

# A Study of Formative Assessment Implementation through Classroom Interactional Competence: Discourse Analysis in English Classes at Lalian Atambua Seminary Senior High School

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\*Simforianus Mario Bajo, Priscilla Maria Assis Hornay, Yohanes P. F. Erfiani 

<sup>123</sup>Universitas Katolik Widya Mandira Kupang, Indonesia

Corresponding author: [simforianusmbajo@unwira.ac.id](mailto:simforianusmbajo@unwira.ac.id)

## A B S T R A C T

This qualitative case study investigates the role of teachers' Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) in the implementation of formative assessment in English lessons at a senior high school located in Indonesia's 3T (frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged) region. While previous Indonesian studies have primarily relied on survey and self-report data, little attention has been paid to how formative assessment is enacted through naturally occurring classroom interaction, particularly in marginalised contexts. Using Classroom Discourse Analysis informed by Conversation Analysis principles, two complete lessons taught by one experienced teacher, purposively selected as an information-rich case, to Grade XI students (N = 52) at SMA Seminari Lalian Atambua, Belu Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, were audio-recorded and transcribed to capture recurring interactional patterns through detailed, turn-by-turn analysis. Findings reveal that classroom interaction was heavily dominated by the traditional IRF/E pattern, with display questions comprising 23.8% of teacher turns and advanced CIC practices (referential questions, extended wait time, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and scaffolding) accounting for only 8.7%. In 24 identified formative assessment episodes, 83.3% of feedback moves were evaluative or effusive praise that closed sequences without guiding improvement, while scaffolded, suggestive feedback occurred only once (4.2%) yet produced immediate and extended student uptake. The results confirm that, in this severely under-resourced context, limited CIC transforms potentially formative moments into ceremonial, teacher-centred checks, thereby constraining the effectiveness of formative assessment. The study highlights CIC as a critical equity issue in marginalised regions and calls for discourse-focused professional development to enable teachers to create genuine "space for learning" even under significant contextual constraints.

**Keywords:** *Language Assessment, Formative Assessment, Classroom Interactional Competence, Classroom Discourse Analysis*

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## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of formative assessment in English language teaching plays a pivotal role in enhancing student learning outcomes by facilitating continuous monitoring and adjustment of instructional strategies. Its effective execution ensures that students receive timely, targeted, and personalized feedback, thereby guiding them toward greater language proficiency, deeper linguistic understanding, and stronger communicative competence. A primary factor contributing to the successful execution of formative assessment is the teacher's Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC), which encompasses a sophisticated set of practices including strategic questioning, contingent scaffolding to support learner development, negotiation of meaning, and the provision of constructive, specific, and actionable feedback that genuinely fosters student engagement in the learning process (Tajeddin & Kamali, 2023; Walsh, 2011; Waring, 2017). These elements of CIC enable teachers to create dynamic, responsive classroom environments where students can actively participate, reflect on their own progress, negotiate misunderstandings, co-construct knowledge, and refine their language skills through

meaningful, authentic interactions rather than through mechanical repetition or teacher-dominated monologues.

Extensive international research has consistently demonstrated the transformative potential of formative assessment when it is deeply embedded in high-quality classroom interaction. Black & Wiliam (2009) landmark review of more than 250 studies remains one of the most cited works in the field, concluding that well-implemented formative assessment can produce effect sizes of 0.4 to 0.8 standard deviations—among the largest gains ever documented in educational interventions. It is further clarified that the power of formative assessment lies not in the instruments themselves but in the moment-by-moment interactional processes through which teachers elicit evidence of understanding, interpret it accurately, and act upon it immediately with feedback that moves learning forward (Heritage & Stigler, 2010; Sadler, 1989). In second and foreign language classrooms, Walsh (2011) pioneered the concept of Classroom Interactional Competence, demonstrating through detailed discourse analysis that teachers who strategically use referential questions, extended wait time, clarification requests, recasts, and confirmation checks create optimal “space for learning” in which formative assessment naturally flourishes. Subsequent micro-analytic studies using Conversation Analysis (CA) have provided even richer evidence: Tajeddin & Kamali (2023) showed how teachers deploy multimodal resources (gaze, gesture, epistemic status checks, and embodied completions) to manage claims of understanding and misunderstanding in real time; Daskin (2017) illustrated how skilled teachers shape extended learner turns and encourage self-repair; and Waring (2017) and Indrayani et al., (2025) revealed that high CIC transforms ordinary pedagogical sequences into powerful sites of language learning and simultaneous assessment. Collectively, these studies establish beyond doubt that formative assessment is not an add-on activity but an interactional achievement co-constructed turn by turn in the classroom. Despite this growing body of scholarship, important gaps remain. Many studies have examined formative assessment as a pedagogical framework, and numerous studies have investigated Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) as a dimension of effective language teaching. However, relatively few studies explicitly connect CIC with the real-time implementation of formative assessment in classroom interaction. Even fewer studies have explored this relationship in the Indonesian context, and almost none have examined how CIC shapes formative assessment practices in Indonesia’s 3T (frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged) regions. This under-explored intersection constitutes the primary contribution of the present study.

Hence, despite this robust international evidence base, the reality in Indonesian English classrooms—particularly in senior high schools—presents a stark contrast. Robiasih & Lestari (2020) conducted one of the earliest large-scale studies during the pandemic and found that the vast majority of teachers reduced formative assessment to checklist documentation and product-oriented tasks with virtually no link to instructional adjustment or meaningful feedback. Post-pandemic research has confirmed that this pattern persists. Suherman et al., (2025) surveyed 120 EFL teachers across Java and concluded that while conceptual knowledge of formative assessment is relatively high, actual classroom practices remain superficial, teacher-centered, and heavily focused on written records for administrative purposes. Ginanjar et al (2025) observing 45 lessons in Central Java senior high schools, reported that feedback was predominantly evaluative (“good,” “correct,” “wrong”) rather than descriptive or suggestive, and interactional sequences rarely extended beyond the traditional IRF/E (Initiation–Response–Feedback/Evaluation) pattern. Sulastini (2022) and (Liu, 2024) similarly highlighted a significant gap between teachers declared beliefs and their observed practices, with most feedback being general, delayed, and non-contingent.

The situation becomes even more challenging in Indonesia’s 3T regions (terdepan, terluar, tertinggal—frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged). Puspitasari and Pelawi (2024) documented severe constraints in eastern Indonesia, including lack of electricity for digital assessment tools, inadequate teacher training, class sizes exceeding 40 students, and almost non-existent professional learning communities. Bali et al (2025), in a recent study covering

schools in Nusa Tenggara Timur, Papua, and Maluku, described formative assessment as “largely ceremonial,” existing only on paper to satisfy supervision requirements while classroom teaching remains overwhelmingly grammar-translation and rote-learning oriented. Satmawati (2025) added that in large, multilevel classes typical of 3T areas, teachers feel compelled to prioritize classroom management and coverage of material over interactionally rich formative practices.

Critically, virtually all existing Indonesian studies on formative assessment rely on questionnaires, interviews, and self-report data. There is a conspicuous absence of research that employs systematic, fine-grained observation of naturally occurring classroom discourse—especially using Conversation Analysis or Classroom Discourse Analysis—to examine how teachers actually enact (or fail to enact) CIC during formative assessment episodes in real time. This methodological gap is particularly glaring in 3T contexts, where the interplay between severe resource constraints and interactional practices remains completely uncharted territory. As a result, we still do not know what interactional realities teachers and students co-construct in these marginalized classrooms, nor do we have evidence-based insights into how CIC could be leveraged to make formative assessment genuinely effective despite the challenges.

Despite these imperatives, in many Indonesian schools, including those in remote, disadvantaged, and frontier (3T) regions such as SMA Seminari Lalian Atambua in Belu Regency, East Nusa Tenggara—one of the most isolated Catholic senior high schools near the Indonesia–Timor Leste border—formative assessment is often executed without regard to classroom interaction dynamics, tending to fulfill administrative requirements alone rather than serving as a tool for genuine pedagogical improvement. This misalignment severely impedes the effective potential of formative assessment in supporting students’ English language competence development, a potential that could be fully realized through the harmonious, synergistic integration of formative assessment and teachers’ Classroom Interactional Competence, thereby creating a multiplier effect that dramatically enhances overall instructional quality, student motivation, and long-term language outcomes.

Accordingly, this study aims to critically examine the extent to which teachers’ Classroom Interactional Competence contributes to—or constrains—the effectiveness of formative assessment in English language teaching at SMA Seminari Lalian Atambua. By employing Classroom Discourse Analysis informed by Conversation Analytic principles as the primary methodological framework, this research seeks to offer practical, context-specific contributions to enhancing the quality of English language instruction in one of Indonesia’s most marginal areas, providing concrete insights into interaction patterns that can directly inform teacher professional development programs, curriculum design, and education policy for 3T regions.

Thus, the urgency and significance of this study lie in its dual mission: first, to identify and document the discrepancies between espoused policy and lived classroom reality regarding formative assessment and CIC; and second, to explore in depth—through rigorous, evidence-based analysis of naturally occurring talk—the precise ways in which teachers’ interactional practices shape (or undermine) the efficacy of formative assessment implementation at SMA Seminari Lalian Atambua, ultimately advocating for more contextually responsive, interactionally aware, and equity-oriented educational practices in Indonesia’s underserved regions.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design grounded in Classroom Discourse Analysis informed by Conversation Analysis (CA). The focus is on examining how teachers’ Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) supports or limits the effective use of formative assessment during real English lessons through naturally occurring talk (Walsh, 2011). The research was conducted at SMA Seminari Lalian Atambua, a private Catholic senior high school located in a 3T (frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged) region in Belu Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, near the Indonesia–Timor Leste border. This school was purposely chosen

because it represents the typical challenges of remote eastern Indonesia, such as large classes and limited resources, while still aiming to develop students' communicative skills through interaction (Puspitasari & Pelawi, 2024). The participants were one experienced English teacher who teaches two classes of grade XI students, totaling 52 students. Grade XI was selected because the national curriculum at this level strongly emphasizes communicative and integrated language skills, which creates more opportunities for interaction-rich formative assessment.

Data were collected over 2 weeks in the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. Two complete English lessons were recorded using an audio recorder to capture the classroom interaction. Field notes and teaching materials (lesson plans, worksheets, feedback sheets) were also collected to support triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis of the audio transcriptions began with repeated reviewing of the entire corpus to identify moments related to formative assessment and CIC. Relevant indications were then selected and analyzed in detail, turn by turn, to show exactly how teachers' interactional practices (questioning, feedback, repair, scaffolding) helped or hindered formative assessment in real time.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the two audio-recorded English lessons at SMA Seminari Lalian Atambua reveals a clear picture of how formative assessment is currently enacted in a typical 3T-region senior high school. Despite frequent opportunities for assessment, the teacher's limited deployment of Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) severely restricts the potential of formative assessment to drive real-time learning. Two tables below present the core evidence that directly addresses the research aim: to examine the extent to which teachers' CIC contributes to or constrains the effectiveness of formative assessment in this marginalized context.

Table 1: Frequency of Key CIC Practices Across Two Lessons

CIC Practice	Freq.	%	Excerpts Samples
Referential questions	12	2.9%	T: "Rian, why do you think the writer feels sad in this story? Tell me in your own words."
Display questions	98	23.8%	T: "What is the past tense of 'go'?" → S: "Went." → T: "Good."
Extended wait time (>2 s)	8	1.9%	T: "So, what is the message of the text? ... (4-second pause) ... Anybody?"
Clarification requests	8	1.9%	S: "Teacher, 'affect' or 'effect'?" → T: "Sorry, what do you mean? Which sentence?"
Recasts	15	3.6%	S: "He go to school yesterday." → T: "He WENT to school yesterday."
Confirmation checks	2	0.5%	T: "You said 'boring', do you mean the film is not interesting? Yes?"
Extended scaffolding sequences	6	1.5%	T: "Almost... try to add a reason. Why do you think it is important?"

The data in Table 1 demonstrate that the teacher's interactional repertoire remains overwhelmingly oriented toward knowledge display and rapid evaluation rather than knowledge co-construction. Display questions, which is known to produce short, predetermined answers and to restrict formative possibilities, account for almost one-quarter of all teacher turns (23.8%). In stark contrast, the five advanced CIC practices that are proven to open "space for learning" and enable rich formative assessment (referential questions, extended wait time, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and scaffolding sequences) together represent only 8.7% of turns. This imbalance directly constrains the teacher's ability to elicit detailed evidence of student understanding, interpret it accurately, and act upon it contingently.

On the other hand, in terms of the feedback quality and its formative impact, across the two lessons, 24 distinct instances were identified in which the teacher had a clear opportunity to use interaction for formative purposes. Table 2 classifies the feedback provided in these

episodes and records whether it led to immediate student uptake such as revision or extension of the original contribution.

Table 2: Types of Feedback in Formative Assessment Episodes

Feedback type	Freq.	%	Excerpt Samples
Evaluative/Binary	15	62.5%	S: "The answer is B." → T: "Wrong."
Effusive praise	5	20.8%	S: "She buy a new bag." → T: "Excellent! Very good!"
Corrective recast	3	12.5%	S: "My father work in office." → T: "My father <b>WORKS</b> in an office."
Scaffolded/ Suggestive	1	4.2%	S: "I think the story about friendship." → T: "Good start. Can you give one example from the text?" → S successfully extends
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 2 provides compelling evidence that formative assessment at SMA Seminari Lalian Atambua is largely ceremonial rather than transformative. More than four-fifths of all feedback moves (83.3%) consist of simple evaluation or praise that closes the sequence without guiding students toward deeper understanding or self-correction. Scaffolded, suggestive feedback occurred just once in the entire corpus (4.2%), yet it was the only instance that produced 100% immediate and extended student uptake. This single example proves that the teacher is capable of high-CIC practice, but contextual pressures (large class, time constraints, and habituated IRF patterns) suppress its regular use. The extremely low uptake rate following evaluative feedback (13.3%) further confirms that most assessment episodes fail to function formatively, leaving students without the interactional support they need to progress in a resource-scarce 3T environment.

The findings from SMA Seminari Lalian Atambua provide the first fine-grained, discourse-based evidence of how formative assessment is enacted in a genuine 3T senior high school English classroom in Indonesia. The data reveal a stark misalignment between the transformative potential of formative assessment highlighted in international literature (Heritage & Stigler, 2010; Sadler, 1989) and its actual implementation in this frontier context. Although opportunities for formative assessment arose frequently (24 episodes across two lessons), the teacher's severely limited Classroom Interactional Competence transformed these moments into brief, evaluative checks rather than dynamic sites for co-constructing understanding and adjusting instruction in real time.

The overwhelming dominance of display questions (23.8% of all teacher turns) and the near absence of advanced CIC practices (only 8.7% combined for referential questions, extended wait time, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and scaffolding) confirm that interaction remained locked in the traditional IRF/E pattern. This finding aligns closely with earlier self-report and questionnaire-based studies in Java and Bali (Ginanjar et al., 2025; Liu, 2024; Suherman et al., 2025), but the present discourse evidence shows the phenomenon in sharper relief: the pattern is not merely "teacher-centered"; it is interactionally impoverished to the point that formative assessment loses its defining characteristic, using evidence of student understanding to move learning forward (Sadler, 1989). In a 3T school where students have almost no English exposure outside the classroom, such restricted interactional "space for learning" (Walsh, 2011) exacerbates rather than mitigates existing educational inequities.

Feedback practices were equally constraining. More than 83% of all feedback moves were either binary-evaluative or effusive praise that closed sequences without offering guidance. Scaffolded, suggestive feedback occurred just once (4.2%) in the entire corpus, yet it immediately elicited extended, successful student uptake. This single instance is particularly revealing: it demonstrates that the teacher possesses the interactional competence required for effective formative assessment but rarely deploys it under normal classroom conditions. Contextual pressures repeatedly cited in 3T research such as time constraints, and the habitual use of grammar-translation methods (Bali et al., 2025; Ramadhan et al., 2024; Satmawati, 2025) appear to push the teacher toward safer, faster, and more controlling interactional choices that prioritize coverage and discipline over depth and contingency.

These findings fill the critical methodological gap identified in the Introduction: virtually all previous Indonesian studies on formative assessment have relied on surveys and interviews, leaving the actual moment-by-moment interactional reality unexamined, especially

in marginalized regions. The present study shows that self-reported beliefs about formative assessment (typically positive among Indonesian teachers) translate into classroom practice only when supported by high CIC. Without such competence, even well-intentioned teachers fall back on evaluative routines that render formative assessment “largely ceremonial” (Bali et al., 2025) and perpetuate rote-learning orientations long documented in eastern Indonesia.

## CONCLUSIONS

Empirically, the findings provide one of the first discourse-based and quantified accounts of Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) practices within a genuine 3T senior high school context. By documenting the frequency of display questions, advanced CIC practices, and feedback types across two complete lessons, the study reveals how formative assessment is interactionally enacted in an under-researched region of Indonesia. The results indicate that formative assessment functions not merely as an instructional technique but as an interactional achievement that emerges through teachers’ moment-by-moment management of classroom discourse. They also demonstrate that CIC is not a pedagogical luxury limited to well-resourced urban schools but a crucial element of equitable education. In contexts where technological resources, instructional materials, and institutional support are limited, teachers’ interactional competence becomes the primary mechanism for creating learning opportunities and supporting student understanding. Practically, the findings highlight important implications for teacher education and educational policy in Indonesia’s frontier regions. Professional development initiatives should move beyond general discussions of formative assessment techniques and focus on strengthening teachers’ interactional practices through reflective and discourse-informed training. Increasing the use of referential questions, providing adequate wait time, and delivering more suggestive and constructive feedback could significantly enhance the formative value of classroom interaction. In addition, context-sensitive and low-technology strategies may help teachers address practical constraints such as electricity limitations and large class sizes. Furthermore, teacher certification systems and school supervision practices should incorporate observation frameworks that emphasize classroom discourse and interactional quality rather than relying solely on lesson-plan documentation or administrative checklists. Overall, the study suggests that the effectiveness of formative assessment in Indonesia’s 3T regions depends less on teachers’ theoretical knowledge or procedural compliance and more on the quality of their interactional decisions during classroom communication. Unless Classroom Interactional Competence is systematically recognized and developed as a core professional skill, the transformative potential of formative assessment will remain difficult to achieve for students in underserved educational contexts, even though meaningful learning opportunities can still emerge when teachers create space for responsive and supportive classroom interaction despite challenging conditions.

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