obtain a brief description of how teacher questioning was developed as an informal formative assessment strategy, the ESRU sequences were proposed instead of the IRF sequences. However, it was still found the teachers provided generic feedback included in IRF sequences when they did not elaborate on students' responses. However, the use of ESRU sequences was dominant in almost all learning sessions. It indicates that the more complete ESRU sequences, the more advanced the teaching strategies as informal formative assessment. Besides, the ESRU sequences provide fruitful advantages to teacher, students, and peers. 'Using' stage implies more than providing evaluation but rather encouraging students to move towards the learning objectives. Moreover, teachers have a chance to raise a challenging question that redirects students' higher-level thinking. The other advantage is encouraging students to have peer collaboration whenever a group or individual student finds difficulties in understanding the learning concept.

The informal formative assessment was emphasized on teachers' effective feedback and the use of their actual practice results. Effective feedback encourages the teachers to reflect on their teaching and assessment activities. On the other hand, the

feedback given generates positive affective or cognitive impacts on students to achieve their learning objectives. Indeed, it further makes students do self-assessment to modify and adjust their learning styles to teachers' performance. Hence, teachers and students collaborate simultaneously to create a better learning atmosphere.

### LIMITATION

In relation to how teachers make use of the results of their actual informal formative assessment, it is important to note differences in the training level, experience, and other contextual factors (subjects and the number of students) of the five EFL teachers. However, this study does not explain much those differences. T1, for instance, as a senior teacher in the faculty was more likely to use informal formative assessment rather than the formal one (mid-term and final term tests). Another participant, T2, as the principal of the department more flexibly used the results of actual informal formative assessment depending on the subject taught. The more elaboration students say, the higher final score they get for informal formative assessment. T3 and T5 were considered applying an absolute scoring mechanism by constructing the scoring rubric; the informal formative assessment was not dominantly used to decide students' performance but as supporting evidence in cross-checking students' formal formative performance. While the results of T4's informal formative assessment were significantly affected by students' engagement in commenting peer response and asking questions since she taught language content class and speaking class.

### SUGGESTION

Due to the limitation of this study, some suggestions are dedicated to other researchers with a similar focus on informal formative assessment and classroom questioning, teacher and policymaker. First, to get a complete view of the teacher's actual informal formative assessment, further researchers need to investigate the effect of three aspects (teacher's training level, experience, and other contextual factors) toward students' performance. Second, the dominant usage of ESRU sequences in almost all learning sessions indicates that the ESRU sequences provide fruitful advantages to teacher, students, and peers. Using stage, for instance, not only enable teacher to provide evaluation but rather encourage students to move towards the learning objectives. By this means teacher is suggested to have more complete ESRU by raising a more challenging question that redirects students' higher-level thinking. Other suggestion is dedicated to policymakers to take apart as the agent of the assessment who make use of the result of the informal formative assessment and force teaching policy in higher education to develop teachers' professionalism in either formal or informal formative assessment practice.

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