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Case Studies of Formative Assessment Practices: Grade four English Language Teachers' practice, understanding and experiences.

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A Research Report submitted to the Faculty of Education University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg for the Degree of Master in Education (Tertiary Teaching)

Johannesburg, 15 February 2013

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own work. The sources used from other authors' works has been quoted and referenced. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Tertiary Teaching) to the University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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15 February 2013

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ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that the practice of formative assessment is a challenge to many teachers. Teachers are either entrenched in their old habits and methods of assessment or they have not been adequately trained to apply formative assessment in the instructional process. It has been argued that formative assessment can raise standards and improve learners' poor performances (Black and William, 2001). This study explored Grade 4 English language teachers' practice of formative assessment: their understanding, practice and experiences within the micro-level of classroom instruction. Within the case study method data were collected through observations, interviews and document analyses. Bernstein's (1996) concept of framing of evaluative criteria as operationalized by Morais (2002) framed the analyses of data in the study. The results showed that: three out of the four teachers were not conversant with formative assessment; they lacked the skills in effectively using evaluative criteria in the instructional context. The teachers' conceptualization of transmission of evaluative criteria corresponded to weak framing. Thus their control of communicating the evaluative criteria by way of the lesson objectives, feedback and transmission of the knowledge were tacit. Those teachers were trained in South Africa, one teacher in the Apartheid Era while the other two were trained post-Apartheid. The fourth teacher, a Zimbabwean, and educated in Zimbabwe, was able to explain and practice formative assessment to a greater extent. Her control over communicating the evaluative criteria of lesson objectives and feedback within the context of instruction were strongly framed. Other factors inhibiting the three teachers from effectively using formative assessment, could be, large classes and insufficient time. The Zimbabwean teacher, however, was exposed to the same classroom constraints.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a recent shift world-over and in South Africa towards formative assessment. Given that there is a lack of investigation of teachers' understanding, practice and experience of formative assessment in the township schools of Soweto, I explore in this study, Grade 4 English language teachers practice, understanding and experiences of formative assessment.

This chapter presents the background to the study, the rationale, research aim, the problem statement, research questions and an overview of the remaining chapters.

1.1.1 Background to the Study on Formative Assessment

Assessment is the gathering of information about a phenomenon to draw conclusions or make judgments (Rowntree, 1987). In classroom practice, assessment is about teachers gathering information about learners' understanding of the work and evaluating this information to improve the quality of learning (Shepard, 2000). In the past, assessment practices in schools were predominantly summative in the form of tests and examinations. Summative assessment is used at the end of the learning experience to measure the product of learning to pass grades (Torrance and Pryor, 2002). In other words, teachers focused on testing the quantity of content learners acquired at the end of a specified time. The results of the tests and examinations were logged in the form of marks and scores which were measured normatively (Brown, 2004). The learners were measured against other learners' performances or a standard norm set by the education department. But there has been a shift to formative assessment, which brings forth a discursive shift in the conceptualization of classroom assessment.

1.1.2 Defining Formative Assessment

The National Assessment Policy of the Department of Education of South Africa (DOE, 2005b) requires teachers to re-conceptualize their thinking and practice of assessment to include formative assessment, which emphasizes quality rather than quantity teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 2002).

> All those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes 'formative assessment' when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet the need (Black and Wiliam, 2001, p. 2).

The information gathered about learners' performance in the transmission process is used to provide constructive feedback to learners. This is to improve their understanding of knowledge and skills acquired. When teachers use the information related to learners' performance to change their teaching methods, to suit the needs of the learners in order to maximize learner potential, it is called formative assessment (*ibid*).

Black and Wiliam (2001) argue that formative assessment is an on-going process that aims at guiding learners in developing their competence levels through the use of learner feedback to improve their incompetence's. Thus learners improve their knowledge and skills — life-long learning. Brown (2004) agrees with Black and Wiliam (2001), thus:

> Evaluating students in the process of 'forming' their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process. The key to such formation is the delivery (by the teacher) and internalization (by the student) of appropriate feedback on performance, with an eye towards the future continuation of learning (Brown, 2004, p. 6).

The centrality of formative assessment cannot be overemphasised as indicated in the citation above.

1.1.3 The Purpose of Formative Assessment

The purpose of formative assessment is to "motivate students to take more responsibility for their own learning, to make assessment an integral part of the learning experience, and apply a wide range of knowledge, rather than simply engaging in acts of memorization and basic skill development" (Hargreaves, 2002, p. 70). In this connection, formative assessment requires that the teacher impress upon learners a culture of learning; develop learner confidence and learner potential to apply knowledge and skills to new situations — the teacher should circumvent the traditional thought of training learners' memory skills.

Vandeyar and Killen (2007) have observed that teachers' conceptions are important in either the success or failure of formative assessment in classroom practices. This implies that a teacher who understands and practices formative assessment in instructional discourse ensures the success of the assessment process. However, those teachers who do not understand how to implement formative assessment will neglect to employ it in their daily classroom discourse. It is these considerations amongst others that convinced me to investigate the understanding and experience of teachers' in respect of formative assessment in classroom practice.

Below, I present the rationale, the aim, the research problem and question of this study as well as the summary of all the chapters that constitute the thesis.

1.2 THE RATIONALE

The observations of teachers practice in my work as a district official showed that teachers are not applying assessment effectively in their classrooms. The teachers' guide to efficiently applying formative assessment is contained in the National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for schools (DOE, 2005b). The National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for schools envisages that the teacher should use formative assessment to identify learning difficulties early in the year and should address those learning difficulties immediately. The effective use of

formative assessment will improve learner performance (Black and Wiliam, 2001). Yet, several Grade 3 learners in the township schools of Soweto have shown a lack of knowledge and skills in Language and Mathematics. The statistics of the Annual National Assessment conducted in the township schools of the Johannesburg Central District in 2008 showed that only 23% of Grade 3 learners could apply basic mathematics skills and 29% could apply language skills (DOE, 2008). The annual assessment is a standardized assessment administered by the Department of Education to assess learners' competence levels measured against learners' age.

In light of the literature review that I discuss in Chapter Two, effective practice of formative assessment in the classroom should have enhanced the results of the Annual National Assessment (ANA). Teachers can experience formative assessment as effective and beneficial if teachers accept and use it effectively in classroom practice (Black and Wiliam, 2001). The way in which teachers understand formative assessment will influence the success of formative assessment practices. Teachers' understanding will in turn impact on how effectively they go about using it to develop learners' knowledge and skills during the instructional process (Vandeyar and Killen, 2007).

The use of formative assessment practices in the classrooms of historically disadvantaged schools in Soweto and surrounding areas is opaque. The culmination of the ANA seems an opportune to propose a study that interrogates how the teachers of those schools apply formative assessment to improve the quality of learners' learning. A study of this nature may:

a) Initiate further research studies into the larger population group in South Africa.
b) Be used to measure how existing claims on formative assessment relates to the researcher's findings.

c) Provide valuable information to the Education Department on the assessment strategies and processes that occur at classroom level.

d) Provide in-depth insight on how formative assessment is applied in the teaching and learning process of a particular school.

The findings have been confined to the schools that were studied but may serve as additional information on how formative assessment is practiced, understood and experienced at classroom level across all the grades.

1.3 THE RESEARCH AIM

The aim of the study is to:

a) Analyse teachers' practice of formative assessment.
b) Explore teachers' understanding of formative assessment
c) Analyse teacher's experiences with formative assessment in their daily classroom practice.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many teachers are reluctant to change their assessment practices, hence learners' difficulties and inadequacies are realised too late to support them (Black and Wiliam, 2001). Teachers are holding on to traditional practices of assessment such as ticking correct answers and crossing incorrect work of learners without providing them (learners) with feedback that would facilitate learning and understanding (Vandeyar and Killen, 2007). In some cases teachers say that they are concerned about their learners' lack of understanding but teachers do nothing to improve learners' understanding (Black and Wiliam, 2001).

The process of formative assessment has not manifested itself in classroom practice as required by the National Policy on Assessment and Quality Assurance (NPA) in schools (Vandeyar and Killen, 2007), that is, assessing learners formatively in the

teaching process to maximize potential and improve the quality of learning (NPA, 2005). The central focus of the National Policy of Assessment (2005) is learner performance. Although the use of different instruction methods could improve learner achievement, formative assessment is significant in developing learners understanding of knowledge in the instructional process (Black and Wiliam, 2001). Teachers, who do not comply with the policy demands of formative assessment, hamper the learning process (Vandeyar and Killen, 2007).

The conceptions of teachers also pose a problem in practicing formative assessment. Teachers do not show a deep understanding of the concept and its application (Vandeyar and Killen, 2007). The manner in which teachers understand and view their own teaching and assessment practices may "act as barriers to change" (Vandeyar and Killen, 2007, p. 101). This implies that the mind-set of teachers on the transmission-acquisition process and how they understand the process of evaluation within the context of instruction influences how they practice change in instruction and assessment processes.

The practice of formative assessment in historically disadvantaged township schools is vague, thus, posed a favourable prospect to study formative assessment at these schools. The questions that motivated me to undertake this study are mentioned hereafter.

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My research was guided primarily by the following questions:

a) How do teachers practice formative assessment in the instruction process?

b) What is the teachers' understanding of formative assessment?

c) How do teachers experience formative assessment?

1.6 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 presents the introduction, background to the study, an overview of formative assessment, the aims of the study, the rationale, problem statement, and research question.

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature on formative assessment in classroom practice. The second section reviews the literature by significant authors. To conclude this chapter a few challenges that South African teachers encounter in respect of formative assessment is documented.

Chapter 3 describes the conceptual framework of formative assessment grounded in Bernstein's theory of instruction whereby the definition of formative assessment is outlined and a clear presentation of the transmission-evaluation-acquisition process is illustrated within an evaluative context. The traditional approach towards assessment is briefly outlined to enable the reader to understand the significance of evaluative criteria within the framework of formative assessment.

Chapter 4 describes the research approach and research methods used in the study. A multi-method qualitative approach has been used as the aim is to understand formative assessment in-depth. The research design and methods are described and justified. Thereafter I present a description of the participants, sites and tools that were used to collect data. A detailed explanation of the data collected and data analyses are in the context of Morais' (2002) theory is also presented. The chapter concludes with a consideration of issues pertaining to validity and the professional ethics that are required in a study of this nature.

Chapter 5 presents the analyses of data for each teacher individually. Firstly, analyses of the transcripts are presented to determine the extent to which the teacher used formative assessment. Secondly the interview data is synthesized to establish the teacher's understanding and experience of formative assessment. Thirdly, analyses of the documents are presented. The findings are documented in

relation to the three research questions and the findings are justified in terms of Bernstein's concept of framing as operationalized by Morais (2002). The analyses and findings are juxtaposed to maintain a coherent presentation.

Chapter 6 provides an interpretation of the data analyses to answer the three research questions. The findings and data in Chapter Four are alluded to, to provide a clear understanding of the discussion and to provide reasons for the interpretations. This chapter also presents the conclusion, summary of the research findings, recommendations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature that informs formative assessment (FA) in classroom practice that seeks to examine teachers' understanding of this processes, practices and experiences of formative assessment at the micro level of the classroom. The discussion unfolds with arguments and findings of various researches that demonstrate teachers' practices of formative assessment in learners' instruction.

2.2 Discussion of Previous Empirical Studies on Formative Assessment

Researchers such as Black and Wiliam (2002), Shepard (2000), Shohamy (2001) and Gipps (1999) observe that formative assessment plays a significant role in the instructional process since it regulates learners' potential to realize the knowledge that they acquire (Black and Wiliam, 2001). This implies they believe that the intertwined practices of assessment in the instruction process strengthen learning goals, among them to acquire deep understanding.

In a study conducted in the United Kingdom on raising standards through classroom assessment, Black and Wiliam (2001, p 2) states that formative assessment is the heart of instruction, and potentially can close the gap between low achievers and high achievers. Furthermore, Black and Wiliam (2001) found that whereas learners who were exposed to formative assessment improved remarkably, learners who were not exposed to formative assessment performed poorly. The latter group owing to not being supported in classroom practice become disruptive and resort to truancy. Consequently, some of these learners tend to drop out of school and become "victims of social problems".

Black and Wiliam also investigated an essential component of formative assessment, feedback. They claimed that many teachers compared learners' achievements, but much of this feedback was based on merit achievements — While it is the case that high scores represented excellent performance and low scores were regarded as poor achievement, "feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other pupils" (*ibid*, 2001, p.3). Black and Wiliam (2001, p. 4) show that "marking is usually conscientious but often fails to offer guidance on how work can be improved". This means that teachers neglect the use of discursive notations or written feedback. They claim that the feedback to learners often seems to "serve social and managerial functions often at the expense of the learning function (*ibid*).

In addition to the above point, it is important to observe that Black and Wiliam (2001) bring to the fore the issue of emerging criteria through pedagogical assessment. Teachers need to know 'why' and 'how' they assess or evaluate their learners. This suggests that teachers ought to be explicit with the lesson objectives and evaluative criteria.

The explicitness of teachers, evaluative criteria in the teaching of science was investigated by Morais and Miranda (1996), who sampled 92 students of the 5th year of schooling (ages 10-11). They aimed at investigating the relationship between learners' understanding of the evaluative criteria and learners achievements in science. Using Bernstein's concept of framing to analyse their data, they found that the explicitness of evaluative criteria is significant in learners' achievements. In their study learners were given their classmates tests to mark against the teachers' evaluative criteria. These tests were already scored by the teachers on separate cards. Morais and Marinda (1996) compared the marking of the learners to that of the teachers. They operationalized the data as follows: If learners used the same notations, scores and descriptors used by their teachers then they were strongly framed in the area of understanding the evaluative criteria. If learners used

notations different from those of their teachers then the control over communication of evaluative criteria corresponded with weak framing. They inferred that learners who understood the criteria were in a better position to mark like their teachers, while those learners who did not understand the criteria used their own codes which were different from their teachers. Their findings showed the potential of explicit criteria in the assessment process of pedagogic practices, namely that when learners understand teachers' evaluative criteria their learning improves.

Shepard (2001) considered evaluative criteria as the focal point of instruction. Thus assessment must occur alongside instruction. In her study of assessment practices in instruction with early literacy learners in a Canadian classroom where the lesson goal was to develop learners' ability to choose good reading books, Shepard found that learners who were constantly assessed and supported by means of a checklist when choosing books were more likely to sample multiple books by reading portions of the book or by choosing definite topics before settling on a book (*ibid*). However, she found that learners in early literacy classrooms who were not given essential descriptors (evaluative criteria) and supported alongside the instruction process, selected books without bothering to look beyond the cover page — implying that these learners select a book without evaluating it — whether they like it or not.

Furthermore, Shepard (2001) investigated the dynamics of practicing formative assessment in the instructional process. She observed how a teacher assessed children's reading progress during the course of the lesson. She observed that while a teacher was doing an oral reading lesson, the teacher kept track of learners' omissions, substitutions and word recognition skills. Shepard (2001) observed that this teacher was able to make immediate instructional decisions such as focusing on teaching learners compound words, or even changing the text to a simple one based on immediate formative assessment of the teaching and learning relationship.

Along this continuum, Gipps (1999), investigated the role of assessment in the school system and found that developing new relationships in the instructional process is not straightforward. In an analysis of teachers' informal assessment of learners in England, it was observed that learners are satisfied with the minimum requirements just to complete the task. Therefore teachers find it difficult to engage learners in deep learning activities through self-assessment. Furthermore learners found self-assessment difficult because of their lack of familiarity with it, or it might be the case that the assessment criteria were not clear. Gibbs (1999, p. 381) claims that "every teacher who wants to practice formative assessment must reconstruct the teaching contracts so as to counteract the habits acquired by his pupils."

Hargreaves (2002) conducted a study with 29 Grade 7 and 8 teachers in a Canadian context critiques a particular strand of formative assessment, namely self-assessment. He claims that it "might actually cultivate an inward narcissistic, self-indulgent, self-centred personality" (*ibid*, p.91). Learners may become too egoistical and overestimate themselves, which will not accurately reflect their true worth. But he failed to note that the above characteristics develop with teachers' explicit evaluative criteria. Hargreaves (2000) also showed that whilst assessing reading, teachers experienced much confusion about 'what" to assess. A teacher complained that it is difficult to assess outcomes when an assessment standard in reading indicates that learners should "exceed the outcomes" (*ibid*, p. 72). Teachers according to Hargreaves (2002) are experiencing problems of how and what to assess because teachers find the curriculum statements not clear.

Researchers such as Vandeyar and Killen (2007) have also made significant claims pertaining to teachers' mindsets and knowledge of educational change in terms of assessing the content that the curriculum encapsulates in the South African context. They argue that teachers' entrenched assessment practices makes educational change difficult. In their study of formative assessment in multilingual Grade 4 teachers' mathematics classroom, they found that many teachers are not aware of the discursive shift in classroom assessment. Further, they claimed that teachers'

deep-rooted old assessment practices prohibit them from using strategies required in formative assessment. Vandeyar and Killen's (2007) also claimed that those teachers who struggled to understand the process of formative assessment were unable to provide learners with clearly defined criteria; for example, one of the experienced teachers, Marieta, still held on to her old ways of assessing. Even though she complained that learners performed badly because of the problem of communicating in English. But worse still she did not make attempts to support learners to improve their language skills. Marieta believed that the old system of assessment, of testing content and memorization skills through tests and examinations were better.

Vandeyar and Killen (2007) also found that teacher "conceptions" of the new approach to assessment influenced how teachers practiced formative assessment. Those teachers, who understood that the aim of assessment is to enhance learning, use formative assessment effectively. These teachers are not driven by examinations and consistently support learning by providing constructive feedback. However, these teachers' understanding of formative assessment was narrow. Such teachers did not provide opportunities for learners to express their "individualities", innovativeness" and initiatives" (*ibid*, p. 10). In this regards, Vandeyar and Killen (2007) observes:

A teacher who gave a range of mathematics problems to suit the levels of learners in the class provided criteria to assess the product of the problem. The teacher used one method only, other methods of solving the problem were ignored, Thus inferring that learners were disadvantaged because they were not given the opportunity to explore and realize different ways of solving the mathematics problem. Hence, when a learner presented her method of obtaining the mathematical answer, the teacher told the learner to conform to the method given by the teacher. Yet, the learner's method was correct. This confer that the teacher has a lack of knowledge of negotiating the criteria for assessment in the mathematics problem.

Vandeyar and Killen, (2007) documents the practices of experienced teachers. But how do experienced teachers' understanding of formative assessment compare to that of a novice teacher?

Shohamy (2001) in her study of newcomers and old timers observes that novice teachers incorporate formative assessment in the instructional process and adopt the ideas of experimenting with different strategies. She found that novice teachers use a range of creative activities such as debates, simulations and role-plays to assess oral language; whilst experienced teachers stick to the old form of testing — they use one reading oral test. Shohamy (2001) does not indicate when novice teachers assess their learners — is the assessment of oral language done in the instructional discourse or at the end of a topic? This gap brings forth one very important key feature of formative assessment that I present in my discussion, namely the integration of the evaluative criteria in the instructional situation. The significance of this evaluative criterion in the instructional process is elaborated on in the conceptual framework.

2.2.1 Hindrances to Formative Assessment

Researchers also argue that there are several reasons why formative assessment has not been successful in the instructional process. Ames cited in Gipps (1999) argues that when the classroom climate is that of competition and winning, learners do not focus on understanding the requisite knowledge, instead they focus on performance and good scores. He claims that until teachers change their perceptions of informal assessment, learners will focus on trying hard [to] [improve] their standards (*ibid*)

Another failure of formative assessment is given by Shepard (2000, p.5), who study shows that, "the dominance of objective tests' has not only affected teaching as imparting knowledge content to learners, but has shaped teachers beliefs" that tests and instructions were two separate events. Many teachers do not see assessment as part of the instructional process and are inclined to tests and examinations. These

tests and examinations are conducted at the end of a section or term to evaluate the product of learning.

Shepard (2001) show that in the United States, normative assessment — comparing students to one another — is used exclusively and is a "key factor to developing classroom cultures that are dominated by an exchange value of learning, "where students perform to please the teacher or to get good grades" (*ibid*, p.1080). This type of classroom culture in the United States demonstrates that learners reproduce knowledge for other reasons and not merely for understanding. In addition, she found that the failure of professional judgment (elaborated on in the conceptual framework) in formative assessment is not successful because many teachers feel that professional judgment is not always fair. Teachers' find it fair to evaluate the product of learners work by counting the number of correct or wrong ticks, or counting the number of mistakes learners make in a reading test. But since many teachers prefer the old method of assessment they give more priority to marking and scoring learners (Black and Wiliam, 2001, p.4). The reason why preferred tests compared to evaluating learners subjectively was that "formula-based methods"; for example, counting ticks or correct answers were more "impartial" (Shepard, 2000, p.6).

The lack of highly skilled teachers poses another challenge for the implementation of formative assessment in the classroom. Modiba and Nsibande (2007) who researched continuous assessment in a Swaziland classroom maintain that teachers lack the skills required in informal assessment. They claimed that teachers need to be highly skilled and flexible in designing assessment tasks to develop learner cognitive abilities. They also claimed that teachers need to be "manually gifted and theoretically talented" to be able to recognize learners' needs and respond effectively to them (*ibid*, 2007, p. 4).

Another major setback in the practice of formative assessment in South Africa is the large classes in multilingual and multiracial contexts. Vandeyar and Killen (2007)

claimed that teachers complain that constant feedback is unrealistic in classes with huge numbers. Furthermore, Vandeyar and Killen (2007) showed that many teachers were poorly trained during the Apartheid era; they are still grappling with the implementation of the new assessment approaches. In agreement, Hargreaves (2000) found that teachers in Canadian classrooms experience formative assessment as a "new world" of measurement. The lack of teacher training in formative assessment can only mean that teachers lack the knowledge of how to assess. So they sometimes "feel uncomfortable" and uncertain of the "quality of their assessments" (Hargreaves, 2002, p.76).

2.2.2 Conclusion

I have argued that teachers who adopt the new approach of assessment have conceptualized the characteristics of formative assessment. That is, their learners are motivated to participate in the learning process with the aim of attaining the lesson goals. Teachers develop knowledge and skill competence; and they perceive evaluative criteria as the locus of importance in negotiating communicative skills and knowledge to learners. These teachers plan on improving learners realization rules in the instruction process and share an understanding with their learners about what is important and what is not. This is a step towards learning (Shepard, 2000; Black and Wiliam, 2001).

However, evidence in the research on formative assessment shows that this new approach remains a challenge for many teachers in South Africa. Thus: Are the teachers that my district support practicing formative assessment? Along these lines, I explored the classrooms in selected previously disadvantaged primary schools to see how teachers use formative assessment in their daily lessons.

The next chapter deals with the conceptual framework, to show how instructional discourse embeds key features that frame formative assessment.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the explanation of formative assessment in the context of Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse. It will elaborate on four aspects: a) It will discuss how formative assessment has been conceptualized to maximize learners' potential of understanding acquired knowledge. b) It will present an overview of Bernstein's pedagogic discourse theory. c) It will explain how the theory will apply to this study, focussing on the discussion of instruction to demonstrate the process of evaluation in the transmission and acquisition model that this investigation uses to explain teachers' understanding of formative assessment. In this discussion, I will also include Bernstein's theory of framing of evaluative criteria in the instructional discourse. d) The chapter will conclude with how the concept of framing is operationalized by Morais (2002), replicated in this study.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptualization of formative assessment emerged from a discursive shift in the way learning is perceived. The notion of learning has shifted from being primarily a process of "storing and reproducing knowledge towards [a] broader conceptualization" —understanding the knowledge acquired (Pryor and Crossourd, 2008, p. 3). For example, in an Arabic class where learners are taught to translate from Arabic to Roman Numerals, they should be able to translate from Roman Numerals to Arabic (Shepard, 2001). In Vygotsky language, what is *internalised* must be *externalised* through the process of *appropriation* and understanding (Vygotsky, 1962). Importantly, the shift in perceptions towards learning necessitated a shift in assessment practices as well, where assessment should become a part of the instructional process (Pryor and Crossourd, 2008). This means that teachers should assess their learners' understanding during the instructional process. When

informal assessment is infused in the instructional process, "[it is] designed to elicit performance without recording results" (Brown, 2004, p. 5) and, serve as a means to gather information about learners achievements, to provide feedback to learners to improve their learning and to adjust the teaching strategies to suit the needs of the learners. This type of assessment process is referred to as formative assessment (Black and Wiliam, 2001). The notion of formative assessment enables the teacher to establish early what the learner can do independently and, what guidance the learner needs to move towards achieving the learning goals (Vygotsky, 1978; Shepard, 2000).

3.2.1 Bernstein Theory of Pedagogic Discourse — an Overview

Bernstein (1990, 1996) focuses on the ways in which discourse functions in society and how it maintains social order among others in education. *Pedagogic discourse* is how notions of class, race and gender are structured and reproduced within society. Bernstein (1990) maintains that sufficient distinction needs to be made between the verbal message, and the infrastructure through which the message is relayed.

Thus discourses on education are significant because of their power to reproduce dominant relations external to the discourse, but which infiltrate the social relations, media of transmission, and assessment of pedagogic discourse. Bernstein holds that in pedagogic discourse, what is relayed is known, viz. the discourse ("text"), but not the relay itself, that is, the structure that allows it to be conveyed. In other words, pedagogic discourse emphasises what is verbalised — what is written and said (*ibid*, 1990). Bernstein defines pedagogic discourse as: "a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into special relation with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition" (*ibid*, p. 181). Bernstein points out that pedagogic discourse is distinct in that it is completely dependent on other discourse to form its own discourse. This means that it lacks its own discourse and so benefits from others. Bernstein is concerned with the conditions and the structures that make pedagogic discourse and also affect its change.

Bernstein (1990), identifies three principles (rules) governing pedagogic discourse that occur in hierarchical relation to each other. These include distribution, relocation (re-contextualisation) and evaluation. The principle of distribution governs the institutional practices and the upper echelons of government, re-contextualisation governs the transformation of school subjects, and evaluation governs pedagogic practice. To generate these principles, Bernstein differentiates between the basic invisible structures through which a pedagogic subject is realised, and "the text" — the actual utterances and written texts among others. For Bernstein, if a theory is weak on "relations within", this implies that it is impossible to realise rules for an account of the agencies or processes with which it is concerned. Thus for a theory of cultural reproduction to be complete, it has to explain how a text came to be constituted.

Bernstein introduces the "pedagogic device" in the theory of pedagogic discourse as an intrinsic grammar, to control the three rules mentioned above: *distribution*, *re-contextualization* and *evaluation*. Bernstein uses the example of physics in the formation of a pedagogic subject in the secondary school, which is the result of the re-contextualizing rule that has selected and delocated what counts as physics from its primary location in the universities and relocated and refocused it in the secondary school. In his view, physics undergoes a complex transformation: a) original, b) to a virtual and c) into imaginary discourse. The rules of *relation*, *selection*, *sequencing*, and *pacing* cannot in themselves be derived from some internal logic to physics or from the practices of those who produce physics. As it were, the rules of the reproduction of physics are social. The re-contextualising rules control *pace, selection*, *relations*, and *sequence* with other subjects, as well as the theory of instruction from which the transmission principles emanate (Bernstein, 1990).

Thus, between power and knowledge, and between knowledge and forms of consciousness, lies the *pedagogic device* which is itself controlled mainly by the higher end of the education system. Bernstein (1990) differentiates between two

types of knowledge: the esoteric and the mundane. Bernstein maintains that both represent the "complex" and the "simple" in which the distribution of forms of consciousness and systems of meaning are essentially similar, but that they are specialised contrarily through diverse agencies and pedagogic discourses. Any distribution of power is an attempt to regulate the realisation of that potential in the interests of the social ordering it creates, maintains and legitimates, just as any re-distribution of power seeks to regulate its realisation in different ways. Bernstein proposes that the pedagogic device makes the transformation of power into differently specialised subjects possible through the distribution and regulation of *knowledge* and the discourses such knowledge presuppose. Change occurs due to the inner potential of the device and the regulation of knowledge conflicting with the social base the source of its power. Rather than act as an agent of change, the education system (including assessment types) constitute avenues for cultural reproduction for society. Hence, what constitutes the content of a school subject is nothing peculiar but develops from those who regulates and control the education system — the curriculum among others in the interest of society.

3.2.2 Pedagogic Theory and How it Applies to this Investigation

Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse (Bernstein, 1990, 1996, 2000) is applied to understand how educators understand formative assessment in a learner-centred pedagogy. For Bernstein (1996), pedagogic discourse consists of two discourses: a discourse of skills of various kinds, which includes the teacher's skill in formative assessment and a discourse of social order. He called the former *instructional discourse* (ID) and the latter as *regulative discourse* (RD) (Bernstein, 1990).

$$\frac{\text{Instructional Discourse (ID)}}{\text{Regulative Discourse (RD)}}$$

Bernstein's (1996, p. 48) explication of this formulae is that the instructional discourse (ID) is embedded in the regulative discourse (RD) because the "moral discourse creates the criteria which gives rise to character, manner, conduct etc." In other words the RD translates the dominant values of society and regulates how knowledge is transmitted. Whereas the ID is a discourse of "competence" (*ibid*), it refers to what is transmitted in the instructional discourse. The two discourses are merged in such a way that the RD dominates the ID since the RD produces the "order in the instructional discourse" (*ibid*).

However, pedagogic discourse is transmitted through specific codes in a specialized context. For example in a physics classroom context the learner (acquirer) should acquire the recognition rule. In terms of the RD the recognition rule is the ability to recognize that it is a physics classroom. In terms of the ID the acquirer should acquire the realization rule, that is the ability to select the relevant meanings from the context or knowledge transmitted, and reproduce the knowledge with meaning (*ibid*).

In the instructional process, both the recognition rule and the realization rule form the basis of the transmission and acquisition of knowledge (Bernstein, 1996). However, given that the realization rule (the ability to understand, select and reproduce knowledge with meaning) is an underlying principle of formative assessment, here from, less emphasis is placed on the RD and emphasis is on the ID of pedagogic practice.

Internal rules underline the instructional and the regulative discourse of pedagogic discourse (Bernstein, 2004). The instructional discourse is underlined by discursive rules or the rules of selection, sequencing, pacing and evaluation; the regulative discourse is underlined by the rules of hierarchy. In Bernstein's theory, there is a

third set of rules that prop-up the two discourses — rules of criteria which define what is regarded as lawful or unlawful learning in the pedagogic milieu. Bernstein (*ibid*, p.197) points to the internal logic of any pedagogic practice consists of the relationship that governs these three rules, the basis of pedagogic practice changes based on framing and classification values.

a) Framing regulates the locus of control over the selection, sequencing and pacing of the instructional discourse (Bernstein, 2000, p. 13). Strong framing indicates that the locus of control is with the transmitter and weak framing points to where the locus of control is with the acquirer. But strong framing also indicates visible pedagogic practice, the rules of instructional and regulative discourse is explicit, and the transmitter has explicit control over the selection, pacing and criteria. Weak framing indicates where pedagogic practices are probably invisible and the acquirer has more apparent control, the rules of regulative and instructional discourse are implicit and largely unknown to the acquirer (Bernstein, 1996, p.27).

b) Classification is about power relations. It is concerned with the levels of buffering between the agents, categories, actors or discourses (Bernstein, 2000, p. 6). Thus, classification concerns the social division of labour that creates specializations: agents, categories and discourses. Where the degree of buffering between categories controls the classification values, which are either strong or weak, classifications transposes power relations. Note that framing is moderated by the rule of control; it is the function of relations within a context.

By classifying something as weak or strong in Bernsteinian thought, indexes contextual differences that include: what is predictable as well as what is lawful (Bernstein, 1990, 1996, 2000). Similarly, the recognition rules allow the acquirer to identify functions of the context, in this way it determines what the context

demands. This rule is crucial since, for example in a classroom context, it empowers the learner to read the context and to respond appropriately (Bernstein, 1996).

Indeed from strong classification emerge clear contextual specialisms and identities. This makes the context identifiable and the acquirer relate with the text, but from weak classification opaqueness emerge. The problem is the acquirer needs more time to decipher the context. It seems that the rule of realisation enables the acquirer to create meanings. Thus, different framing values impose selectivity on realisation rules. The rule of recognition and realisation are the basis upon which meaningful experiences are re-contextualise or redirected in any context.

3.2.2.1 Pedagogic Discourse Theory and contextualise Formative Assessment

Bernstein maintained that social positions, viewed by their degree of specialisation, use dissimilar language patterns that influence the ability of groups to succeed in schools (Maton and Muller, 2007). From these social positions arise, "different modalities of communication differentially valued by the school, and differentially effective in it, because of the school's values, modes of practice and relations with its different communities" (Bernstein, 1996, p.91). This essentially is "classification" and "framing" (*ibid*, p.26), concepts I use in this thesis to explain formative assessment in the classroom. As we have observed above, while classification conceptualises relations of power to regulate relations between contexts, framing is concerned with the relations of control within these contexts (Bernstein, 2003). Thus classification and framing can be used to analyse educational contexts and practices and their relations to coding orientation brought to education by various social groups. In effect, the question of how diverse forms of educational knowledge are constructed emerges. For Bernstein, the answer lies with what he calls the *pedagogic device* (Maton and Muller, 2007), which is the basis of his three rules, I recall below:

a) The methodical regulation and distribution of a society's meaningful knowledge repertoire (distributive rules); thus, new knowledge is constructed and positioned.

b) Its transformation into a pedagogic discourse, a form amenable to pedagogic transmission (recontextualising rules). Here discourses are selected, appropriated and repositioned to generate educational knowledge.
c) The transformation of this pedagogic discourse into a set of benchmarks to be accomplished (evaluative rules).

The three rules above index conflict and struggle constituted by the pedagogic device in which social groups attempt to dominate how educational knowledge is produced. It seems that groups attempt to take control of the device that they then use to legitimise their rule by the generation of specific code modalities. In this sense, the device becomes the focus of challenge, resistance and conflict (Bernstein, 1996, p. 193).

From above, Moore and Maton (2001) ask: What is typical about these fields of knowledge generation? Bernstein indicates "hierarchical knowledge structure" that he delineates as “a coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure, hierarchically organised [that] attempts to create very general propositions and theories, which integrate knowledge at lower levels, and in this way shows underlying uniformities across an expanding range of apparently different phenomena” (Bernstein, 1999, pp. 161-162) such as subject area such as chemistry. A "horizontal knowledge structure" is “a series of dedicated languages with dedicated modes of interrogation and a standard for the construction and circulation of texts” (*ibid*, 1999, p.162), such as each of the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences.

From above, it seems that Bernstein's theory has formed the basis for a range of studies into the production of knowledge in education, expressly in teaching and learning (Christie and Martin, 2007; Maton 2000). Therefore it is not irrational that Bernstein’s *classification* and *framing* may be used to explain the conflicts or the lack of conflicts in the use of formative assessment in the classroom by teachers who constitutes a social group.

In summary, the idea of learning as discursively produced in relationship to assessment criteria is important since the negotiation of issues of quality between learner and teachers is not an unprejudiced matter. It is replete with concerns of power and control. Thence the outcome of the negotiation is determined by the social context of its production. Understanding this social context involves negotiation with this context in its micro form, namely the educator and the learner as well as with the macro context — the course, school, the Department of Education, and the Ministry of Education as well as the wider society in what Bernstein (1996) refers to as control and power dynamics.

In line with Pryor and Crossourd, (2008) and Brown's (2004), Bernstein (cited in Gipps, 1999, p. 362) explains that "evaluation has changed from being overt to covert assessment and from specific to diffuse evaluation criteria". 'Overt' meaning more objective and norm referenced assessment, while 'covert' assessment does not allow for comparisons amongst learners. Bernstein's explanation means that the criteria is not standardized, but are such that learners are expected to acquire and reproduce knowledge with understanding (Marais and Miranda, 1996). Bernstein further explains that the evaluation criteria are essential to interactive and effective teaching. They reduce ambiguity, provide information to learners of the goals or lesson expectations (cited in Morais, 2002) and, help to learners realize the acquired knowledge. However, Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse illustrate that the use of evaluative criteria in the instructional process provides for a more objective evaluation of a learner's progress; hence, the explicitness of the criteria. As previously observed classification then denotes the means of communicating a legitimate text for the production of a legitimate text, and the control over the communication of the criteria (Bernstein, 1996). "Framing is about where a control lies. What follows can be described as the 'internal logic of classroom practice" (*ibid*, p.27). It seems to me that framing is about the nature of control: Selection of valid knowledge; sequencing, that is, what precedes and what follows; pacing — the rate of expected acquisition; criteria — what is valid recognition and realization of

knowledge; and finally control over the social base which makes this transmission possible.

Bernstein (cited in Gipps, 1999, p. 362) maintains that "…informal based assessment…actually gives more control over performance and success to the teacher". Thus, where framing is strong, the transmitter (teacher) has explicit control over the evaluative criteria. Where framing is weak, the acquirer has a more "apparent" control (*ibid*, p. 27). Bernstein's uses the word apparent to refer to pedagogy where power relations between teacher and learners are disguised to create more symmetrical relations. When the teacher makes the evaluative criteria explicit to her learners then framing corresponds to strong (F+) or very strong framing (F++), while the lack of communication of evaluative criteria refers to weak (F-) or to very weak framing (F--).

In the next section, I present Bernstein's concept of framing operationalized by Morais (2002). Secondly, I operationalise the concept of framing into indicators of very strong to very weak framing in this investigation.

3.3 Operationalization of Bernstein's Concept of Framing

Morais (2002) operationalizes the concept of framing into indicators of strength or explicitness of criteria. She explains that the degree of framing is strong when the teacher provides explicit feedback to learners; the degree of framing is weak when the teacher fails to make the evaluation criteria explicit.

Table 1, shows the different strength of *F* (***F--, F-, F+ and F++)***. The first two points corresponds to weak framing of epistemic criteria where the teacher marks a cross to indicate incorrect response or writes 'incomplete'. The last two corresponds to strong framing of evaluative criteria where the teacher elaborates or writes what 'content' is missing and, very strong framing refers to where the teacher 'writes the text which is missing in the answer'.

CONTROL RELATIONS FOR EVALUATION CRITERIA (ID) INDICATORS				
Symbol	**F--**	**F-**	**F+**	**F++**
Indicators	Does not make any notation	Writes 'inc'	Gives an indication of the scientific contents / competencies which are missing	Indicates (writes) the text which is missing in the answer.
Scale	*Point scale 1*	*Point scale 2*	*Point scale 3*	*Point scale 4*

Table 1 : An example of one indicator (Morais & Miranda, 1996)

In the context of instructional discourse the table demonstrates different possible framing by the teacher when correcting an answer that is not complete (Morais, 2002). The data was analysed according to the four point scales. Thus he may not make any comment (point scale 1, *F*--), may simply write 'inc' (point scale 2, *F*-), may give an indication of the scientific contents / competences that are missing (point scale 3, *F*+), or may write the text that is missing (point scale 4, *F*++). Morais' explanation indicates that a teacher who gives feedback according to the first point-scale does not make the criteria of evaluation explicit. In other words, she does not give the learners the opportunity to learn the required text. Hence the degree of evaluative criteria is very weak symbolised by the notation ***F--*** since the message is implicit. In contrast, a teacher who explains the text to the learner makes the explicitness of the evaluative criteria correspond to strong framing, symbolised by the notation ***F++***. This is an example of how Bernstein's concept of framing is used to measure the strength of teachers' transmission of knowledge (Morais, 2002).

Based on Morais' use of Bernstein's codes of framing, I have developed a rubric to analyse the different evaluative criteria of strengths for framing. Firstly, I present the framing of objectives of the lesson. The framing of lesson goals is significant in formative assessment because it provides the explicit direction of the lesson (Black and Wiliam, 2001). Indeed, when the lesson goals are clarified to learners at the commencement of the lesson, learners work towards achieving targeted goals

(QCA, 1999). The indicators of very weak to very strong framing of objectives of the lesson are specified in *Table 2* (a).

F-- —*Very Weak Framing* — the objective of the lesson is unclear.
F- —*Weak Framing* — informs the class of the objectives / topic of the lesson, e.g., human impact on the oceans. Terms in the topic are not explained.
F+ — *Strong Framing* — informs the class of the objectives / topic of the lesson e.g. and explains each term in the topic.
F++ —*Very Strong Framing* — informs the class of the objectives / topic of the lesson and explains each term in the topic and follows up on misconceptions.

Table 2 (a) Indicators of framing of lesson objectives

Table 2 (b) presents the indicators of framing of the evaluative criteria (lesson).

F-- — Very Weak Framing — the evaluative criteria are not presented, e.g., No responses to questions.
F- — Weak Framing — the evaluative criteria are vague or unclear to learners, e.g., not clearly explained to learners. Learners are unclear of what is required of them. No clear response to incorrect verbal answers.
F+ — Strong Framing — inform class of the evaluative criteria, e.g., explains and responds to incorrect verbal answers.
F++ — Very Strong Framing — inform the class of the evaluative criteria, e.g., clearly explains or clarifies misconceptions. Responds clearly too incorrect verbal answers. Writes the correct key points on the board. Learners know what is expected of them.

Table 2 (b) Indicators of framing of Evaluative Criteria during the lesson

For Bernstein's the evaluative criterion allows the acquirer to understand knowledge. In this connection, Morais (1997) explains that the evaluative criteria influence differential achievement. The evaluative criteria are fundamental and are seen as the locus of formative assessment.

I will also investigate the framing of the evaluative criteria during feedback in the application exercise / activity set by the teacher. In line with Shepard (2002), the theory of assessing how learners construct knowledge or gained deep

understanding of the knowledge is likely to be more evident in an application activity. This application is essential for this study since it allow the researcher to show how teachers provide further clarification on misconceptions and misinformation to help learners improve on weaker areas. I model my investigation on Shepard's example of assessing reading alongside instruction. Thus far, I analysed the data with the assumption that all teachers assessed class application activities using observation and reviews (individual or plenary). The indicators of framing of the evaluative criteria during the application activity are presented in *Table 2* (c).

Indicators of framing of evaluative criteria during the application activity
F-- —Very Weak Framing— No application activity to ensure that acquisition occurred.
F- —Weak Framing— teacher sets an exercise but does not evaluate the competences of learners, e.g., the activity is not reviewed, marked, discussed.
F+ —Strong Framing— teacher evaluates learning explicitly, .e.g., they review answers verbally at the end of the activity. Learners interact in the review session.
F++ —Very Strong Framing— teacher explicitly evaluates learning during and after the activity .e.g. teachers walk around during the activity to spot check and immediately correct errors. Provides self-corrective opportunities. Also reviews at the end of the lesson by verbally discussing answers and writing them on the board for purposes of clarifying answers.

Table 2(c) Indicators of framing of evaluative criteria during the application activity

Morais' model, *Table* 2 (a), (b) and (c) show that a teacher who responds on the basis of the symbol notation ***F--*** evidently does not make the criteria or lesson goals explicit. Such a teacher does not offer the learner the possibility of understanding the acquired knowledge, which left implicit. However, a teacher who responds on the basis of the notation symbol ***F++***, explains the knowledge (concepts) to be

acquired, by giving learners the opportunity to self-evaluate and self-correct his responses since the communication of the content is explicit.

In formative assessment, feedback does not have to form part of the written evaluative process; it could be developed on the basis of reflection on learners' work during the transmission and acquisition process. Using Shepard's (2002) theory of feedback in formative assessment, I examined feedback of observation and questioning based on the teacher's professional judgment. When teachers observe or question learners, they check and correct responses immediately. But this also means that teachers' questioning techniques should be thought provoking rather than leading to an answer (Weeden *et al*, 2002; Brown 2004). In other words, questions should be used to guide learners towards achieving the lesson goals.

The process of feedback used in this investigation is based on the model proposed by The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority ((QCA), 1999)). They maintain that during the instruction process, a teacher wants to find out if pupils know the properties of prime numbers. The teacher asks: 'Is 7 a prime number?' A pupil responds. 'Err…yes, I think so', or 'No, it's not.' The learner's response to the question makes it difficult for the teacher to assess whether the learner understands the concept of prime numbers or not. If the question was rephrased as 'Why is 7 an example of a prime number?' it would have provoked thinking. The learner has to recall the knowledge of prime numbers, the properties of prime numbers and compare 7 to the properties to establish whether 7 is a prime number or not (*ibid*). The line of questioning in the first example, confirms that the teacher does not give the learner the possibility of learning prime numbers. Thus the questioning techniques correspond to *Very Weak Framing* (***F--***). In the second instance of questioning prime numbers, the teacher stimulates thinking and promotes learning. Hence the questioning style indicates *Very Strong Framing (F++)*. Thus, I have indicated how I will operationalize the framing of evaluative criteria in the pedagogic context.

In the evaluative context of written work Morais (1996) maintains that at the micro — level of classroom interaction, the transmission and reproduction of pedagogic discourse is realized through a given pedagogy. This implies that when correcting and marking practice activities or tests, "the specific pedagogic text is made visible by the notation and information" as feedback to learners (*ibid*, p.603). In other words, teachers use notations such as ticks, marks, scores or information next to a paragraph or at the end of the written work to offer feedback to learners. Feedback is an essential component of learning in the evaluation context and is guided by criteria (Shepard, 2002; Bernstein, 1990).

Morais' (1996) criteria allow the learner to understand valid communication. Thus, the understanding of the criteria contributes to the production of knowledge based on deep understanding. I also, investigated the type of comments that teachers gives as feedback to learners because formative assessment is not about teachers providing learners with correct or incorrect answers (Shepard, 2000), but it involves ignoring 'inconsequential" errors and, offering indirect hints and questions that would lead to the correct answers (*ibid).* My investigation process is based on Shepard's model of feedback: she conceptualized feedback in formative assessment as a means to enhance deep understanding of the knowledge acquired. She explains the merits of descriptive feedback which is "task related" — the teacher comments specifically on the learners' "achievements and competence levels" (Gipps, 1999, p. 381).

Consistent with the codes of framing explicit feedback, unclear comments would include where a teacher told her learners that their writing pieces 'lacks punctuation skills'. The statement 'lacks punctuation skills' does not help the learner locate the punctuation that the teacher identified as incorrect (Lillis and Turner, 2001, p. 58). Feedback like "state clearly", "spell it out", and "say exactly what you mean" are not transparent statements (*ibid*). These phrases can mean different things "across a range of contexts" and may confuse learners (*ibid*). Lillis and Turner (2001) also observes that in a writing task, feedback that comments on structure of writing

without providing guidelines on how to improve its structure, confuses learners instead of enriching the quality of their work.

Based on Shepard's theory (2002), I also explored the use of the traditional approach of marking. She explicitly demonstrates that traditional, judgmental feedback either in the form of marks and scores or labels like 'poor, good, excellent' do not provide the learner with information that may guide him to correct or improve on the work, working against the foundational principles of formative assessment. In accordance with framing of evaluative criteria during feedback to written work, I have tailored Morais' example of *Table 1* to suit the needs of this research illustrated in *Table 3*.

Indicators of framing of Evaluative Criteria in written activity
F-- *—Very Weak Framing* — Does not have evaluative criteria, e. g., global marking / give marks on professional judgement, learners not aware of how the scores were determined.
F- *— Weak Framing* — Evaluative criteria are not explained to learners, e.g., it is available on worksheet / board but not discussed with learners. Teacher uses traditional counting of ticks and scores without reason for wrong work.
F+ *— Strong Framing* — Indicates the evaluative criteria on the worksheet and makes the learners aware of the criteria, e.g., refers learners to the criteria before they complete the written activity / test / task. Teacher gives feedback which is measured against the criteria. Written guidance towards correcting work but without correcting incorrect work.
F++ *— Very Strong Framing* — the teacher indicates the evaluative criteria on the worksheet and makes the learners aware of the criteria, e.g., highlights the evaluative criteria and explains the criteria before the task / activity / test. Reviews the criteria with to learners clarify misconceptions etc. Learners are clear on what they will be assessed on. Teacher gives feedback measured against criteria / detailed corrective guidance / work are corrected.

Table 3: Scale for framing relations of feedback in the assessment context of this study.

In *Table 3*, a teacher give feedback according to any of the first situation of the first point-scale, does not provide effective feedback. As such, the teacher does not offer the possibility for the learner to understand the knowledge. The feedback corresponds to weak framing and is regarded as implicit. A teacher that provides

feedback according to the last two point-scales corresponds to strong framing and very strong framing. The feedback is explicit and the teacher offers the learner possibilities of learning the content with deep understanding.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt firstly with attempting a succinct description of Bernstein's pedagogic discourse theory and the dynamics of power relations in the classroom. Secondly, the study has adopted the theory to explain the extent of teacher's understanding and the use of formative assessment in the classroom and how this informs the teaching learning relationship. The chapter concludes by adopting Morais' (2006) model of framing to empirically explicate teachers' understanding and use of formative assessment in the classroom.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four discussed the methodology used for this study. It begins by justifying the choice of qualitative research as a methodology and basis of the study. This is followed by the discussion of the data collection instruments and subsequently a description of the process of data collection, a brief description of the samples, the sites, and concludes with the discussion on the analysis of data and the process involved.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design was adopted because it allowed for an in-depth study of formative assessment in classroom pedagogy. The choice for a qualitative research paradigm suited the aims of this study which were basically to explore evaluative qualities: How teachers practice, understand and experience formative assessment in the classroom in an environment in which the participants were observed were not controlled or manipulated (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010. p.323).

4.2.1 Qualitative Research

Researchers who use the qualitative approach make use of data collection techniques such as observations, interviews and document analyses. These techniques were pertinent to this study. I was able to interact with the participants thus it enabled me to interpret the participants' verbal responses and their styles of assessment in classroom practice. The qualitative approach allowed me to uncover rich information that I would not have been able to accomplish had I used the quantitative paradigm. The quantitative design specifically collects data that is

statistically interpreted and the participants' behaviours, emotions and responses in their natural milieu would be overlooked (*ibid*). A qualitative design paradigm provided me with the opportunity to explore formative assessment. I wanted to gain a deep understanding of teachers' conceptions and their application of formative assessment in classroom practice. A case study method was embedded in the qualitative paradigm.

4.2.2 A Case Study

A case study enables any researcher to understand complex issue and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of micro event(s) and their interrelationships (Yin, 1984, p. 23), defines the case study research method as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used". The case study has certain advantages such as its applicability to life current human situations.

The qualitative case study research design for this study placed emphasis on investigating teachers' understanding, experiences and practice of formative assessment by looking closely at teachers' words, actions and documents. By looking specifically at what the participants said and did in their classrooms, I was able to understand and attach meaning to my participants' words and actions. My research focused on the teachers' experiences, difficulties, insights and classroom practices. The findings and the interpretations of this qualitative research paradigm is presented in a descriptive form.

4.3 RESEARCH METHODS

The multi-method approach that was used to collect data included non-participant observations, post observation interviews and analyses of documents (learners' work that was assessed by the teacher). The reason for a multi-method approach

was to triangulate the data as well as to provide comprehensive answers to the research questions. Triangulation served to cross-check the validity and congruency of the data collected. A single method might have undermined the study. In the next section, I explain and justify the necessity of a non-participant observation to collect data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

4.3.1 Non-participant Observation

Non-participant observation is where the researcher observes the teachers and their interaction with the learners within the research context, without taking an active part in the situation. This method was suitable because I was able to observe the teachers in practice as well as record the interaction between the teacher and the learner as it occurred in the classroom (Ostrower, 1998).

I focused on lesson objectives (how and when were the lesson objectives presented to the learners), The mediation of the lesson (the techniques teachers used to assess their learners' understanding of the knowledge in the teaching process) and, the application activities of the lesson (how the teachers assesses learners' understanding of the knowledge and provide feedback to the learners in the application activity).

I recorded as far as possible what I saw and heard without interpretation. I wrote down verbatim as much as I could of the verbal interaction between the teacher and the learners. I recorded my comments in line with Maykut and Morehouse (1994) guidelines:

> As much as possible, the researcher tries to capture people's exact words in field notes. This is particularly important because the qualitative researcher is specifically trying to understand and describe what is going on in the terms used by the setting she or he is studying. In addition the researcher cannot assume that the terms used by the people in the setting mean the same as they do to the researcher (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p 76).

4.3.2 Post–observation Interview

A researcher will not be able to observe and interpret all the meanings that participants attach to events and situations. Therefore it is necessary to enquire by questioning how the individual "feels" and 'thinks" (Patton, 2002). A post-observation interview occurs after the participant is observed in practice to corroborate the data obtained from the observations (*ibid*).

The interviews provided me with the opportunity to explore the views and feelings of teachers, and how they practice and understand of formative assessment. The interviews were the main research instrument because it provided information on teachers understanding and experiences of formative assessment. I chose to use the post-observation interviews to collect data since information obtained from interviews is reported and interpreted through the eyes of the participant and can provide important insights into the situation under investigation (*ibid*).

It was a two-part interview session of approximately lasting 30 minutes. The first part of the interview was to obtain biographical information of the teachers. The second part was to determine teachers' understanding and experiences of formative assessment. The biographical information was used to analyse data. It helped to draw conclusions from the findings. In addition, the interview discussion also supported the findings of the actual classroom practices (Spratt *et. al*, 2004). The questions that I asked in the second part of the interview were guide questions leading me to a clearer understanding of the issues that I raise in the research questions and the problem statement. The interview questions are included in *Appendix B*.

4.3.3 Document Analysis

The document analyses consisted of an examination of the feedback given in the written work of the learners. This was work that had been handed in after the observed lesson. The written work was analysed after it had been marked by the

teacher**.** The reason for analysing the documents was to gain an in depth understanding of how teachers provide written feedback to learners.

The use of the multiple methods was designed to triangulate between sources and to supplement one kind of data with another (Spratt *et. al*, 2004). The non-participant observations occurred prior to the interview because the interview questions might have prompted the teachers about formative assessment. The teachers might not have reflected a true understanding of formative assessment (Brewer and Hunter, 2006).

4.4 SAMPLE

The sample consisted of four teachers from two primary schools. In view of the multi-method approach much time was required to study the formative assessment in classroom practice. The four participants were Grade four English teachers. My reason for selecting English teachers was to narrow the scope of the study to one subject. Since English is not the home language of the majority of the learners attending both the primary schools, it was interesting to observe how teachers use formative assessment to develop competency in the English language. Grade four teachers were selected because this class begins the second phase of schooling. Consequently the demands on teachers for support is greater in Grade four where teachers are required to narrow the gap between the foundation phase and the intermediate phase (DOE, 2005).

4.4.1 Profile of the Participants

The four participants consisted of two black female teachers from school A, T3 and T4 and two Indian teachers from School B, T1 and T2.[1] T3 was 46 years old and had taught in a small black private school in Orange Farm for 10 years without a teacher's qualification. She also held the position of principal for two years at the former school. In 2004 T3 pursued a teacher's qualification on a part-time basis and

[1] The names of the participants are fictitious and for merely for the convenience of presenting the data of this study.

obtained an Advanced Certificate in Education for primary teaching in 2007. T3 trained in the post-apartheid. Her training included the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement and the National Assessment Policy.

T4 trained at the University of Zimbabwe and she had 27 years of teaching experience. At the time of the study she claimed to be teaching in South Africa for 2 years. T4 has since obtained an Honours degree in Education and a Masters degree in Business Administration from Zimbabwean Universities.

Lash was 47 years old and had been teaching for 26 years in Gauteng. Lash received her Education Diploma in primary school teaching in 1984 at a Teachers Training College in KwaZulu Natal. In 1994 Lash obtained a Higher Education Diploma on a part-time basis through correspondence at an institution in Natal. She subsequently received an in-service training programme that was provided by the state in 1999 and 2005. In 1999 Lash received forty hours of training in Outcomes Based Education — Curriculum 2005. Later she trained in the Revised National Curriculum Statement.

T2 acquired an Education Diploma in the 1970's but did not pursue her career in her field. She said that in 2000 her passion to teach was intrinsically rekindled hence she registered as a part-time student at an institution in the Northwest Province and completed a Further Diploma in Education in 2002. At the time of the study she claimed to have been teaching for 7 years at school B.

Teacher code	**T1**	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**
Language	English	English	English	English
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Nationality	South African Indian	South African Indian	South African Indian	Zimbabwean black
Teaching experience	26 Years	7 years	10 years: 8 years volunteer taught	27 Years

			at private schools (South Africa). 2 years of qualified experience	
Qualifications and year obtained	Education Diploma (1984) Higher Education Diploma (1994) (UDW Kwa-zulu Natal). OBE/RNCS training 1999-2005	Further Diploma in Education – 2002 (UNISA)	Advance Certificate in Education for Primary Teaching 2008 (NWU, SA)	Certificate in Education - 1983 (Zim) B.Ed Hons - 2002 (Zim) MBA- 2008 (Zim)
Age	47	46	42	47

Table 4: Tabulated Biographical Particulars of Participants

4.5 THE RESEARCH SITE

This study was conducted at previously disadvantaged schools: one school in the township and the other school was on the outskirt of Soweto. The schools were very different in terms of its location and context.

4.5.1 The Context of the Research Sites

4.5.1.1 School A

School A is a historically disadvantaged school in Soweto — a Black Township in the south-west of Johannesburg South Africa. The principal of school A, senior managers as well as the teaching staff were from the old regime and were active unionists at the time of the study. School A was established in 1999 and consisted of 30 classrooms built to accommodate a maximum of forty learners per classroom. The school building has been neglected, classroom and building walls were decorated with graffiti and the school had a generally unkempt appearance. Due to an influx of learners from the Pimville area the school had admitted more learners

than they could accommodate, resulting in a teacher, learner ratio of 1:52 on average. Currently school A is a Quintile 1 school where learners are not required to pay school fees because the government provides a budget to cater for the teaching and learning needs. Quintile one means that the school is ranked as under resourced and poor. The school had adequate reading and writing material but the library was inadequately resourced. The school comprises an all-black management, staff and learners.

4.5.1.2 School B

School B is one of the oldest primary schools in the outskirts of Soweto. During the apartheid, the area in which the school is located was declared an Indian area according to the Group Areas Act of 1962. Since 1994, the area has become a multi-racial zone, but is still predominantly Indian. The area in which the school is located comprises low cost housing and originally catered for the disadvantaged members of the Indian population.

At the time of the study, the demographics of school B had changed and comprised 78% black learners of whom only 10% of the black learner population resided in the area. The remaining 68% travelled from Orange farm and Soweto — Orange Farm is an informal settlement area thirty kilometres south of School B. 20% of the school B's learner population were of Asian descent and resided close to the school. The remaining 2% of the learner population were coloured learners who travelled from Ennerdale and others from orphanages situated approximately 12 km away from the school. The school principal is Indian and was appointed to school B in 2001. The remaining management team — the deputy principal and heads of departments are also Indian. The staff of school B consisted of 58% Black teachers, 41% Indian teachers, and 1% Coloured teachers.

The original school was a "pre-fabricated" structure which was subsequently renovated in the 1990's and replaced by brick buildings. The new classrooms were

built to accommodate forty learners per classroom but due to the influx from the surrounding areas School B had a ratio teacher, learner ratio of 1: 49 on average. School B appeared to be well organized and neat.

According to the principal the financial budget received from government is insufficient to provide all the necessary resources that are required by teachers for effective teaching and learning to take place. Hence school fees, fundraising drives and sponsorships were other means of income to ensure that teaching and learning needs of the school are met. The school is well resourced and equipped to provide for both teachers' and learners' needs. The school has a well-resourced library that caters for all levels of learners.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

I spent five days in each school — the study occurred over a period of 10 days. I observed four teachers in two 60 minute lessons each. In all four instances the second lessons were follow-ups of the first lessons. In total I spent 120 minutes in each classroom concluding 480 minutes of classroom observations.

4.6.1 Gaining Access into the Research Process

On the first day I had a general meeting with all four teachers to develop "rapport, trust and reciprocal relations with the individuals to be observed and interviewed" (McMillan, 2010. p.329). The roster that was agreed upon by the participants was discussed. The first two days after the meeting I observed two teachers in their first lessons. The following two days I observed their second lessons and proceeded with the interviews. I used a tape recorder to record the observations of the lessons and the interviews and jotted field notes as evidence and insights emerged. The non-participant observations were followed by post-observation interviews. Each interview took place outside the classroom at a convenient place and time that suited the participant. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes. The first part of the interview consisted of the teachers' biographical particulars of age,

qualifications and years' experience. A biographical questionnaire was used to record the biographical information. The biographical data of the teachers were used as an additional source of data to interpret the findings.

The second part of the interview consisted of five open — ended questions to allow teachers to speak freely about their experiences with the formative assessment while simultaneously drawing on their understanding, experiences and use of formative assessment. Since the interviews were post-observation interviews I was able to ask teachers about specific practices that had been observed during the observation sessions. On the sixth day I collected the learners' work that was marked by the teachers. The written feedback was analysed. The ten pieces of learners' work - per teacher- were analysed, thus providing a total of 40 pieces of learners' work analysed.

I made field notes and journal entries of my observations as well as the teachers' interview responses. The lessons that I observed and the interview discussions were also audio tape recorded. The audio recorded lessons and discussions were used to develop the transcripts. The transcripts together with the field notes were coded for easy reference. It took me over a month to process the eight lesson transcripts of the observations and the four interviews transcripts. The analysis is discussed in the next section.

4.7 DATA ANALYSES

In a qualitative study the data analysis is a non-statistical process in which the researcher examines the meaning of people's words and actions. I chose the "interpretive-descriptive' method as described by Belensky (cited in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) because in this approach, the researcher selects and interprets the data and integrates the descriptions attached to the participants' words, raw data from the observation notes and the recordings. Included in the "interpretive-

descriptive" approach is the researchers own interpretations into a rich and believable descriptive narration.

4.7.1 Interpreting the Findings using the Research Questions.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS	DATA USED TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS.	ANALYSES OF DATA USING BERNSTEIN'S CONCEPT OF FRAMING TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS?
a) How do teachers practice formative assessment in the instruction process?	Analyses of lesson transcripts / documents.	Teachers who were strongly framed show that they practice formative assessment. Weak framing suggest that the teacher does not use / practice formative assessment.
b) What is the teachers' understanding of formative assessment? And,	Analyses of interview responses to questions 1, 2 and 3 of the interview.	Teacher's responses that were strongly framed show that teachers understand formative assessment. Weak framing suggest poor or no understanding.
c) How do teachers experience formative assessment?	Analyses of interview responses to questions 4 and 5 of the interview and biographical data.	The data will be interpreted against the theory of formative assessment presented in the conceptual framework and the literature review.

Table 5: Interpreting the data analyses and findings

4.7.2 Lesson Transcripts

To analyse the lesson observation transcripts I read through the transcripts many times to search for the meanings that were inherent in their discussions. I used Bernstein's concept of framing described in Chapter Three and Morais' (2002) evaluative criteria and operationalization in Chapter Four to analyse the transcripts. The field notes gathered were raw data analysed to determine how teachers practiced formative assessment. During the analysis process I had to watch my own

biases and preconceptions, by maintaining a healthy scepticism (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010).

The lesson transcripts were divided into 3 tasks: The introduction of the lesson was coded as Task 1. The mediation of the lesson was coded as Task 2; and the application activity of the lesson was coded as task 3. Each task was analysed against a 4 point scale of descriptors described in *Table 2* of Chapter 3. Further, each task was analysed against the indicators of *Table 2* (a, b and c). A synthesis of the results for the two lessons were described in terms of Bernstein's concept of framing — in context of the lesson transcripts each task would amount to 3F. The three tasks summed to the value of 18F. The results of each teacher respectively were used to draw up a frequency table (see *Table 6)*.

		Lesson 1	Lesso n 2	Overall Results 3F+3F
TASK 1 :	Framing of evaluative criteria when introducing the lesson objectives	3F	3F	6F
TASK 2 :	Framing of evaluative criteria when mediating the topic	3F	3F	6F
TASK 3 :	Framing of evaluative criteria of the application activity	3F	3F	6F
	Total (T1+T2+T3= 6F+6F+6F=18F)			18F

Table 6 A frequency table — shows a teacher strongly framed in all aspects of formative Assessment

Table 6 illustrates the results of the raw data of the two lessons that were synthesized in context of the mathematical principles of adding and subtracting integers, that is, - + - = 2- (F- + F- = 2F-); (F-- + F-- = 2F--); and (F+) + (F+) = 2F+ ;(F++) + (F++) = 2F++; (F-) + (F+) = 0 where the value of 0 implied strong framing if the results were all F+, and weak if the results were all F-; (F--) + (F+) = very weak framing + strong framing thus negating each other and resulting in weak framing. I interpreted -- + - as very weak to weak framing (F--to F-) and categorized it as weak framing. In a case where the results showed ++ added to a + it confer strong to very

strong framing (F+ to F++) and I categorized it as strong framing for convenience of reporting.

Table 7 & 8 illustrates the codes that were used to analyses the transcripts and overall results of table two. *The principle of percentages served as a guide to code the strengths of framing and was not used to analyse or interpret the data. The data analyses were based on Bernstein's codes of framing. When the codes were F+ or F++, 50% and* above 50% were considered very strong framing and below 50% -1% were considered strong framing. Where the codes were F- it was viewed that above 50% was considered very weak framing and below 50%-0% was considered weak framing. Using 50 as the bench mark for very strong and very weak framing is because the value 50 in Education institutions is considered an accepted norm for competence. So a (–) would correspond with incompetence and a (+) with competence. The higher the value of (F-) the weaker the framing and the higher the F++/+ value the stronger the degree of framing.

Overall Results based on 18F	Percentages	Descriptors' of evaluative criteria of feedback; marking criteria; lesson objectives	Strength of framing	Codes of framing
18F++ and 18F+ to 9F++ and 9F+	100 – 50	Excellent: clear and explicit throughout all the tasks	Very strong	F++
8F++ and 8F+ to -1F++and 1F+	49 – 1	Good: explicit in one or two tasks	Strong	F+
9F-- and 9F- to 1F--and 1F+	49 – 1	Satisfactory: explicit at particular points in a task. present but implicit	Weak	F-
18F-- and 18F- to 10F-- and 10F-	100 – 50	Weak–Poor: Not explicit; confusing; unclear	Very Weak	F--

Table 7: Codes to interpret the overall results of Table 2& 3

The strength of framing for both lessons.	Percentages	Descriptors of evaluative criteria of; feedback; marking criteria; lesson objectives	Strength of framing	Codes of framing
6F++ or 6F+ to 3F++ or 3F+	100 – 50	Excellent –clear and explicit throughout the task	Very strong	F++
2F++ or 2F+ to 1F++ or 1F+	49 – 1	Good : explicit in two tasks	Strong	F+
2F—or 2F- to 1F—or 1F-	49 – 1	Satisfactory: explicit at particular points in a task	Weak	F-
6F—or 6F –to -3F—or 3F-	100-50	Weak – Poor; Not explicit; confusing; unclear	Very Weak	F--

Table 8: Interpreting the results of the lesson transcripts for each task.

4.7.3 Interview

The professional biographical details of teachers were read and summarized to get a sense of where the teachers are. The rest of the interview data was read and summarized in terms of the key interview questions analysed against the conceptual framework. The principles that orientated the findings were Bernstein's concept of framing. Thus, data that were associated with the theory described in Chapter 2 corresponded with very strong framing. (F++) and data that were mismatched in terms of the conceptual framework corresponded with the degree of weak to very weak framing (F—to F-). The relevant theory was mentioned to support the validity of the findings.

4.7.4 Written Work of Learners

Data was analysed using Morais (2002) operationalization theory described in Chapter 4. I collected ten marked scripts per teacher. The ten documents was analysed in terms of Bernstein's codes of framing that I presented in Chapter 3, *Table 3*. Considering that each document was analysed against two sets of indicators the total was 2F. The 2F was multiplied by 10 (ten sets of data) and averaged to scale

the overall performance of the teachers written feedback in the instructional process. *Table 8* illustrates the quantification.

Teacher Code	**Result** 10 scripts x 2F	**Strength**	**Code of framing** Result ÷ 10 = average
T1	20F++	Very Strong	2F++

Table 9: Summary of Data analyses for written feedback for one teacher

The findings were interpreted as follows: an analogy of 2 F++ to 2 F+ which corresponded to the degree of very strong to strong framing and classified as strong framing for the convenience of presenting the findings. Teachers that behaved according to the first situations in *Table 3* would present an analogy of 2F-- to 2F- and would correspond with the degree of very weak to weak framing and classified as weak framing.

4.8 Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity of the study, I had to take in to account the validity and credibility. Validity is concerned with the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). To enhance the validity in the data collection process the recorded data were verified with the teachers to ascertain the correctness of the data collected. According to McMillan (2010, p. 330) validity of qualitative designs is the degree to which the interpretations have mutual meanings between the participant and the researcher. Thus the researcher and participant agree on the descriptions of any events.

The interview also served to validate what has been observed in practice. In the interview conversation the researcher identifies any discrepancies in the observation process. The participants were given an opportunity to listen to the audio-tape and to read the researchers notes to validate the data.

Whilst the concept of validity is important the concept of trustworthiness is also applicable. Trustworthiness takes into account the credibility of the study. Credibility refers to the extent to which the researcher manages to establish confidence in the true value or trustworthiness of the findings. In qualitative research this means that the findings must be true in terms of the context and subjects under investigation. This study was credible in that the findings emanated from authentic transcriptions of the interviews with the participants, and the carrying out of random member checks. In some instances I gave the notes to participants to check whether I have commented correctly on their lessons and responses. The concept of validity and trustworthiness was not sufficient in a study of this nature. I had to consider professional ethics in line with the requirements of the ethics committee. The ethical considerations are presented in the following section.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Relevant ethical procedures were followed including obtaining permission from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand, the schools principals, the participants and the Gauteng Department of Education. An ethics clearance application was forwarded to the Ethics committee and a clearance certificate was issued in August 2010. The clearance certificate is attached with my declaration. Formal letters were also sent to the two schools as well as to the four participants to formalize the research process. The following day the researcher collected the acceptance letters from the secretaries of both school A and B. Each participant returned approval letters granting the researcher permission to observe two 60 minutes lessons analyse learners' marked work and conduct an interview with the participants. Consent was also requested from the participants to audio record the entire research process.

The letters to the four participants contained information about the research study. The participants were assured that strict confidentiality and anonymity would be

maintained prior, during and after the data collection process. I assured the participants that the data collected was kept confidential and used for the purpose of this study only. All the participants were further assured that the recorded data would not be submitted with the report and will be eventually destroyed. The participants were also ensured that they would not experience any form of humiliation or loss of trust. The participants accepted to participate purely on voluntary basis and were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. No participant withdrew during the study. Since the participants were teachers, the interviews were conducted during the teachers' free time. The time was negotiated by the teacher and the researcher. The interviews took place at venues that were convenient for the informant. In all four instances the staffroom of the school was used.

In addition, permission to pursue the study in government schools was also sought from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). Permission was granted. I have attached the approval letter to the declaration page. To maintain the professional ethics of anonymity of participants the names of the schools as well as the participants were not mentioned in the report. For the convenience of reporting the data, the researcher named the first primary school 'A' and the second primary school 'B.

The next chapter presents the findings that emerged from the data collected after an in depth analyses of the observations and interviews.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data analysis for each teacher coalesced around the three research question of the thesis. The presentation follows this order: Firstly, analyses of the lesson transcripts is illustrated using Bernstein's codes of framing followed by a presentation of the findings to determine the extent to which the teachers practiced formative assessment. Secondly, the interview data is analysed to establish the teachers' understanding and experience with formative assessment. Thirdly, analyses of the written work are presented to demonstrate teachers' practices of evaluative criteria of feedback.

5.2 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE ANALYSES

5.2.1 Teacher 1: Lash — framing of evaluative criteria during the lesson

	Lesson Objectives: write a Dialogue	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Overall Results L1 + L2 3F + 3F = 6F
TASK 1	Framing of evaluative criteria of the lesson objectives	3F-	2F- 1F+	4F- (weak framing)
TASK 2	Framing of evaluative criteria when mediating the topic	3F-	1F-- 2F+	2F- (weak framing)
TASK 3	Framing of evaluative criteria of feedback in the application activity	3F+	2F+ 1F-	4F+ (strong framing)
Total	T1 + T2 + T3 = 18 F			2F-

Table 10: Summary of analysis of the lesson transcripts of T1

Table 10, illustrates a total of 2F- out of 18 strengths of framing (*Appendix E*). This implied that the strength of teachers' control on communicating of lesson objectives corresponded to weak framing (4F-); and the explicitness of the evaluative criteria shows a degree of weak framing with the strength of 2F-. The degree of framing of feedback shows a result of 4F+ indicating that the teacher has better control on communicating evaluative criteria of verbal feedback. This means the degree of framing is stronger in the task of application of activities.

5.2.2 Findings

At the micro-interactional level the explicit transmission of the lesson objectives at the outset (Gipps, 1999) motivates learners to work towards the goals that ultimately attributes to the success of their learning (Black and Wiliam, 2002). Thus considering that the main objective of Lash's first lesson was to teach how to write a dialogue, and her second lesson was a continuance of the first, she attempted to explain the meaning of the word "dialogue". At the opening of the first lesson she made a statement with a rhetorical question-"I taught you that big word 'Dialogue' isn't it?" The question was to remind her learners of the concept "dialogue" which she assumed was transmitted at a previous lesson. She asks: "Who can tell me what it means?"

The purpose of using the question technique was to elicit from the learners' the meaning of the word 'Dialogue'. Although the descriptions and excerpts showed that she was successful in explaining the concept because the learners became aware of the concept 'dialogue'. They could have been under the impression that the word 'dialogue' was under discussion. Even though the control on communication of the lesson objectives strengthened while learners were applying the knowledge in a practice context (1F+ indicated in *Table 10)*, her learners were over engaged in verbal activities. Numerous sets of role plays were demonstrated during instruction. Learners participated in role play of dialogue — this reinforced the learners' understanding of the concept. We can say Lash was very successful in mediating

the concept "dialogue, but her learners could have interpreted the main objective of the lesson to be a role-play of a dialogue. The excerpt below illustrates an emphasis of the concept dialogue, which might have overlooked the authentic objective — to write the dialogue.

Class: Yesss

Teacher 1: Can you remember Riaad and Soloman did a dialogue and Nico did a dialogue with me. Now what did we say a dialogue is.

Nico: It is a conversation between two people.

That her learners were prepared to write a dialogue was very tacit. This implies that the evaluative criteria of lesson objectives were left implicit. Consequently, framing of lesson objectives was perceived as weak (4F-) at the outset of the instructional discourse. In the evaluative context, the evaluative criteria regulates the transmission and reproduction of the knowledge acquired (Bernstein, 1996), which means the realization of the evaluative criteria ought to be robust. The explicitness or how learners understand the evaluative criteria in the learning process influences differential achievements (*ibid*). In this connection, Lash's results showed a variance in the degree of framing of evaluative criteria.

The techniques applied to evaluating learners' responses of the instructional process was progressively that of repeating the learners' responses ,and often followed by the word "okay", thus, she inferred that all the responses were correct. For example: when Learner 1 (L1) said"…it is telling you what is happening in the community" Lash responded by saying "okay". Similarly, her questions were always followed by the word "isn't it?" inferring that she activated an approval from her learners rather than a response. For example:

> Can you see what is happening? I'm asking him a question and he's answering. It is like questions and answers. Isn't it like questions and answers?" Then the class would chorus "yessss".

Chorus responses like 'No' and 'yes' were a norm of her lessons.

> ***T1*** Now I am going to show you how I can talk to somebody in the class and we can write it down. But I'm going to make it a little tricky for you in your work. Because you are going to be two parts – you are going to be yourself and you are going to be your partner. Okay because if you do not complete it in class you can't take your partner home, can you.

Then the class answered,

> ***Class*:** Nooo …

The teacher's question techniques encouraged "yes" or "no" type of answers. In addition, choral answers were accepted all the time. An example below explicitly illustrates the mode of questions that Lash practiced:

> ***Class*:** Yessss
>
> ***Teacher 1***: And you answering to me, isn't it
>
> ***Class:*** Yesss
>
> ***Teacher 1***: So, we are communicating. We are talking to…
>
> ***Class***… Each other
>
> ***Teacher 1***: So a dialogue will be a communication in the form of a conversation between you and your friend. It doesn't have to be you and your friend it can be me and you. It can be you and your mum. It will be any two people. Do you all understand that now?
>
> ***Class:*** Yeh…sss ma…dam

Formative assessment requires high level questioning (questions that stimulate thinking and allow the teacher to determine the learners' competence levels) (Black and Wiliam, 2001). Lash's classroom situation of choral answers could have led her to overlook slow learners who might not have understood the concept. Formative assessment provides room for improving the standards of poor learners (Black and

Wiliam, 2001). Hence, thought provoking questions could have helped her identify those learners who needed additional support.

In view of *Table 6,* the analyses (Table 10: 2F-) show that the evaluative criteria were left implicit for the following reasons: Firstly, Lash could have explained what a community is and how it differs from a dialogue. Secondly, she could have allowed individual learners to respond to her questions by evoking their thinking through using stimulating question techniques. Thus the degree of framing evaluative criteria weakened at the level of mediating the lesson. But hints of strong criteria unfolded in the transmission process. At the start of the second task of lesson one, she stated: "Now I am going to show you how I can talk to somebody in the class and we can write it down … I'm going to show you how one person can write a dialogue between two people — would you like that?" Further, she had mentioned that the dialogue "must be real" and that her learners should write only on one of the three topics that were written on a chart, pinned onto the chalkboard. Although the evaluative criteria were not reinforced, it was expressed in the instructional process. Her performance at those intervals inferred a degree of strong framing (*Table 10*, Task 2 2F+) of the evaluative criteria.

The transmission of evaluative criteria of writing a dialogue was discernible during the practice activity. The second lesson commenced by recapping the definition of the concept, and was followed by a written practice activity. For example she mentioned this criterion in the transmission-acquisition process: choose one topic, write your own name then skip a line and write your friends name, start with a capital letter (Strong framing). A variance of transmission of evaluative criteria resulted in the emergence of a decline from strong framing to very weak framing of evaluative criteria. During the practice activity, she interrupted the silence to explain the evaluative criteria that was pinned to the board (*Table 11*). She referred the learners to a set of evaluative criteria that was typed on the worksheet (see *Table 12*).

Punctuation	Originality	Sticking to the topic	Writing your names on separate lines
4	5	5	4

Table 11: Marking Criteria

In contrast, the verbal explanation differed from the evaluative criteria typed on the actual worksheet. The actual typed evaluative criteria read as follows:

Gramma	Originality	Relevance to Topic	
10	5	5	

Table 12: Actual Evaluative Criterion

Considering any of the above criteria of 'writing a dialogue', there may potentially be confusion for the learner-writer. For example, the teacher attempted to clarify the marking criteria and the allocated marks, but her verbal expressions were not the same as the actual writing on the worksheet. Those of the worksheet and verbal explanations differed from the evaluative criteria transmitted in the transmission-acquisition process — "make it real", "skip a line…", and "write your name in capital letters". One would expect to be evaluated on all the evaluative criteria transmitted in the classroom discourse. Further, she also emphasized the mark allocation, for example she said, "…do you want to get 20 out of 20?" Thus, she encouraged her learners to strive to achieve high marks. The code of framing for evaluative criteria at the level of transmission of application activity was therefore very weak.

Given that effective verbal feedback, described in the conceptual framework, is considered a significant characteristic in developing learner competencies (Gipps, 1999), the feedback process of the application activity of framing of evaluative criteria for verbal feedback was strong (F+) (4F+ *Table 10*, last column Overall task, *Task, 3*). It was only at this activity of the lesson where she alerted the learners of the lesson objectives; as she walked around the class, every now and then she offered support and guidance to weaker learners. Below is an excerpt showing Lash

mediating the objectives at the beginning of the activity task and verbal feedback at the end of the lesson.

Teacher 1: Good it is a conversation between two people. Remember I told you that you going to be you and your partner. Okay now I'm going to show you the page on which you are going to write the dialogue – you will write a dialogue… but first look at the board.

Teacher 1: Siphon writes your name and your partner's name.

Class you have to finish the dialogue today (After handing out the pages she continues).

Teacher 1: Right class you can start, remember to make the dialogue real (Teacher walks around to observe the learners while they are working).

Teacher 1: Stop children, stop – I see some of you didn't write the names. Can you see my sheet? I wrote my name and madam Shayna's name. Can u see my name is in blue and her name is in red?

Class: Ye…he…ss mam...mda...m

Teacher 1: Now write your friends name and your name like that… (The teacher continues to offer learners Individual assistance).

It is noted that only at the end of the lessons Lash's observations manifested into a spontaneous flow of verbal feedback to individual learners. The feedback occurred at the learner's desks. When she discovered problems that she thought other learners might experience. She stopped and addressed the whole class. For example she said, "Some of you did not use different colours…now stop. Look at the chart…" The verbal feedback that Lash provided to her learners was explicit and helped learners' progress towards the objectives.

Another example of effective feedback was when Moses who was a very weak learner was struggling to start on the activity; she provided individual guidance but also gave feedback to the entire class.

Teacher 1: You didn't start — write your name (Learner writes his name in blue).

Teacher 1: Who's your friend?

Learner: Moses

Teacher 1: Okay now use the pencil and write Moses name on the next line (Learner writes the name). That wasn't difficult. Now when you meet Moses what is the first thing you going ask or tell Moses.

Learner : Hello

Teacher 1: Good – next to your name write 'hello'. Good. What do you think Moses will tell you?

Learner: Hi

Teacher 1: Now write Hi next to Moses name. Can you see what's happening? Do you understand?

Learner (nodded his head)

Teacher 1: Now carry on with the conversation (Continues to walk around).

Teacher 1: Class some of you did not use different colours and some of you are not sticking to the topic. Now stop. Look at the chart. There are three topics. You choose only one topic. Okay children! Do you all understand? Group leaders quickly walk around and check that everyone in your group is working.

Teacher 1: Children if you can't spell a word write it in pencil when I come to you I will correct it or check your dictionary for the right spelling.

Given that the analyses showed that Lash was strongly framed (F+) at communicating the evaluative criteria of verbal feedback only at the end of the lesson, the degree of framing of evaluative criteria was weak (F-) in the transmission-acquisition process because learners were potentially confused of the exact criteria.

5.2.3 Analyses and Discussion of the Interview

The analyses of the interview responses were described as illustrated in *Section 4.7.2* of the methodology. Lash was relaxed in the interview and spoke with a confident voice. She responded to all the biographical questions with alacrity. In the second

part of the interview she was optimistic and obliging in her approach, but responded with bantam thought. She gave little thought to the questions and hastily responded to the first question as follows:

> For me formative assessment is about finding out what challenges they have and work towards it. It's like a formal task or informal assessment. I don't really help them much when I do that. I just guide them.

Brown (2004) is very clear that formal assessment is planned and summative, whilst informal assessment is unplanned and occurs anytime during the instruction process. In this connection, Lash's perception of formative assessment is unclear and is not consistent with the theoretical principles. Thus, the strength of how she understands formative assessment at the micro–level of instruction shows a degree of very weak framing (F--) because for her formal and informal assessment was the same, thus:

> I plan for…oral work like role play…it helps learners…I develop the written skills by repetition of work… after marking I find that they keep making mistakes with punctuation and past tense…so we correct that, I get my learners to orally repeat the correct work …oral repetition works.

Her response showed that she was unclear about the difference accorded to instruction and assessment during the instructional process. She spoke about role play as a means to make learners understand the concepts and knowledge. Then she also believed that role play served as a vehicle to identify the shy learners and slow learners. While role play was emphasized in her lessons, it was used to demonstrate the key concept of the lesson. It could be argued that the assessment process could have been facilitated if she had asked the learners to role play what they had written.

She is conscious of using the assessment information to improve the learning process that the learners undergo, however she used feedback to help learners remember the knowledge rather than understand the knowledge. The use of oral repetition, drill work and correcting incorrect answers implies that she believed in

memory training; thus, demonstrating that her perceptions are robustly grounded in the traditional mode of assessment. For example, she talks about memorization and drill work without focusing on the true understanding of the acquired knowledge. Therefore the degree of her understanding of the process of formative assessment, acquisition-evaluation-transmission in a pedagogic practice, corresponds to weak framing (F-).

She said that she was trained in the apartheid era but had gained her knowledge on formative assessment by reading the policy documents. The findings show that the policy document on assessment (NPA, 2005) contains a brief explanation on the requirements of the new approach to assessment. The information contained in the policy documents might not be adequate enough to train a teacher on formative assessment. She also experienced that the teacher's assessment was more reliable than peer or self-assessment. Further, due to large classes it was impossible to mark all the learners' work. During the instructional process she would walk around the class to observe learners' performance while they were engaged with activities. She said that there was only time to mark formal assessments which she often marked at home. Thus, class observations were vital for her. Her response to how she experienced formative assessment corroborates with her classroom practice because, at the level of the practice activity she observed her learners and was instrumental in evaluating and correcting incorrect work.

5.2.4 Document Analyses: Written Feedback to Learners

The teachers' evaluation criteria were inferred from the text they produced when correcting or marking the learners' written work and, also from the marking matrices they made when marking the activities, the teacher's marking texts were measured against *Table 3*. The analysis of this information revealed that the teacher did not write long text on learners' answers but expressed her opinions using the following graphic signs. These graphic signs were not discussed with the learners - telling the learners what each graphic sign meant.

5.2.5 Codes and comments decoded from the teachers marking texts (T1)

Below is a system of notations used by the teacher to mark the learners work

Notation	*Meaning*
_____	underlines inadequate words
----------	crosses out incorrect words
√	Ticks correct answers
○	circled what is out of context

Teacher Code	Result	Strength	Code of framing
T1	18F- -	Very weak	2F- -

Table 13: Summary of Data analyses for written feedback for T1

The data displayed in *Table 13* indicates that framing of written feedback is very weak. She lacked the skill in using effective assessment criteria and showed no evidence of providing effective written feedback. For example she used ticks and crosses without indicating how learners could correct the work that had crosses. Her marking techniques were consistent in all the learners' work. She used stereotype comments such as well done, good, and poor and she awarded marks in the form of scores to assess her learners' performance. The final assessment could not be linked with the assessment criteria that she had printed on the worksheets of the learners. For example a learner called Tyran was assessed 3 out of 10. It was difficult to trace how Lash arrived at the mark. She had a criteria printed on the worksheet, but it was not used in her marking process. Thus, the evaluative criteria of written feedback correspond to very weak framing (result: 18F--).

5.3. Data analysis and findings of Teacher 2 (T2) — Framing of evaluative criteria during the lesson

	Lesson Objectives: write a Dialogue	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Overall Results L1 + L2 3F + 3F = 6F
TASK 1 :	Framing of evaluative criteria of the lesson objectives	3F-	1F- 2F+	2F- (weak framing)
TASK 2 :	Framing of evaluative criteria when mediating the topic	2F+1F-	2F- 1F+	0f (very weak)
TASK 3 :	Framing of evaluative criteria of feedback in the application activity	2F- 1F+	2F- 1F+	2F- (strong framing)
Total: (T1 + T2 + T3 = 18 F)				4F-

Table 14: Summary of analysis of the lesson transcripts of T2

The data in *Table 14,* illustrates a total of 4F- out of 18 strengths of framing (Refer to *Appendix F*). This implied that the strength of teachers' control on communicating the lesson objectives to her learners corresponded to weak framing (2F-); The explicitness of the evaluative criteria show a degree of weak framing with strength of 0 degrees. The degree of framing the feedback shows a result of 2F- indicating that the control on communicating of evaluative criteria of verbal feedback is weak in the task of application of activities.

5.3.1 Findings

We are cognizant of the advantages of making learners aware of the lesson objectives at the outset because it regulates learners' attitude towards working on achieving the goals to improve learning (Gipps, 1999). I wish to note that T1 and T2 shared the Grade 4 English classes. Therefore, their objectives of the lessons were the same. Lash taught 3 classes of Grade 4's and T2 taught one class of Grade 4 learners.

Like Lash, T2's first lesson was to teach her learners to write a dialogue, she initiated the discourse with attempting to explain the concept "dialogue". Thus:

Teacher 2: Good morning class

Class: Good morning madam

Teacher 2: Right, now we spoke about a dialogue when madam Jayshree was here. I want you to listen carefully because when we done I am going to assess whether you understand a dialogue or not. Okay now, who knows what a dialogue is? Who can tell me what a dialogue is?

Learner 1: It's a conversation

Teacher2: Yes good it's a conversation. You all say "Hi"

It's a conversation. You used a nice word conversation He used a big word - con / ver / sa / tion. What is a conversation?

Learner 2: It is when two people are talking.

Teacher2: Yes. It is a conversation between two people. When two…o people talk to each other it is called a con / ver / sa / tion. (Teacher writes word on board) Right! It's also called a… dialogue. Right, now tell me, when you talking to someone how do you have this conversation? We have different types of dialogues — dialogues with your aunt or mum.

Learner 3: You greet and talk?

Teacher 2: Let's say your mum and aunt want to have a conversation and they are not together how can they talk to each other?

Learner 4: By phoning her.

Teacher 2: Yes good — any other method of having a conversation.

Learner 1: Writing letters.

Teacher 2: Writing letters. Right phoning writing letters are methods of having conversations. We also get e-mails. I'm sure some of you know what's an e-mail and faxes.

Class: Yesss… e-mail.

Teacher 2: These are all methods of conversing with the next person. But now we are going to deal with just a dialogue.

From above, T2 attempted to explain the meaning of the word "dialogue". She had potentially elicited the definition of a dialogue from the learners. I say potentially because she clearly accepted the answers. Thus, "it's a conversation" and "it is when two people are talking" and, at another point, she accepted a different view point. For example, L1 responded "writing letters". The process of letter writing can be argued to be a one-side communicative activity because the receiver has an option to reply — the reply is usually much later. To add, at the end of task 1, T2 said: "These are all methods of conversing with the next person. But now we are going to deal with just a dialogue".

The teacher's responses are not consistent thus inferring that the evaluative criteria is implicitly transmitted. Further, the objective 'writing a dialogue' is not articulated until the beginning of the application activity. Her learners could have been under the impression that they were expected to present verbal dialogues. Therefore, the degree of framing of lesson objectives corresponds to weak framing (Table 14, Task 1, 3F-).

At the opening sequence of lesson two, she hands out worksheets to the learners; she instructs them to continue writing the dialogue. In the analysis, the degree of framing of evaluative criteria and lesson objectives corresponds to strong framing and weak framing (Table 14: Task 1, 2F+ and 1F-) because all her learners seemingly were aware that they had to continue writing the dialogue, but some of her learners were uncertain. The uncertainty of those learners was observed in their delay to start the writing activity. Some learners only started writing after a pair of learners read out loud what they have written.

In the evaluative context the role play of T2's second lesson, served as a means to explicitly reinforce the evaluative criteria that had already been revealed during the transmission — acquisition process. For example, when she presented a step-by-step demonstration on how to write a dialogue, she explained: write the names of the speakers inside the margin; skip a line after each speaker; emphasise the

evaluative criteria and, she pinned a large chart firmly on the board to serve as an example. The large chart that she pinned on to the board was used by her learners to progressively self-evaluate their work. Notably, she used the same worksheet that Lash had used for her learners. The worksheet had the same typed marking criteria (see *Table 12*).

During her observations of the application activities, she drew her learners' attention to the marking criteria. She read it aloud but did not explain what she meant by grammar, originality or relevance to the topic. Some learners were listening, while others continued writing their dialogues. Since not all her learners were listening, the degree of explicitly explaining the evaluative criteria was weakly framed (F-). She checked individual learners' grammar and spelling; this reinforced the criteria that appeared on the worksheet. However, the criteria on the worksheet did not correspond to the criteria on the chart (*Table 11*). Thus, the evaluative criteria were implicit because the message potentially may have confused the learners.

In addition, she accepted every answer without assessing the accuracy of the answer. For example, she accepted letter writing to be a dialogue. In a content-context, letter writing is a means of communication and not a dialogue (*Oxford Dictionary*). In view of formative assessment, teachers need to know their content in order to know what to assess (Vandeyar and Killen, 2007). In some instances she asked a question and answered it at the same time. It did not stimulate the learners' thinking, for example when she said, "What are these weird ways of greeting?", and then she answered in the same breath "Hi and hello ... Yes my darling". Given that high level questions stimulates thinking and deepens understanding of the acquired knowledge, (Shepard, 2000) question responses in the transmission of the evaluative criteria was thus implicit, implying that her control on communicating of evaluative criteria in question — responses corresponds to weak framing (F-).

Gipps (1999) explains that the role of feedback is to enhance the learning goals. In this regard, T2 was very active in assessing her learners by means of observation.

She walked around the class and, during her observational assessment; she provided individual feedback to learners who needed guidance. In some instances she stopped the entire class and addressed the problem with the entire class. Framing of evaluative criteria of feedback corresponds to strong.

5.3.2 Analyses and Findings of the Interview

T2 responded to the first part of the interview hesitantly. Initially she was reluctant to disclose her personal particulars. I assured her that the biographical information was for the purpose of this study only. She seemingly relaxed as the interview progressed. On investigating the data of the second part of the interview, the data illustrated that her perception of formative assessment was limited. For example, when T2 was asked what her understanding of formative assessment was she replied: "You mean different forms of assessment?"

I had no intentions of prompting T2, I replied "whatever you understand? 'She continued to say that so called formative assessment is "a baseline assessment" and then she moved to another idea where she spoke about diagnostic assessments being formative. Theoretically, a baseline assessment occurs at the beginning of a grade or phase to establish what learners know (Brown, 2002). Diagnostic assessments are usually used to find out about the nature and cause of barriers to learning (Rowntree, 1987). The strength of her understanding of the concept corresponds to weak framing (F-) because she showed confusion about baseline, diagnostic and formative assessment.

When she was asked how she planned for formative assessment -without giving the question any thought T2 immediately replied:

> Okay first of all what I'll do – the topic that I'll use – ill look at the child's standard before I present the lesson and the relevance. It has to be realistic and it has to be child orientated. I can't assess a child on what he doesn't know.

I probed the answer by asking T2: "What do you mean by 'present the lesson and the relevance'. She did not respond to the question and continued to chat about how she communicated a picture story to her Grade 7 classes. The data clearly showed that she had no understanding of how to plan a pedagogic practice of acquisition-evaluation-transmission to enhance learning. For example, she could have explained the practice of feedback to enhance learning (Bernstein, 1990). Thus, the strength of framing how she planned for formative assessment conferred weak (F-).

However, she explicitly explains the usefulness of marks and rubrics in her assessments. She said, "I use marks and I use a rubric where I include marks in a rubric for presentation." On this note, T2 further explained that she preferred to use marks because it was easier to gauge the performance of learners. I concluded that she confused formative assessment with summative assessments. Summative assessment measures what a learner has learnt at the end of a section or term (Brown, 2004, p6).

As I probed into her application of the rubrics she replied: "When I had to record a mark…, I record all the marks". She had limited understanding of assessment alongside instruction — it is not for marks but to promote the quality of learning (Shepard, 2002). I also asked: What is the difference between formative assessment and summative assessment? She responded,

> Once I get the work of the child at the end of the day. Then I pick up where the child is lagging for example maybe the child didn't put a question mark. That would be summative.

T2 showed some confusion in differentiating between summative and formative assessment thus, the strength of framing of understanding the process of formative assessment corresponds to very weak framing. In light of evaluation techniques she said,

> …I did peer- assessment but here I double check to see if the learner assessed properly. But I prefer educator assessment it is more realistic. Teacher

> assessment is done at home. Only if it is listening skills I assess in the class… I use rubrics and marks… from the marks you know how the learner is doing.

Firstly she preferred to mark all the work herself because she believed that it was more reliable then peer assessment. Secondly she used marks rather than written feedback because she believed that marks were easier to use when determining learners competence levels. Her responses were not always in line with the question. For example when I asked, how did you gain experience in assessment? She replied, "I do get peers to assess sometimes I get parents to assess". Therefore, it was difficult to explicitly investigate her responses. I wondered whether the fact that she was very nervous at the opening of the interview could have affected her responses.

In the light of her linguistic barriers like poor reading skills that posed a challenge, she claimed that it was difficult to teach Grade 4 learners because they often forgot the work. Many of the learners struggled to speak English. Consequently, time constraints limited her capacity to assist all the learners who needed help. Finally due to the large classes and language barriers, T2 marked much of the work at home. Evidence showed that she does have an understanding that her learners must be guided towards correcting misconceptions and this point was observed in her instructional practices.

5.3.3 Document Analyses: Written Feedback to Learners

T2's evaluation criteria were inferred from the text she produced when correcting or marking the documents and, also from the marking matrices she made when marking the activities. The analysis of this information revealed that the teacher did not write long text on learners' answers but expressed their opinions using graphic signs without telling the meaning of the sign.

5.3.3.1 Codes and comments decoded from the teachers marking texts

a) Concerning the criteria for marking, there was no rubric but only a mark breakdown, that is, global marking

b) System of Notations used by the teacher to mark the learners work

Notation	Meaning
_____	underlines inadequate words
----------	crosses out incorrect words
√	Ticks correct answers
O	circled what is out of context

c) Type of discursive comments: good, poor, or can do better were never accompanied by explanations.

Teacher Code	Result	Strength	Code of framing
T1	18F--	Very weak	2F--

Table 15: Summary of Data analyses for written feedback for T2

Table 15 showed that framing of written feedback to the learners range from weak to very weak. She used one word comments like "good", or "well done!" to assess the learners' performance. These comments were consistently used in learners' work. She used ticks to indicate correct work and crosses for incorrect work. In some cases she circled or underlined work without providing a reason for making those inscriptions. The mark/scores that appeared on learners scripts were based on 'professional judgment'. For example, a learner called Abia was assessed 4/10; it was difficult to track how T2 had arrived at that mark. T2 did not make use of the criteria she originally set. The data showed that she lacked the skill in providing written feedback to her learners.

5.4. Data analysis and findings of Teacher 3, (T3) — Framing of evaluative criteria during the lesson.

	Lesson Objectives: write adjectives	**Lesson** 1	**Lesson** 2	**Overall Results** L1 + L2 3F + 3F = 6F
TASK 1:	Framing of evaluative criteria of the lesson objectives	1F+2F-	1F+ 2F-	2F- (weak framing)
TASK 2:	Framing of evaluative criteria when mediating the topic	1F+2F-	3F+	2F+ (weak framing)
TASK 3:	Framing of evaluative criteria of feedback in the application activity	1F+ 2F-	1F+ 2F-	2F-(weak framing)
	Total: (T1 + T2 + T3 = 18 F)			2F-

Table 16: Summary of analysis of the Lesson Transcripts of T3

The data in *Table 16* illustrates a total of 2F- out of 18 strengths of framing. This implied the strength of teachers' control on communicating the lesson objectives of formative assessment to her learners corresponded to weak framing (2F-); and the explicitness of the evaluative criteria show a degree of strong framing (2F+) when mediating the lesson, but the evaluative criteria of feedback in the application activity corresponds with weak framing (2F-).

5.4.1 Findings

The practice of formative assessment in the instructional process as I have already deliberated on, require the teacher to make learners aware of the lesson objectives at the outset (Gipps, 1999). The explicitness of the lesson objectives in the transmission process motivates learners to work towards the goals to develop deep understanding of the acquired knowledge (Black and Wiliam, 2002). In this connection, the analyses of T3 instructional practices show degrees of both strong and weak framing of lesson objectives in her practice.

Her classroom was arranged in eight groups of six learners each. Although she stood in the front of the class, at the opening of the lesson, she constantly moved about during the lesson to interact with her learners. T3 was polite, gentle and displayed much confidence in the way she approached her lesson. However, from time to time she had to shoo her learners for their disruptive, fidgety and noisy attitude. I presume that either her placid disposition lead to the noisy classroom ethos or her teaching method, which is beyond the scope of this investigation, bored the learners.

At the opening of the lesson she said to her learners:

> T3: Let us close our eyes, but before we close our eyes I want us to look at this…. And when we close our eyes I want you to imagine this fan that is in my hand ok. And think of it and think the way it is. Now I want you to close your eyes. Put your hands over your eyes, and sit up straight. Breather in, and out, breathe in, and hold it, now breathe out. You may open your eyes, thank you… Alright…..okay, I had something in my hand,… what was it? ….Yes (to learner who put up her hand)

I presumed that the above activity was an ice-breaker because she gave them the answer before they closed their eyes. She said, "I want you to imagine this fan in my hand, ok". Identify the object that is in my hand. The following excerpt illustrates how this activity progressed.

> ***Learner 1***: It is something just like a fan.
>
> ***Teacher 3***: Just something like a fan? Or is it a fan? It is a fan, alright, it is a fan. What is that thing?
>
> ***Class:*** A fan.
>
> ***Teacher 3:*** Aaa…
>
> ***Class:*** Fa…n
>
> ***Teacher 3:*** Who can spell for me fan?
>
> ***Learner 2:*** Fan
>
> ***Teacher 3:*** Fan, let us all spell fan (Teacher writes the word fan on the board).

Class: F.A.N

In the same way, without the closing of eyes procedure, she asked her learners to identify the objects that were placed in the centre of their groups.

Teacher 3: Okay what is in front of you there (*pointing at the one group)*.

Group One: Cotton wool.

Teacher3: Show them what it is.

Group1: Cotton wool.

Teacher 3: What is it all of you?

Class: Cotton wool.

Then she wrote the word "cotton wool" on the board just like she did with the word "fan"; she phonetically sounded the word as she wrote them. The learners of other groups continued the discussion. They had to identify their objects; she wrote it in the same way on the board. The transmission –acquisition of identifying objects was a lengthy session (Bernstein, 1990). It seems the learners were of the perception that they had to identify things and write down the spelling. Similarly, I presumed that the objective was based on building vocabulary or spelling words correctly. Only later did T3 mention that they were going to learn to describe things. The learners' perceptions were already embedded in identifying objects since for almost half the lesson they had been deeply engaged in such an activity. The learners were not aware that they were expected to use adjectives in written sentences. In addition, the data indicated that T3's objectives and the actual work taught had no link. Thus the strength of framing of lesson objectives was weak until the lesson activity (2F-).

In the evaluative context she made use of the question and answer technique. The type of questions that she used encouraged learners to give 'yes' or 'no' answers; and almost all the learners chorused some of the answers. In light of questioning techniques, formative assessment is framed by high quality questions that are

thought provoking and stimulating. The level of her questions corresponded with weak framing (2F-) because her questions were focused on the content not on the understanding. She showed no evidence of the type of questions that are required of formative assessment (Chapter 3). Acquisition-evaluation-transmission requires that learners know what is expected of them (Bernstein, 1990). T3 expressed the evaluative criteria progressively during the instruction process. Over the mid-way of the first lesson she emphasized the significance of learners using their senses to describe things. Thus:

> T3: When you are describing things like I said, you can use your sense of sight by looking at it, and you can use your sense of touch by feeling how that thing is. You can use the sense of smells, by using your nose, to smell things, and we can taste things, today we are going to learn about describing things. Right you can all see there on the board, I see that it's not very bright, but now the new words that we going to learn today is 'adjectives'. What is the new word?

However, as the lesson progressed into the second lesson the evaluative criteria became tacit. She firstly spoke of using the senses which she practiced with her learners in a class activity. For example she had a picture of a lady and she requested that they use their sense of sight and describe what they see. But the implicit control over the communication of the evaluative criteria set in only when she gave them an activity in which her learners had to fill in the missing adjective. Throughout the lesson she used tangible objects and pictures that learners could touch, see, smell and describe. One may argue the modality of the teacher to have prepared her learners to complete the abstract written sentences. Hence the degree of framing corresponds with weak framing because learners could potentially not have understood how to complete the written exercise without concrete objects. Thus, the evaluative criteria of the knowledge transmitted on identifying objects were explicit for a short period, and there were conflicting evaluative criteria towards the final activity resulting in framing that corresponded with very strong framing (F++) then weak framing (F-), which concluded strength of strong framing (2F+).

The evaluative criteria of framing of feedback in the application activity were strong**.** She walked around observing how the groups performed the activity. As soon as she discovered that learners were struggling she provided guidance. She was thus aware that learners should be monitored closely during the activity session. In some instances the answers of her learners were immediately reviewed in a plenary discussion. Thus she demonstrated strong framing but in view of the homework activity evaluative criteria differed and she did not explain how the activity would be evaluated, therefore the evaluative criteria corresponded with weak framing.

5.4.2. Analyses and Findings of the Interview

After a discussion on her biographical aspects she commenced her conversation with confidence. Responding to a question on formative assessment she said:

> My understanding of formative assessment is assessing the learners in all the work they have to do. To see if they understand the work you have done with them and it has to be formal like written tests, worksheets and so on." "We just have to complete a part of the learning area and you assess.

Summative assessments are administered after a topic or at the end of a grade for progression purposes (Brown, 2002). T3's response showed that her knowledge of the assessment process and terminology that is attached to assessment is limited. For example she said, "We….complete a part of the learning area and …assess". It is clear that she viewed formative assessment as the process that occurs at the end of a section. Thus the strength of her understanding of the concept corresponds with weak framing (F-). To corroborate her knowledge of formative assessment I asked her to tell the difference between summative and formative assessment was. She said "the district common exam is summative — it helps a lot — so I tell the children that they must know the work so that they can pass the common exam". Her response confirmed that she had an understanding of preparing her learners for a summative assessment but perceived formative and summative as one and the

same thing. Therefore it is clear that the degree of control over the understanding of the process of formative assessment confer weak framing.

Black and Wiliam (2002) insist that teachers should know what to assess and how to assess. When she was asked how she planned for formative assessment, she explained that she planned for summative assessments — assessment was done at the end of a section. Her response implied that her perception of assessment was for promotion rather than for understanding. She was assessing memory when she said "they must know their work." She depended on examinations as an assessment tool. Her response to testing and examinations were inclined towards the traditional approach, inferred from the following comment: "… I first taught the learners techniques in reading then I used a rubric to test them on things I taught them".

Experientially, she claimed to have learned about formative assessment during her ACE postgraduate degree obtained in 2007. She discussed more teaching methods without elucidating them. She showed no formal understanding of formative assessment. In the following section I present the data analyses on the written feedback to her learners.

5.4.3 Document Analyses: Written Feedback to Learners.

The teacher's evaluation criteria were inferred from the text she produced when correcting or marking the documents and also from the marking matrices she made when marking the activities. The analysis of this information revealed that the teacher did not write long text on learners' answers but expressed their opinions using the following graphic signs without telling the learners what each graphic sign meant.

5.4.3.1 Codes and comments decoded from the teachers marking texts

a) Criteria for Marking used by T3: Gives a value of 1 mark for correct answers = total = 4 (4 sentences) Gives no mark for incorrect answers.
b) System of Notations used by the teacher to mark the learners work

i. Notation Meaning

X crosses out incorrect words

√ Ticks correct answers

d) Type of discursive comments: she made no written comments

Teacher Code	Result	Strength	Code of framing
T3	20F-	Very weak	F--

Table 17: Summary of Data analyses for Written Feedback for T1

The data displayed in *Table 17* shows framing on written feedback to be very weak. The results were attributed to her behaviour in respect of the following: She lacked the skill to use effective assessment criteria and showed no evidence of providing effective written feedback. She used ticks and crosses without indicating how learners could correct the work that had crosses. Her marking techniques were consistent in all the learners' work. She awarded marks in the form of scores. The final assessment could not be linked to the assessment criteria that she had used in the instructional process. It is probable that when learners received feedback, they would not be able to identify the reasons for their mistakes.

Since all the teachers discussed so far were trained in South Africa and displayed similar understanding and experiences of formative assessment, it was interesting to analyse the data of T4 who was trained in Zimbabwe but was teaching in South Africa.

5.5 Data analysis and findings of Teacher 4, (T4) Framing of evaluative criteria during the lesson

	Lesson Objectives: writing direct speech	**Lesson** 1	**Lesson** 2	**Overall Results** L1 + L2 3F + 3F = 6F
TASK 1 :	Framing of evaluative criteria of the lesson objectives	3F+	1F-2F+	4F+ (strong framing)
TASK 2 :	Framing of evaluative criteria when mediating the topic	3F++	3F++	6F++ (strong framing)
TASK 3 :	Framing of evaluative criteria of feedback in the application activity	3F+	1F- 2F+	4F+(strong framing)
	Total: (T1 + T2 + T3 = 18 F)			14F+

Table 18: Summary of analysis of The Lesson Transcripts

The data in *Table 18* elucidates a total of 14F+ out of 18 strengths of framing. This indicated that the strength of teachers' control on communicating the key features of formative assessment corresponded to very strong framing. The strength of explicitness of lesson objectives corresponds to strong framing (4F+),the degree of framing of evaluative criteria corresponds with very strong framing (6F++) indicating that the teacher had good control in communicating the evaluative criteria explicitly to her learners. Thus the strength of evaluative criteria of verbal feedback corresponds to strong framing (4F+).

5.5.1 Findings

At the instructional level of transmission – acquisition the evaluative process alongside the instruction is a key feature in formative assessment. It is one of the characteristics that allows learners to be aware of the lesson objectives at the outset of the lesson (Gipps, 1999).The explicit transmission of this element in a learning milieu motivates learners to work towards the goals that ultimately attributes to the

success of their learning (Black and Wiliam, 2002)[2]. Given that the main objective of T4's lesson was to teach her learners how to write sentences in 'direct speech' and her second lesson spontaneously rolled into the first lesson she at the outset of the lesson explicitly unfolded the lesson objectives evident in the excerpt below.

T4: Good morning class.

Class: G…o…o…d mor…nin Ma…m.

T4 I remember the last time we spoke about what you want to be when you grow up some said they want to be a writer some said a reporter. Then I said you can be a good news reporter if you write good English. You remember.

Class : Y..e..ssss

T4: Right I want Samkelo to come here (pointing to the front of the class front). Come Samekelo.

T4: Right, Samekelo you are the teacher now tell the class something.

Samekelo: (shouts) Write neat work.

T4: Very good. "Write neat work" Thank you Samekelo T*he class applauds her she goes to her seat).* Can someone else come to the front?

L2; Me.

T4: Come, Samekelo was the teacher, now you are Dad. Tell the children something.

L2: Where are my car keys?

T4: Thanks. (Class applaud the learner).

T4: Right, let's write what was said. Our teacher's name is Samekelo right, she said, (teacher writes on the board)
"Write neat work"

T4: This is just a sentence.

---

[2]T4's timetable for the day of the researches planned visit was such that the class in observation had two sessions of English. Thus the two lessons overlapped and appeared as one lesson. There was a short interval between the two lessons consequently the introduction to the second lesson was extremely brief

T4: Now we want to make it correct direct speech (the teacher adds to the sentence as she speaks)

T4: Right, this is it when you speaking – but when it is written it will be different – it will be different in the book. And this is what we going to do today – we are going to write sentences in the direct speech.

By analysing the excerpt, it is clear that the learners had realized the objectives early in the lesson. For example she called, Samkelo, a bright learner to the front of the class and asked her to pretend that she was the teacher and that she (*Learner 1 (L1*) should tell the class something. Without any hesitation Samkelo shouted "write neat work!" Then T4 called upon a volunteer to recite another sentence. Without any hesitation learners eagerly raised their hands to come forward. The next learner had to pretend that he was 'Dad' and he had to tell the children something. *Learner 2* (L2) first looked around in thought and said, "Where's my car keys?"

In the first sequence – *Task 1* of the instructional practice T4 transmits firstly, that there exists a difference between the spoken word and the written word. For example, "… it's different when you write it…now we are going to write sentences in the correct direct speech". She inferred the evaluative criteria of writing direct speech. Secondly, she emphasized "today-we are going to write sentences in the direct speech". T4's control on communicating the lesson objectives to her learners corresponds to strong framing because at the outset her learners were potentially prepared to learn how to "write direct speech". Implicitly, evaluative criteria were also unfolded when she explained that there is a difference between writing and speaking.

In the evaluative context of the instructional practice, the framing of evaluative criteria corresponded to very strong and to strong framing. The strength of framing in this task was attributed to the way she constantly called learners to the board to

write sentences and punctuate it in the transmission-acquisition process. As the lesson progressed, the evaluative criteria of writing sentences into direct speech were clearly explicated. For example:

> Right you see we write the word "write' with a capital letter. Then there is something very important to write in and that something we call quotation marks. What we call it?

Within the evaluative context, T4 wrote the punctuation marks and its explanations progressively while teaching. In a block that was drawn on the left hand corner of the board, she wrote the punctuation marks that were under discussion (see *Figure 1*).

Capital letters
Begin a sentence and after comma,
Quotations marks or inverted commas – "Opening Closing"
Question mark - ?
Exclamation mark - !
Comma (,) place after the word said / asked / replied
Fullstop (.)

Figure 1: Punctuation on the Blackboard.

Considering the quality of questions, the following excerpt demonstrates the strength of evaluative criteria of feedback in the instructional discourse of questions and answers.

T4: These are opening quotation marks (writes it on the board) and these are closing quotation marks (teacher writes it on the board)This is where you place the quotation marks – in front of Write and Work". Can you see?
***Class*:** Ye…ssss Ma…m.

***T4*:** The teacher, Samkelo was very angry when she spoke. Did you hear her?

***Class*:** Ye…sss Mam.

T4: So what punctuation mark do we put? Is it a question mark or what?

Samkelo: An exclamation mark.

T4: Go…d Samkelo – we put an exclamation mark then we close inverted commas or quotation marks. Did you hear I said inverted commas and quotation marks – it is the same thing?

T4: Right this is a correct sentence of direct speech.

(*Teacher points at the next sentence written on the board)*

Let's read the next sentence.

Dad asked

What do I do after dad asked? Who can tell me?

L1: You put a comma.

T4: Very good you put a comma

(Teacher places the comma after the word asked).

What do you do next?

L2: You must open quotation marks.

T4: Very good you must put the quotation marks in front of the word and closing quotation marks at the end of what dad said. Who can tell me what is missing.

L3: Exclamation marks

T4: Are we sure it is an exclamation mark? Samkelo

No mam you put a question mark.

T4: Why a question mark? Why not an exclamation marks?

Samkelo: Mam, because when you shouting you use a exclamation mark and when you ask a question you use a question mark and Dad is asking a question.

T4: Yes Samkelo, you are correct we will put a question mark because Dad is asking a question and not an exclamation mark because Dad is not shouting. Do you all understand? Come and write it (teacher gives Samkelo the chalk – Samkelo fills in the remainder of the punctuation marks to the sentence.

Is it correct direct speech?

Class: Yesssssss Ma..dam

The questions were pertinent and stimulated thinking. For example when L3 responded that an exclamation mark was needed, Teacher 3 crossed- assessed by asking L3 if he was sure of the answer. When Samekelo, interjected and responded negatively. T4 requested from Samekelo a reason for indicating that the exclamation mark was incorrect. The realization of good question techniques was a spontaneous act and befitted the requirements of formative assessment. The modality of questioning, firstly corroborated high level questioning to stimulate thinking and secondly, the modality of feedback to learners' responses, clarified misconceptions and provided deep understanding of the knowledge. Although she occasionally accepted choral answers, she had pointed to different learners to respond to questions, or to come forward to complete sentences on the board.

Furthermore, in the activity sequence of the lesson, she gave her learners two activities on one worksheet. While the learners were engaged in the first activity, T4 walked around to observe them. She gave feedback and guidance to individual pairs as the need arose. After a short while T4 called upon learners to punctuate the sentences on the board. Those sentences were the same ones that were on the worksheets. Immediately after a learner had written the sentence on the board, she would ask the class to assess the sentence. T4 in collaboration with the learners verbally identified the correctness and incorrectness of the written sentence. If the sentence was incorrect the learners would correct the sentence as per the class and teachers guidance. Once the sentence on the board was reviewed, the learners were given time to check their own sentence before moving to the next sentence. By the end of the class activity all the sentences were reviewed and responded to by the

class and self-corrected individually. The mode of reviewing each sentence before moving to the next sentence enhanced the possibility of learners not repeating mistakes.

Only after the class activity was corrected did she give the learners worksheets on direct speech they had to complete individually. She then collected the worksheets and assessed them. The activity was not for recording purposes but for the purpose of assessing learners' understanding of the knowledge and skills. In resonance with the conceptual framework explicit evaluative criteria regulates learners potentially to develop a deep understanding of acquisition of knowledge. The data clearly showed that T4 integrated evaluation in the acquisition-transmission process; and provided constructive feedback throughout the lessons. Implicitly it was noted that her aim was to improve learners' understanding of writing direct speech. The modality and application of evaluation alongside instruction matched to the explanations provided in the conceptual framework of this study. Thus her behaviour in terms of Bernstein's concept of framing of evaluative criteria and of feedback alongside instruction resonated with very strong to strong framing.

5.5.2 Analyses and Findings of the Interview

T4[3] was very clear and bold in the way she spoke. She showed confidence and did not hesitate to answer questions. After a short discussion of her biographical details she said:

> Formative assessment is a way of finding out how children understand the concept you have taught. And then use the information to help correct and improve their work.

Her explanation matches the definitions and descriptions presented in the literature review and conceptual framework of this study. This implied that T4 showed a clear understanding of the formative assessment. Her response inferred that the strength

[3] It is important to take cognizant of the point that I had only realized that T4 was trained in Zimbabwe after she had completed the biographical interview.

of framing her understanding of the concept, formative assessment, corresponded to strong framing.

> I plan in the introduction for learners to know what they are expected to know. I Then I plan my teaching …Plan for individual work to see if learners understand what I have been teaching. Then I give time to help them if there is a problem. Sometimes I can't because of time [constraints].

Considering that she planned "to see if learners understand" clearly conferred with the underlying principle grounded in formative assessment — to deepen learners understanding of the acquired knowledge. However there was a gap in view of her response 'I plan for individual work" compared to the data obtained in the class observations — Zizi and Jo were two learners who struggled with the activity. She had given them the same activity to complete as the other learners. Zizi and Jo's competence levels were not considered in the planning process. However there is strong evidence that she provided constructive verbal feedback to her learners where she focused on learners' understanding of the knowledge taught. The study indicates that T4 was inclined towards using and understanding formative assessment.

> Well I use peer assessment, group assessment, individual assessment and my assessment. It depends on the progression of the lesson. I believe that the learners must understand the work. Teaching is not about rushing through the lesson. So I… according to how the learners progress – I use techniques appropriate at the time. You could see in my lesson – first I had to use peer assessment –…but I also used questions and answer method.

This teacher clearly showed that she had an understanding of when and how to integrate peer assessment and self-assessment. She employed the question and answer technique in the pedagogic process. She believed that her learners' understanding was of importance. Furthermore it is evident that T4 had a clear understanding of the difference between summative assessment and formative assessment because she clearly stated that she only record marks that are required for progression. Her discussion on examinations showed how she understood the

difference between summative and formative assessment. T4 observed: “Formative assessment is the key to all assessment. The examination is not the key to final assessment. Children must have hands on activities. How do you prepare them for the final exam if you do not use formative assessment?”

T4 also mentioned that she used peer-assessment, self-assessment and educator-assessment during the teaching and learning process to make certain that her learners understood what they were doing. Her responses provided strong evidence that she had a good understanding that formative assessment prepares the learners for summative assessment. Thus the strength of framing of understanding formative assessment corresponds to very strong framing. In respect of her experience in using formative assessment, she claimed to have learnt of formative assessment in her studies. However, she claimed that time constraints could be an obstacle in trying to improve the quality of learning of every child who needed it.

5.5.3 Document Analyses: Written Feedback to Learners

5.5.3.1 Notations, codes and comments were decoded from the teachers marking texts.

a) Criteria for Marking: Gives no marks

b) System of Notations used by the teacher to mark the learners work

Notation	Meaning
√	Ticks correct answers

c) Type of discursive comments: wrote “tried” on one learners work.

She filled in with a colour pen the missing punctuation marks.

Teacher Code	Result	Strength	Code of framing
T3	16F-	Weak	F--

Table 19: Summary of Data analyses for written feedback for T4

The data as presented in *Table 19*, illustrates that the degree of framing of evaluative criteria of written feedback corresponds to weak framing. She only used ticks for work that was correct but she corrected every single incorrect sentence in red ink. Her corrections were not followed by any comment. Learners who showed little or no understanding were not given feedback as to why the sentences were corrected. Finally, given that T4 showed an understanding of formative assessment and practiced formative assessment in the instruction process she still lacked the skills in using written feedback as required of formative assessment.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the data analyses and the findings of four teachers at various levels of data collection: interviews, observation and document analysis. In the next chapter I present my interpretation of the findings.

CHAPTER 6

INTERPRETATION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Firstly, this chapter deals with the interpretation of the findings in response to the three research questions:

d) How do teachers practice formative assessment in the instruction process?
e) What is the teachers' understanding of formative assessment? And,
f) How do teachers experience formative assessment?

The findings that are presented in chapter 5 will be cited and juxtaposed with the theory of formative assessment to present a coherent discussion. Secondly, it also presents the conclusion of the thesis, which includes a summary of the key findings to answer the three research questions above. Thirdly, the chapter presents the recommendations, and concludes with the limitations of the study.

6.2 How Teachers Practice Formative Assessment?

The teachers' practices of formative assessment were inferred from the analyses. I interpret their practices using Bernstein's acquisition-evaluation-transmission process (Bernstein, 1990). The key message of the model, which should translate in teachers' classroom practice, is the notion of explicitness of evaluative criteria (*ibid*). The Explicitness of evaluative criteria in the instructional discourse requires that learners know why (lesson objectives) and what (evaluative criteria) is required of them in the instructional discourse (Black and Wiliam, 2002).

In this study when considering the 'why' or the explicitness of the objectives of the lesson, most of the teachers inferred a degree of weak framing because they did not make learners aware of the learning goals from the outset. Consequently learners were not clear at the outset what they were expected to know, that is, the learners

were not aware of what the teachers were going to assess. Learners were working towards a vaguely understood or a misunderstood set of goals or outcomes until much later in the transmission process. For example, the Lash (T1) had set down as her objective that the learners would be able to write a dialogue. She defined the concept 'dialogue' as part of her lesson. But, she assessed their understanding of the concept by using role play. The role play activity continued for almost the entire lesson. It is possible that during the instruction process her learners could have been under the impression that they were expected to orally role-play dialogues. It was only when the class was involved in the written activity session, did she make clear to the learners that they were to write the dialogue. The possibility of her learners' preparedness of writing a dialogue early in the instruction process was implicit.

The second teacher (T2) communicated the objectives of her lesson to her learners when she gave them the written activity. The objectives were highlighted only once in the lesson, just prior to the application activity. When she handed out the activity worksheets to the learners she said, "Write your dialogues or conversations". Even though the instructions and objectives were clearly stated on the board, the teacher had not alerted her learners of the statements on the boards. She used role-play to evaluate her learners' understanding of the concept 'dialogue'. Her introduction at the beginning of the lesson might have led her learners to think that they were going to be assessed on a verbal presentation.

T3 had a long drawn out introduction that lasted almost an hour. Only when the learners were about to start the activity, did she mention that the objective of the lesson was to describe the items that were placed on their tables. She focused more on identifying objects instead of describing the objects. She also put her learners' to think that the object of the lesson was to identify identifying objects.

T4 was the only one who explained to the class from the onset what they were expected to do, namely to "write sentences in correct direct speech". Given that her

learners perceived very early in the lesson that there task was to learn how to write sentences in the direct speech, they worked towards that knowledge goal.

The opening classroom assessment environment of the first three teachers is perceived as teachers behaving according to the first situation (F-) described in *Table 2* (a) of the methodology chapter and, the fourth teacher behaved according to the last two situations (F++/+). It can be concluded that these teachers who corresponded to weak framing (F-) are either uninformed of how lesson objectives translates in the practice of formative assessment or they have parenthetically not applied it to their practice. On the other hand, the fourth teacher was cognizant of the knowledge of presenting the goals early in the lesson and successfully applied the skill to her practice.

To ratify the interpretation of their practice of evaluative criteria of lesson objectives, I wish to decode their interview responses into the discussion. When the teachers were asked, how they plan for formative assessment, the underlying aim was to determine teachers' understanding of the key features that frame formative assessment (evaluative criteria of objectives, feedback and transmission).

> ***T1:*** 'Basically I do a lot of written work…I develop the written skills by repetition…'
>
> ***T2:*** 'Okay first of all what I'll do – the topic that'll use- I'll look at the child's standard before I present the lesson…'
>
> ***T3:*** 'We just have to complete a part of the learning area and you assess'.
>
> ***T4:*** 'I plan in the introduction for learners to know what they are expected to know'.

The first three teachers spoke of issues other than that of alerting their learners to the knowledge they should acquire, therefore there control on communicating the message of explicit lesson objectives corresponded weak framing. The analyses shows that they correspond to framing codes (2F-) below the benchmark —

described in Chapter Four. Thus, this implied that they were not aware of the significance of the evaluative criteria of lesson objectives in classroom practice. The fourth teacher, however, showed strength of framing of 3F+ which is within the benchmark of understanding formative assessment (*Table 8).* She clearly stated that she planned to inform her learners of the knowledge that they were required to achieve. Given that T4's response, "…what they are expected to know" inferred her understanding of the significance of learners realizing the lesson objectives at the opening of the practice session. Her strength of control on communicating the message was so clear and explicit, indicating that her interview response complemented her actual classroom practice.

It is arguable that that most teachers do not apply the skill of evaluative criteria to lesson objectives in the instructional practice because they have not conceptualized the significance of this characteristic. The practice of this key feature is embedded into broader characteristic, evaluative criteria (Bernstein, 1990). In the evaluative context of practicing formative assessment, teachers' explicitness of evaluative criteria was analysed. Note that "evaluative Criteria are rules that regulate the extent to which the legitimate text is made explicit to the acquirer" (Morais, 2002, p. 560). In this study, the findings illustrates that most teachers implicitly transmitted the evaluative criteria in the instructional process, and in some instances teachers' evaluative criteria were confusing because the message was unclear to the learners.

Two teachers exhibited three different sets of evaluative criteria. The first set was unfolded in the transmission–acquisition process of mediating the knowledge to her learners. For example, in the instructional practice she told her learners that they should make the dialogue 'real', they should start with capital letters, and should skip a line after each speaker. During the activity task she referred the learners to the printed criteria on the worksheet. However, their explanation of the printed marking criteria differed from the text. The questions that arise are:

> Were her learners potentially aware of the knowledge – evaluative criteria transmitted, for example, "make it real…leave a line…", or were they

> suddenly expected to translate the new evaluative criteria that was explained, by the way, during the activity session? Did they focus on the marking criteria that were printed on the worksheet?

The written evaluative criteria with a continuum of marks conflicted with what the teachers had mentioned verbally. On this basis, I concluded that two teachers had overlooked the evaluative criteria that they had introduced during the instructional discourse. This implies that they perceived the marking criteria as a different entity from the acquisition–transmission process.

T2, informed her learners of the marking criteria at the end of the second lesson. By then the learners had already completed most of the activity. There is need to emphasise that, the evaluative criteria that both T1 and T2 transmitted during the practice activity did not correspond to the actual lesson instruction. The evaluative criteria reflecting the following: Grammar-10, Originality-5; Relevance to topic-5 were not consistent with the knowledge text that was revealed in the instructional practice.

Taking into consideration the above discussion, the evaluative criteria of T1 and T2's lessons should have assessed the learners' acquisition of knowledge on the grounds of transmission. For example, the criteria could have been listed the following: the names of the speakers should be clearly stated: each speaker should be written on a separate line; the dialogue should be coherent — the speaker's discussion is on one topic only.

In the acquisition-evaluation-transmission process, T3 had her learners engaged in activities that involved the use of concrete aids to teach how to write adjectives. For example, her learners described the objects that were placed in their group (Bangles) Group 1 said "gold bangles". She also had large pictures pinned on the chalkboard which her learners had to describe. Her learners looked at the picture and described the colour, the race and she corrected them if the descriptions were incorrect. Yet in the actual activity her learners had to complete sentences by filling in the

appropriate descriptive word. They had no concrete or visual guidance to complete the activity. There was no link between the evaluative criteria unfolded in transmission-acquisition process and the actual activity.

T3's instructional discourse progressively unfolded the evaluative criteria of writing sentences in direct speech. Her learners were potentially preparing to achieve the evaluative criteria in the application activity. Within the evaluative context most of the teachers practiced double standards of evaluative criteria. In the transmission–acquisition process the content knowledge differed to the marking criteria. Thus, increasing the possibility of confusing learners in terms of the knowledge they were required to acquire. The strength of framing evaluative criteria of evaluative criteria is therefore analysed as weak for most of the teachers. It would seem then, that in relation to evaluative criteria, firstly, most teachers do not understand the purpose of evaluative criteria, secondly, teachers do not understand how to use evaluative criteria and thirdly they prefer assessing learners by allocating marks.

In continuance of the evaluative context the investigation of the written feedback inferred from the text the teachers produced when correcting the application activities. The analyses of three teachers that are T1, T2 and T3 demonstrated strength of weak framing of evaluative criteria of written feedback. The findings are interpreted summarised below:

The modality of discursive feedback that was practiced by T1 and T2 is consistent with the traditional approach where global marks were given to learners. The product of learning was emphasised rather than the realisation of the acquired knowledge. For example, T1 and T2 both emphasised the mark allocation, but Lash particularly stressed the point of achieving 20/20, when she asked her learners 'would you like to get 20 out of 20?' Also, they circled words out-of-context and made statements without giving reasons for these graphic notations. T1 and T2 used ticks and crosses with comments such as 'good', 'can do better' and 'well done'. The comments 'can do better' can be interpreted variously; for instance, the learner has

the potential to understand the knowledge or the learner understands the knowledge but is careless. One can give such a statement to many interpretations. This inferred the weakening of the strength of control on communicating the graphic notations and traditional statements that express a variety of views. An interesting analogy of Lash and T2 is that they ignored the written criteria and allotted marks globally. For example Tom obtained a mark of 16/20 but there was no indication of how the aggregate of 16 was determined.

The above raises the following questions: Are teachers skilled in acknowledging the evaluative criteria of their lessons or do they view assessment and instruction as two different entities? The analogy confirms that the strength of framing evaluative criteria corresponds to weak framing because there is no relation between the evaluative criteria of the instructional process and the marking criteria of the application activities.

T3 had no written evaluative criteria planned. She told the learners that they had to complete the sentences by filling in the correct adjective and she evaluated the activity by using notations that are presented in Chapter 5. The modality of feedback corresponded to weak framing conferring a lack of skills in practicing formative assessment. T4's analogy of a degree of strong framing inferred that she successfully evaluated the realization of knowledge text without allotting marks but by providing graphic feedback. T4 made comment such as *tried* for a very weak learner but tediously corrected every learner's work in red ink without providing guidelines as to why she had corrected the work. For example where learners had failed to insert the correct punctuation marks in the sentences she inserted it with red ink. In formative assessment the corrections might not inform the learners why the punctuation was necessary (Lillis and Turner, 2001). There were no guidelines provided to those learners to help them correct their work. However T4 made the criteria explicit to her learners. She wrote the criteria on the chalkboard and consistently reminded the learners of what they were expected to do: insert quotation marks at the beginning and end of the spoken words; a comma after 'said'

or ‘asked’, a full stop at the end of the sentence, the use of ‘that’; and capital letters. No marks were attached to the criteria. The criteria were consistent with the objectives and gave the learners a clear indication of what they were learning. This indicates the strength of feedback corresponded to strong framing. One may argue, in consideration of the above discussion, that the assessment practices alongside the instructional process are tacit.

Good questions can be useful to identify the depth of learners understanding of the knowledge acquired and could help in determining the competence levels of learners and ways that the teacher could help learners improve learners’ competencies. Through talk learners reveal what they understand and this could help teachers support learning throughout the instruction process (QCA, 1999).

All the teachers who participated in the study used question and answers. However, three teachers used questions that required ‘yes or no’ answers. T1, T2 and T4 used questions to establish whether the whole class understood the work choral answers. A concern that arises from this is whether all the learners really understood. Chorused answer creates vacuum where weaker learners, who lacks understanding and need more support, remain hidden and unacknowledged.

Gipps (1999) observes that knowing the learners well is crucial in the assessment process since it provides the teacher with information on how to assess. T4 used the question and answer method to determine her learners’ understanding of the knowledge, but she showed that she knew her learners. At one point when she asked a question, but politely told Samkelo, a bright learner, ‘let’s give someone else a chance [to answer]’. In view of the above, three of the teachers used low – levels of questioning. The questions were not stimulating and thought provoking. Those teachers who accepted ‘yes or no’ answers did not provide support to learners — yes or no answers were very often chorused by the class. Black and Wiliam, (2002) observe that although the teachers in the study were convinced that questioning techniques helped them establish learner performance during the instruction

process, they failed to understand that in formative assessment the quality of questions determines the level at which learners are performing.

So with respect to findings, the strengths of framing of teachers' observational feedback corresponded to strong framing because teachers showed explicit understanding of how to provide feedback to learners when they were engaged in classroom written activities. The modes of observation and interaction show that teachers' evaluated with the aim of improving the quality of the learners' learning. However verbal feedback was only used at that point of transmission-acquisition. This suggests that providing limited written feedback that is unclear and non-stimulating will not motivate learners to improve the quality of their work, which in turn will hinder their understanding and growth of knowledge.

It seems that the results of the three South African teachers illustrated the use of quality verbal feedback during the written activity session, whilst the Zimbabwean teacher integrated effective verbal feedback throughout the pedagogic process. Given that the three teachers were not so active in verbal feedback during the class discussions, they had to tediously walk around the class observing every single learner. But in the larger classes and given time constraints, it was practically impossible to observe every learner.

6.3 Teachers' Understanding of Formative Assessment?

Most of the teachers lacked insight and clarity regarding formative assessment. Lash, explained that formative assessment is 'formal or informal assessment'. Theoretically, formal assessment is used to assess the product of learning, whereas informal assessment occurs during the pedagogical process to establish learners' understanding — Formative assessment is informal assessment (Brown, 2004).. The theory that frames formative assessment shows that informal assessment becomes 'formative' when the teacher uses assessment to improve learning (Black and

Wiliam, 2002). Lash's explanation of formative assessment indicates that she did not understand the concept.

The approach that Lash used in planning formative assessment was inclined towards a traditional approach to assessment. The characteristics of the traditional approach include rote learning, memorizing knowledge and correcting incorrect work without focusing on understanding. These characteristics manifest in Lash's discussion of formative assessment. She observes, 'if they keep making mistakes with punctuation and past tense… I get my learners to orally repeat the correct work … oral repetition works.' When a teacher assesses how much learners remember as opposed to how much learners understand, the assessment process conforms to a more traditional approach (Shepard, 2000).

Lash also showed uncertainty in how she understood the different techniques required in formative assessment. She seemed to confuse pedagogy with assessment. When she claimed that the 'use of role-play make her learners understand…' Her response showed that she employed role play as a teaching aid, but failed to explain how she used role-play to assess her learners' understanding. Lash also mentioned techniques like 'debates' and 'research' that she used to teach her learners but Lash did not discuss any technique that was characteristic of formative assessment (see Chapter Two). This indicates that Lash had no clear understanding of the features that are required in formative assessment. It is arguable that debates and role-plays are techniques that are used in formative assessment. The teacher described those techniques as instructional methods — she taught the concept 'dialogue' using role play. If she had used role-play to assess how her learners understood the concept — and then used the outcome of the assessment to improve their understanding it would have been formative assessment (Black and Wiliam, 2001). In short, Lash was not conversant with assessment terminology, she lacked understanding of formative assessment; it seems to me that her mind-set was inclined towards traditional assessment rather than formative assessment.

T2 displayed some confusion about the terminology related to assessment. In attempting to explain her understanding of the concept she said, '…it is a baseline assessment… and formative is like a diagnostic assessment…' According to Rowntree (1987) baseline assessments are conducted at the beginning of the year or phase to establish the competence levels of learners; and diagnostic assessments are used to identify barriers to learning. In bringing the terms 'baseline' and 'diagnostic 'into the discussion on formative assessments she displayed her lack of understanding. Although those concepts were outside the domain of the study and were not probed, it is clear that T2 simply articulated terms that evidence shows she did not understand. She used the term assessment in a very generic sense without understanding the function or role different assessments had.

T2 showed no understanding of how to plan for formative assessment. She said 'I present the lesson… it has to be realistic and it has to be child orientated. I can't assess a child on what he doesn't know'. Firstly her planning revolved around instructional methods to enable learners to understand the content. Furthermore her notion of assessment did not cohere with the features of formative assessment. Hence I was unable to determine what and how she planned assessment. Secondly, her understanding of assessment was vague — assessment is gathering information about learners' work and evaluating the information to judge the quality of learners' learning (Shepard, 2000).

T2's discussion of the techniques she used for formative assessment indicated that she had a vague understanding of the concepts that frame formative assessment. She said, 'The assessment techniques I use are rubrics and I use marks in the rubrics'. A rubric is a tool comprising a list of criteria against which the objectives are measured to determine learners' levels of competencies (Rowntree, 1987) — it is not a technique. A technique is a strategy or a method that one would use to assess learners' performance; for example, peer assessment, self-assessment, question and answer techniques, teacher evaluation (*ibid*). Rubrics can be used in any or all of the

techniques. For example a teacher may use a rubric in self-assessment or peer assessment. She did not articulate a clear understanding of what typifies formative assessment.

T3 showed at the outset that she was unclear of the difference between formative assessment and summative assessment. She said 'My understanding of formative assessment is assessing the learners in all the work they have to do to see if they understand the work you have done with them and it has to be formal like written tests, worksheets and so on'. Firstly, T3's use of the word "formal" showed that she viewed formative assessment as a formal exercise. Formal assessment is conducted at the end of a topic or experience known as summative assessment. Summative assessment is distinct from formative assessment since it is done during the teaching and learning process (Black and Wiliam, 2001). Secondly, her notion of tests showed that she believed that all tests are formal. Written tests can be informal, (Shohamy, 2000) for example, after T3 taught the lesson on adjectives she could have given her learners a test, which could have assessed the quality of learning. The analysis of the test could have been used to inform learners of the level of their competency. But when tests are given only to establish learners understanding without further feedback or interventions it is not formative (Black and Wiliam, 2001). Her articulation of the concept formative assessment evinced that she was confused and lacked the understanding of formative assessment. She gave no indication that formative assessment was part of the teaching process to improve the quality of the knowledge (Black and Wiliam, 2001).

T3's response to how she planned for formative assessment showed that she only planned for summative assessments. There was no evidence of how she planned for formative assessment. Her words 'we have to complete a part of the learning area and you assess…' demonstrates that she only assesses at the end of learning. Her knowledge does not reflect her understanding of formative assessment — assessment integrated in the instruction process to gather information that is used to help learners improve on what they do not understand (Vandeyar and Killen, 2003).

In the discussion T3's showed that she was unsure, firstly of the techniques and tools and secondly the types of assessments employed. She referred to the techniques of assessments as 'rubrics, tests, portfolios and checklists.' A portfolio is a type of assessment used at the end of a learning experience to assess the competences of various skills and knowledge that a learner acquired (Modiba and Nsibande, 2007). Her response did not match correspond to the features that frame formative assessment. In summary, the study showed that she had no understanding of the terminologies used in formative assessment; she conflated formative and summative assessments, portfolios and tests. She also could not distinguish between assessment tools and techniques.

Finally, T4, expressed an understanding of formative assessment. She said '[its] a way of finding out how children understand the concept … taught … if there are problems, help them to understand the work… Grade 4's …called them to the board and let everyone assess if they understand the work'. Her description showed that formative assessment assessed understanding; and then the role of the teacher is to guide the learners towards understanding the knowledge and therefore learning.

Although T4 showed an understanding of the concept in her discussion as well as in her practice, she lacked skills in written feedback. Her understanding of formative assessment is distinct when she mentions that in the introduction of her lessons she ensures that her learners 'know what they are expected to know'. In other words, she ensured that her learners were aware of the learning goals. However, she did not plan different teaching methods for those learners who were struggling. She employed the same strategies for all learners. In formative assessment, when a teacher identifies that there are learners who struggle to grasp knowledge, the teacher should adapt the teaching methods to the learning needs (Black and Wiliam, 2001).

In summary, three of the teachers discussed above showed that their depth of understanding formative assessment corresponded to weak framing since it lacked clarity, whilst only one teacher showed a degree of stronger framing based on her understanding of formative assessment. Most of the teachers lacked the skill to differentiate between the different terminologies used in formative assessment. All the teachers lacked the skills to plan for formative assessment. But T4 showed better understanding of how to use formative assessment in her lessons.

6.4 Teachers' Practice of Formative Assessment

Teachers experienced challenges with large classes, lack of time and learners who worked slower than expected. So they were unable to assess every weak learner effectively. In addition, some teachers resented peer assessment as it either resulted in peer conflicts or the results were unreliable. Their experiences with ticks, crosses and scores were more reliable then professional judgment.

Lash used peer assessment only in class activities because she believed that learners cheat in peer and self-assessment – 'it was not reliable', She further claimed that children are not as serious about work as those of three or four years ago. She added, 'so I'm still of the old [school], I mark myself. It is a lot of marking for me. But it helps a lot — it helps the child for the final tests.' The teacher experiences challenges with peer assessment probably because she had no understanding of how to use peer assessment effectively in line with the framework of formative assessment. One of the advantages of peer assessment is that realisation of own competence levels (Black and Wiliam, 2002). Since she had no knowledge of the benefits of peer assessment she relied on her old tradition methods of marking.

Lash has a huge marking load because of her large classes. The large classes could have prevented her from assessing her learners formatively. Formative assessment requires an enormous amount of time that she did not have. In addition, she said that Grade 4 learners were young and required constant assistance so it was

exhausting to walk around for every lesson — 'but if I don't walk around I will never know how they perform.' During class activities this teacher was very active in providing immediate feedback to improve her learners' work. Given that she had only used effective feedback at one point in her lesson is evident that she was not trained in formative assessment. Formative assessment should be integrated throughout the instructional process. The inadequate training that she received can be underpinned when she claimed that she read about it vaguely in the policy document. The National Policy on Assessment (NPA, 2002) seems to be the teacher's guide to assessment. However, formative assessment is at best vaguely explained in the document, an explanation that is certainly not adequate to train teachers or be effective as a policy requirement. Formative assessment requires highly skilled teachers and so training is important (Modiba, and Nsibande, 2007).

T2 faced many challenges. Firstly, her main problem was that many learners forget what to do no matter how many times she tried to help them. Thus inferring that T2 was not aware that formative assessment can improve standards and maximize potential (Black and Wiliam, 2002). Secondly, she claimed that learners took very long to complete tasks. She used a marking rubric to follow when completing the activity but most did not fare well on the task. A matter of concern is that when she discovered that her learners had not achieved the goals she had set for them, she made no attempt to change her teaching strategies. If she had been skilled in using formative assessment, she would have reviewed her teaching methods and might have experienced better results. Thirdly with peer assessment, she experienced that peers did not want to accept that they were wrong. They constantly argued about peer assessment — even though she gave learners guidelines to assess against. As mentioned earlier, peer assessment enables learners to discover their own potentials and understanding of the knowledge (QCA, 1999). If she was acquainted with formative assessment, she would have alerted her learners of the benefits of peer assessment; hence, she would have inculcated strong values and attitudes in peer assessment.

T3 said, ‘our learners fail to understand English. Fortunately, I can speak Zulu, Xhosa and so on. So I explain to learners in their own language. Most learners understand when you are patient; give them extra time and extra homework. I have just completed my ACE course and I learnt a lot about assessing learners work using rubrics and check lists etc.’ She claimed that she had to be very patient when teaching Grade 4 learners because they worked very slowly and needed much time. She said that she tried to accommodate all her learners and ensured that learners were adequately assessed by using question and answer or observation methods. T3 also claimed to have learned about formative assessment in her ACE (Advance Certificate in Education) course.

T4 was very enthusiastic about the new approach to assessment. When she was asked to elaborate her experiences, she said that ‘Formative assessment is the key to all assessment which leads to the final assessment. Children must understand the work. The examination is not the key to have hands on activities. How do you prepare them for the final exam if you do not use formative assessment? It is best to assess in class; it’s reliable. I have learnt of formative assessment in my teaching studies.’

T4’s responses were congruent with her practice. She showed implementation of the assessment process during the teaching and learning process. She also faced severe time constraints. The large classes made it difficult for her to address individual needs. Therefore she relied on group and pair work. She paired a weaker learner with a brighter learner so that the weaker learners did not feel neglected and that those learners were able to receive support immediately. She claimed that when she made learners work individually, which she does at times, she was unable to reach all the weak learners. Many times those learners were overlooked. She claimed that weak learners were sometimes identified when it was time for progression. Hence her experience of pairing learners helped to reach out to many learners’ needs. She also claimed that Grade 4 learners needed plenty of time so she was forced to slow down the pace of her teaching to ensure that learners understood the work. It was

necessary to constantly assess the progress of her learners' acquisition of knowledge whilst she was teaching.

T4's approach to assessment revealed that she understood and used formative assessment in her practice She used aspects of peer assessment, changing teaching strategies and pacing the work to suit the needs of the learners quite effectively in her teaching practices.

According to Vandeyar and Killen (2007, p.101) "the reluctance of many South African educators to change their assessment practices in response to new policies and curriculum guidelines may be due to their ingrained conceptions of assessment". This study has argued that teachers were not reluctant to change their assessment approach. Evidence showed that teachers were aware that they had to assess their learners' understanding. However, they lacked the skills in using formative assessment. Hence the teachers who are not effectively trained to assess formatively were unable to implement the new assessment process. The evidence showed that the teacher trained in Zimbabwe had no difficulty in implementing the new assessment strategies whilst the South African teachers lacked the understanding of the new assessment process. In addition, Black and Wiliam (2001) and Vandeyar and Killen (2007) findings showed that teachers who lacked the understanding of the new approach to assessment lack the skills in applying it in classroom practice. Their findings are congruent with the findings of this study. The teacher who had an understanding of formative assessment used the assessment approach whilst those teachers who lacked the understanding of formative assessment had not used it in their practice.

This study has attempted to show that teachers want their learners to understand, but they don't use assessment and feedback effectively to ensure that learners understand (Black and Wiliam, 2002). Another finding was the use of marks to assess learners. Shepard's (2000) found that teachers preferred a continuum of marks because it was an easier method to gauge learner performance. The findings

also show that three out of the four teachers preferred to use marks for all the activities because it was easier to assess their learner's progress with marks rather than with written feedback.

6.5 CONCLUSION

6.5.1 Overview

This study explored formative assessment in classroom practice. Short classroom observation sessions, analysis of teachers' written feedback to learners; and short interview sessions with four Grade 4 English teachers were used to determine:

- What the teachers' understanding of formative assessment is?
- How teachers experience formative assessment?
- How teachers use formative assessment in the instruction process?

The data was analysed using Morais' theory of evaluative criteria which in turn is based on Bernstein's concept of framing. The findings were interpreted within the context of Bernstein's theory of instructional practice, that is, acquisition-evaluation-transmission where the evaluative criteria is at the core of instruction within the evaluative context.

An overarching interpretation of this study show that the three respondents who were trained in South Africa showed different levels of misperceptions in the modalities of practicing and administering formative assessment. In contrast, the teacher who was trained in Zimbabwe transmitted knowledge within an evaluative context as described by Bernstein (1990) in Chapter Four. This difference may be explained by different teacher education systems.

Two teachers were more recently qualified in post-apartheid South Africa while Lash had been trained and qualified during the apartheid era. T4 was trained as a teacher in Zimbabwe. One may argue that teacher training within the scope of the post-apartheid era has teachers corresponding to a stronger degree of framing

evaluative criteria in instruction. In view of the above, this study has shown the following:

a) That race and age were factors that did not influence teachers' lack of understanding and skills in using of formative assessment.
b) That the training period of the teachers had no impact on the way they understood or used formative assessment.
c) Teachers are not reluctant to use the new approach to assessment. They acknowledge that assessing learners during the teaching process is crucial in identifying learners' understanding of the skills and knowledge. Teachers are aware that learner achievement and understanding of the knowledge and skills are important.

6.5.2 Key Emergent Ideas

While the teacher who had a good understanding of formative assessment, conceptualized the process of explicit evaluative criteria in the context of transmission and acquisition, the teachers who did not conceptualize the significance of evaluative criteria in the transmission-acquisition process, were unable to use formative assessment in classroom practice.

However, the interview discussions showed that teachers were not reluctant in the usage of formative assessment methods. They wanted their learners to learn. But one may argue that there were other underlying factors that could have prevented the three South African teachers from effectively using formative assessments, namely, the large classes and time constraints. However, it is necessary to point out that the Zimbabwean teacher was exposed to the same conditions.

Therefore this study concludes that a section of teachers do not understand formative assessment and they still hold on to the traditional assessment methods because they are either poorly trained in the evaluative context of transmission–

acquisition or their mind-set is of the old school of thought. Whether they were trained in the pre or post-apartheid era had no implications on the teachers' understanding of formative assessment.

6.6 Recommendations

The findings of this study may serve as a platform for the Department of Education of South Africa to review the teacher assessment training programmers and to develop skills development programmers to make certain that all teachers are proficient in understanding and using formative assessment in classroom practice. In addition, further investigations could be undertaken at institutions for higher education and teacher training colleges to assist and train teachers in applying the new assessment processes.

Further comparative studies between Zimbabwean and South African teacher training institutes could be undertaken in order to investigate and establish assessment training programmes that will facilitate formative assessment in the South African context. The findings can serve as a body of knowledge for future studies in the field of formative assessment.

6.7 Limitations

A study of this nature is invariably plagued by various limitations. My position as an Education department official impacted on the study. During the study, I observed that the teachers were very formal in their teaching and addressed me in my capacity of an official of the Department of Education even though this study was in no way related to my role in the department. The teachers' response to me in my official capacity instead of that of a researcher could have influenced the findings of my study.

A further constraint was that my research was affected by the on-going teachers' strike action. It was my intention to conduct this study at a primary school in

Soweto that had an all-African management staff, teachers and learners. At the beginning of this study two of the four African teachers who volunteered to participate in the study withdrew. They withdrew because of the industrial strike action that was taking place at the time. As a result I had to find two more participants in a second school.

An added limitation was the limited samples and participants that I had access to. As a novice researcher I did not have the expertise to probe into many of the responses and observations during the interview sessions. During the analysis period the responses of some of the participants were rather vague.

6.8 Final Remark

My journey through this study has been long and arduous. I faced many hurdles along the way as my topic covered too vast an arena. At the end of this study I realize that I had gained valuable insights into the topic, Firstly that formative assessment is a process, not an event that occurs at the end of the year; secondly, that the process requires highly skilled teachers if it is to contribute to the teaching and learning process in general. It seems that teachers are unaware of the skills formative assessment requirements. I hope that this study is a modest contribution towards increasing awareness and highlighting the central role formative assessment can play in enhancing the teaching and learning processes.

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APPENDIX A: OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW ROSTER				
DAY	PARTICIPANT/CODE	ACTIVITY	TIME	DATE
1	All	Meeting	14h30	25.10.2010
2	Teacher 1 (T1)	Lesson1 Observation	9h00-10h00	26.10.2010
3	Teacher 1 (T1)	Lesson2 Observation Interview	11h00-12h00 14h00	27.10.2010
4	Teacher 2 (T2)	Lesson1 Observation	9h00-10h00	28.10.2010
5	Teacher 2 (T2)	Lesson2 Observation Interview	11h00-12h00 14h00	29.10.2010
6	Teacher 3 (T2)	Lesson1 Observation	9h00-10h00	01.11.2010
7	Teacher 3 (T2)	Lesson2 Observation Interview	11h00-12h00 14h00	02.11.2010
8	Teacher 4 (T2)	Lesson1 Observation	9h00-10h00	03.11.2010
9		Lesson2 Observation Interview	11h00-12h00 14h00	04.11.2010
10	Teacher 1&2 (T1 &T2)	Researcher Collect Learners marked activities	14h00-15h00	07.11.2010

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

To establish Teachers' understanding and experiences with formative assessment

1. What is your understanding of the concept formative assessment?

2. How do you plan for formative assessment?

3. What assessment techniques do you use to assess your learners during the lesson and why do you prefer these methods.

4. What are the problems that you experience with formative assessment?

5. How did you gain experience in formative assessment?

Emerging questions might arise from the observations and the Participants interview responses.

APPENDIX C

A Lesson Observation Transcript

Teacher 2 (T2)

Lesson 1

Grade 4b

English: Writing Lesson

Topic:Writing a dialogue

Task 1 –Introduction – Addressing the concept

T2: Good morning class

Class: Goo…d MOR…ning ma…dam

T2: Right, now we spoke about a dialogue when madam Jayshree was here. I want you to listen carefully because when we done I am going to assess whether you understand a dialogue or not. Okay now, what is a dialogue? Who can tell me what is a dialogue?

L1: It's a conversation

T2: Yes good it's a conversation. You'll say "Hi"

It's a conversation. You used a nice word conversation He used a big word – con / ver / sa / tion. What is a conversation?

L2: It is when two people are talking

T2: Yes. It is a conversation between two people. When two…o people talk to each other it is called a con / ver / sa / tion. (*Teacher writes word on board*) Right, it's also called a… dialogue. Right, now tell me, when you talking to someone how do you have this conversation? Some different methods of dialogue we have. Different types of dialogues we have: Dialogues with your aunt or your mum.

L3: You greet and talk?

T2: Let's say your mum and aunt want to have a conversation and they are not together how they can talk to each other?

L4: By phoning her

T2: Yes good — any other method of having a conversation?

L1: Writing letters

T2: Writing letters. Right phoning writing letters are methods of having conversations. We also get e-mails. I'm sure some of you know what's an e-mail and faxes

L3/4: Yes's… e-mail

T2: These are all methods of conversing with the next person. But now we are going to deal with just a dialogue.

Task 2 Method (expanding on the concept)

T2: Now we are only going to talk about dialogues — when two people talk to each other. You hear your mum and dad talk at home isn't it. You hear your brothers and your sister's talk. You yourself when you talk that are a dialogue or a conversation between two people. Even you and your mum talk. Can we live without talking? No we can't. But you change the way you talk to people. You will talk differently to your friends compared to when you talk to your mum and dad.

Class: Ye...s

T2: We are interested in the dialogue between you and a friend.

When you talk to your friends you must also show some respect and values.

L5: You greet your friend first.

T2: Yes, — you greet and talk — but you have different conversations, different dialogues. If you are talking to your aunt how will talk to her? You will greet her with respect. If you greet a friend – how will greet your friend?

L1: You'll say, Hi, how are you?

T2: Yes – You say ''Hi'' or ''Hello'' or you going to greet in any other way that you familiar with. Some of you have some weird ways of greeting. What are these weird ways of greeting? Hi and hello is fine. Yes my darling

L1: When someone greets you say I'm fine thank you.

T2: Yes you say fine thank you, "thank you' is showing respect. Now when you with your mum or so how will you greet. When you with your mum and dad you say mum and dad, when you talk to us you say mam you. You show respect. So when write a dialogue you must know what you going to talk about. But you know that when you talk

with your friend the talk comes naturally, if you went to the mall you talk about the mall to your friend. Now I know that when you go out from here you are going to talk about me. You are going to tell your friends about madam molly, is she strict with us or not. That's what you'll talk about-isn't it about the teachers. Anyway in this dialogue you must talk to your friend properly. You must write it properly. So now I'm going to show you how to write a dialogue properly. Madam has made a worksheet for you and us going to help you as we go along as you need help.

(*Hands out the worksheets to the class*)

Task 3 – Class Activity

L5 Madam one more

T2 Okay here it is. Put that away – come now. Now I want you to take out a pen a pencil and a ruler if you have one. (Learners are given a few moments to take their stationery out.

Now can you all see – this row... there...all of you- I used a ruler and I drew a matgin. Now you are going to write a dialogue. Can you all see?

L3 Yes

T2 You are meeting up with your friend. This morning you got to school and you meeting up with your friend and you having this conversation with your friend.

So you start the conversation. Inside the margin you write your name. (The teacher writes her name in the sample sheet) Can you all see that? Right so you write your name. Then you start your conversation. So what are you going to tell your friend?

L4 I'll greet my friend

T Okay she says she is going to greet her friend — anyone else?

(*No class response*)

Okay you all are going to greet your friends and then / and then? What happens? You're going to start talking to each other.

L4: Ask her, how was her weekend.

T1: Okay imagine I am having a conversation with madam Jayshree. We just met this morning and I am going to say

Hi jay!

Then I'll wait for her to greet me

L3: She'll say hi'

T1 : Ya we also say hi like you. Those people who are talking – come on listen

Then I'm going to write my name first can see I'm writing my name and then I write Hi jay. Then on the next line I write Madam Jayshree's name. Next to her name I write her response. And then I speak again – so I write my name. We show respect when the other speak so we give them a chance to talk. So you start now. Write your name first

(*Teacher pins her chart – example firmly to the board and walks around to check how learners are progressing*)

Okay some of you started writing in you booklets see what you wrote. Okay it seems as if some of you have done it. Now carry on writing your dialogue.

(*As the class work on their own they get very noisy. They are left to write until the end of the session*).

(*Bell Rings*)

T2 Hand in your pages – tomorrow you can carryon in class then I'll collect it to mark.

APPENDIX C — *CONT.*

Teacher 2

Lesson 2

Grade 4b

English Lesson: Writing Skills

Topic: Writing a dialogue (continuation of previous lesson)

–

Task 1 - Introduction

T2: Good morning class. I'm handing out the dialogues to you. You have 10minutes to complete.

(*Teacher walks around during the ten minutes correcting spelling, grammar, structure of certain learners*).

Right you are not talking to your friend you imagined that your friend was talking to you. Isn't it?

–

Task 2 - Mediation

T2: Ok let's get someone who is finished to read theirs. Now you are going to tread your dialogue to the class, you can call a friend to read the friends part.

Okay come Alia.

Alia: How are?

T2: Speak louder so that everyone can hear you. Don't be shy. They are shy.

Rosa: Hi Alia how are you

Alia I'm fine thank you

Rosa How was your holidays?

Alia It was fine.

T2: Very good, Rosa used good language, but they struggled to read. Why do you think Rosa and Alia were struggling?

Alia: Because she didn't write the names so we didn't know what to read.

Task 3 Application Activity

T2: Yes it is important to know who is speaking. You must write the person's name first then what they say.

Is there anyone who still needs to know more about the dialogue? Look at the worksheet on top it gives you the criteria, grammar 10 punctuation, 5 originality 5…

Princess you are very quiet. Let me see- do your work here ok. Remember I am going to collect the page and I'm going to mark it. You can use two different colours to show the two different speakers.

L6 Madam Can I write it in rough first.

T2 Yes. Listen everyone – you can first do it in rough before you do it in your book. But make it short.

(*Teacher walks around*)

T2 Mishka first do it here then you do it neatly. Right when the bell rings I am going to collect the dialogues. (*Learners continued working quietly. The teacher walked and assisted learners who did not understand*).

T2 Okay it seems that you all know what to do. Is there anyone who still needs my help?

L7 Nooo

(Bell Rings)

T2 I'm coming around to collect it. You cannot leave without handing in the dialogue.

APPENDIX D

One Transcript of an Interview

Post observation Interview transcript

Teacher 2

Interview Questions and recorded answers

What is your understanding of Formative assessment?

You mean different forms of assessment

Whatever you understand?

Well for me it is first doing a baseline assessment. That's when

Ok once you. Okay first of all you plan your tasks that you going to get your learners to do-to complete and then you start with the baseline. Then you introduce the topic to the learners. It gives us a sense of knowing the knowledge that that child knows about the topic. And then from there the different assessments will follow. That is the baseline and the diagnostic and then putting all of this together we'll get to the information sharing – the formative part of it and then obviously the summative when the child will overall present whatever the task is. I will cover all aspects of assessments you know.

How do you plan for formative assessments in your English Lessons?

Okay first of all what I'll do – the topic that I'll use – ill look at the child's standard before I present the lesson and the relevance. It has to be realistic and it has to be child orientated. I can't assess a child on what he doesn't know. At present I am doing a picture story with them. For them it is the first time that they are doing such an activity and this activity will lead them to the next grades level of creative writing. Here they are not aware that English is broken down into language and writing and literature in the higher grades. So they need to know concepts like what is creative writing. So when I gave them the story I gave them the incidence the first step then the second step but it is an assessment. When I start the learner is not aware of what I'm going to assess. So I started by pasting the pictures on a board and then told them to build a story not a picture description but a story. I told them put yourself in the story put your family in the story and so on.

What assessment techniques do you use?

I use marks and I use a rubric where I include marks in a rubric for presentation.

Do you record all the marks?

Yes all the marks. For example I gave the children to write a speech. Then I gave them a rubric to show how it will be marked. The cue cards the content, the same I did with a book review. If the child is not sure about the book, I told the child to get another book that he was sure about. Then I gave the child a guideline on what I will assess. I do peer- assessment but here I double check to see if the learner assessed properly. But I prefer educator assessment it is more realistic. Teacher assessment is done at home. Only if it is listening skills I assess in the class.

What are your experiences and challenges when using formative assessment?

I feel that reading plays a major role in assessment when it comes to learners and what happens is when you give them a task they listen for the moment and they forget and when they give a worksheet they don't even read that worksheet. And what happens is if I am to give them a worksheet I will give them two to three weeks to do that assessment and I will take the time daily to check – I will ask them daily how far are you with this assessment did you get help from home. I find that at the end most learners do not fare well because they didn't read the instructions. This is what happened in the beginning of the year. The children had to do a timetable and I showed them how to do it and I gave them a rubric to follow. One child that I failed had his father come and see me. And I explained to the father that the child did not follow the guidelines and the father wanted to know what guidelines? SO I showed him the rubric then the father said "oh I'm so sorry I didn't know that there was a rubric I did the assignment for my child. So I told the father that "I'm so sorry to fail you" These are the challenges.

How did you gain experience in assessment?

I do get peers to assess sometimes I get parents to assess. It's not always good.

You said that peer assessment is not good, why?

The child would never want to be wrong or get something wrong. I would give them a guideline to assess against. And with all of this they will still argue

Grade 7 will argue but really grade 4

What is the difference between formative assessment and summative assessment?

Once I get the work of the child at the end of the day. Then I pick up where the child is lagging for example maybe the child didn't put a question mark that would be summative.

APPENDIX E: Analyses of Transcripts

Teacher 1

Code: T1

Name: Lash

Indicators of framing	**Introduction TASK 1**		**Mediation TASK 2**		**Application TASK 3**	
	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Lesson objectives	F-	F-	F-	F+	F+	F+
Evaluative criteria	F-	F-	F-	F-	F+	F-
Verbal feedback	F-	F+	F-	F+	F+	F+
Total:	3F-	2F- 1F+	3F-	2F+ 1F-	3F+	2F+ 1F-
Lesson 1 + Lesson 2	4F-		2F-		4F+	
Aggregate Task 1 + Task 2 + Task 3 = 18F	**2F-**					

Refer to Table 2 for the detailed explanation of each indicator.

APPENDIX F

Analyses of Transcripts

Teacher 2

Code: T2

Indicators of framing	**Introduction TASK 1**		**Mediation TASK 2**		**Application TASK 3**	
	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Lesson objectives	F-	F+	F+	F+	F+	F+
Evaluative criteria	F-	F-	F+	F-	F-	F-
Verbal feedback	F	F+	F-	F-	F-	F-
Total:	3F-	1F- 2F+	2F+ 1F-	2F- 1F+	2F- 1F+	2F- 1F+
Lesson 1 + Lesson 2	2F-		0F		2F-	
Aggregate Task 1 + Task 2 + Task 3 = 18F	**4F-**					

Refer to Table 2 for detailed analyses of the indicators.

APPENDIX G

Analyses of Transcripts

Teacher 3

Code: T3

Indicators of framing	**Introduction TASK 1**		**Mediation TASK 2**		**Application TASK 3**	
	Lesson 1	**Lesson 2**	**Lesson 1**	**Lesson 2**	**Lesson 1**	**Lesson 2**
Lesson objectives	F-	F-	F-	F+	F-	F+
Evaluative criteria	F-	F+	F-	F+	F-	F-
Verbal feedback	F+	F-	F+	F+	F+	F+
Total:	2F- 1F+	1F+ 2F-	1F+ 2F-	3F+	2F- 1F+	2F- 1F+
Lesson 1 + Lesson 2	2F-		2F+		2F-	
Aggregate Task 1 + Task 2 + Task 3 = 18F	2F-					

APPENDIX H

Analyses of Transcripts

Teacher 4

Code: T4

Indicators of framing	**Introduction TASK 1**		**Mediation TASK 2**		**Application TASK 3**	
	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Lesson objectives	F+	F+	F++	F++	F+	F+
Evaluative criteria	F+	F+	F++	F++	F+	F+
Verbal feedback	F+	F-	F++	F++	F+	F-
Total:	3F+	1F- 2F+	3F++	3F++	3F+	1F-2F+
Lesson 1 + Lesson 2	4F+		6F++		4F+	
Aggregate Task 1 + Task 2 + Task 3 = 18F	14F+					