

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
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**ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS'
UNDERSTANDING OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND ITS
APPLICATION
MA Thesis**

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ABSTRACT

This MA thesis discusses teachers' perceptions of formative assessment and its application in English as a foreign language classes. Formative assessment is a required form of assessment as stated by the Estonian National Curricula. Since more and more Estonian schools have and still are incorporating this assessment approach to move towards a more student-focused learning environment, it is necessary to examine how teachers who claim to use formative assessment perceive and apply it. Teachers' perception of education reforms merits research, as teachers' perceptions have a profound influence not only on their practice but also on curriculum implementation.

The aim of the thesis is to study Estonian English teachers who claim to use formative assessment in order to gain an understanding of their perception of formative assessment and examine the methods they use to conduct this assessment procedure. The study also attempts to determine which of the methods proposed by theorists and education specialists those used by the teachers of this case study comply with.

The first chapter of the thesis outlines what procedures constitute formative assessment, how formative assessment is applied in the EFL classes using the European Language portfolio as well as the concept of learner autonomy, and finally, the importance of studying perception along with examples of such studies in Estonia. The second chapter of the thesis is a case study based on interviews that were conducted among three English teachers who teach in both basic and secondary schools. The results showed that there are both similarities and differences in teachers' understanding and application of formative assessment when comparing the teachers' perceptions to one another as well as when comparing the methods they use to the methods proposed by theorists and the national curricula.

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INTRODUCTION

Assessment is an important part of the study process. The term ‘assessment’ generally refers to establishing whether the instructional activities carried out have resulted in the desired learning outcomes (Wiliam 2011: 3), often when the learning activities have already been completed. However, there are also attempts to understand activities, such as ones before the final assessment that are meant to lead learning towards the set goal as forms of assessment. This is the reason why literature on assessment typically makes a distinction between summative and formative assessment. The latter will be referred to as FA in this paper.

The contemporary use of the term FA is often traced to Scriven (1967: 41), who used the word ‘formative evaluation’ in 1967, explaining it as ‘gathered information to assess the effectiveness of a curriculum and guide school system choices as to which curriculum to adopt and how to improve it’. Following and elaborating on Scriven’s ideas, Bloom in 1971 used the term ‘formative assessment’ and extended its meaning to a tool with which schools could take into account learners’ individual needs during the learning process (Bloom 1968: 9) and contrasted it to summative evaluation defined as the assignments that are given for the purpose of grading or evaluating progress (Bloom et al 1971, cited in Black and Wiliam 1996: 537-538).

Some authors criticise the word ‘formative’ and prefer alternative terms to FA. For instance, Broadfoot et al (2011) have suggested that because of a variety of ways in which the term FA has been used, it is not helpful:

The term ‘formative’ itself is open to a variety of interpretations and often means no more than that assessment is carried out frequently and is planned at the same time as teaching. Such assessment does not necessarily have all the characteristics just identified as helping learning. It may be formative in helping the teacher to identify areas where more explanation or practice is needed. But for the pupils, the marks or remarks on their work may tell them about their success or failure but not about how to make progress towards further learning. (Broadfoot et al 1999: 7 cited in Wiliam 2011:10)

Instead, they propose the term ‘assessment for learning’, which is defined as ‘the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there’ (Broadfoot et al. 2002: 2–3, cited in Wiliam 2011:10). Black and his colleagues explain ‘assessment for learning’ as follows:

Assessment for learning is every assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students’ learning. It thus differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability, or of ranking, or of certifying competence. An assessment activity can help learning if it provides information that teachers and their students can use as feedback in assessing themselves and one another and in modifying 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 learning needs. (Black et al 2011: 10)

In other words, although they are often used as synonyms, the terms ‘formative assessment’ and ‘assessment for learning’ have slightly different emphases. The terms come from different schools of theory and have different concepts behind them. Stiggins and Chappuis (2005: 14) go one step further and use ‘student-involved formative assessment’ and ‘student involved assessment for learning’. They have added this prefix because ‘assessment FOR learning engages students in thinking about themselves as learners. It is a new idea for many teachers to understand that formative assessment can and should be done for and by students, and yet it is crucial to students becoming effective learners’.

While FA has been around since the 1960s, the concept is relatively new in Estonia. Since 1996, the Estonian National Curricula for Basic and Secondary Schools have stated that the function of assessment is to support learning without specifically using the term FA. In 2011, the term formative assessment (‘kujundav hindamine’ in Estonian) was added into the revised Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools and the Estonian National Curriculum for Secondary Schools. It is defined as follows:

Formative assessment shall mean assessment taking place during studies, in the course of which the pupil’s knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviour are analysed, feedback is

provided on the pupil's previous results and shortcomings, the pupil is encouraged and guided in further studies and the future objectives and routes of studying are planned. Formative assessment focuses above all on comparing the pupil's development with his or her previous accomplishments. Feedback shall describe, at the right time and as precisely as possible, the pupil's strengths and shortcomings and shall include proposals for further activities that support the pupil's development. (NCFBS and NCFSS 2014: §20 (1))

Three years later, in 2014, the Estonian Ministry of Education approved the 'Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020'. In its 'Changes in Assessment and Evaluation Principle' part, it is stated that 'the emphasis is moving towards formative assessment that supports learning and the individual development of each learner' (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium 2014: 7). With this strategy and the national curricula, the Estonian education system is moving towards a more learner-focused approach to learning and assessment. It is important to note that the proposal of this assessment method by the Estonian Ministry of Education does not, however, rule out the use of grades as they are still a requirement in the national curricula, except for elementary schools where the school may decide their preferred approach to assessment (NCfBS 2014: §21 (4)). What is more, summative and formative assessment are not mutually exclusive. While assessment does not equal grades, instead of contrasting FA and summative assessment the two need to be combined to complement each other.

The Estonian term 'kujundav hindamine' was arrived at after such alternatives as 'formeeriv hindamine' and 'formatiivne hindamine' had been used, both of which are attempts at literal translation. The Estonian version of 'assessment for learning' is 'õppimist soodustav/ toetav hindamine', promoted by Jürimäe, Kärner and Tiisvelt (Jürimäe et al 2011) instead of the term proposed by the national curricula if the teacher thinks the term describes the process of FA better (Jürimäe n.d). They have occasionally also used the term 'protsessihindamine' (Jürimäe n.d), the English equivalent being 'continuous assessment', to emphasise the process of learning that leads to achieving the final outcomes and not the final outcome itself. However, the Estonian Ministry of

Education says that 'protsessihindamine' is not always FA: 'Giving students grades throughout the course on pieces of work and calculating a final grade based on those grades is not FA' (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium 2018: 24). Protsessihindamine is FA 'only when the students have mapped out their knowledge and skill development in order to change the learning process'. All in all, there are synonyms and alternative terms with small nuances but there can also be, as is the case with 'protsessihindamine', instances of terms clashing with existing terms.

A teacher's mother tongue can affect the understanding of the term FA. A study conducted in 2011 concluded that many teachers in Estonia believe the terms 'assessment' ('hindamine' in Estonian) and 'giving a grade/grading' ('hinde panemine') are synonyms. This was thought to be due to the Estonian language, where the word 'hindamine' can often be associated with giving a grade in the context of school (Jürimäe et al 2011: 30). Similarly, with Estonian words such as 'hind, hinne and hinnang' ('price, grade, evaluation') that sound the same, there might be situations where schoolwork is equated to 'a task completed or goods delivered' (Sarv 1996: 4). As illustrated with 'pideva hinnangu andmine', influenced by the English terminology, Estonians have also attempted to make a clearer distinction between the words 'assessment' and 'evaluation' ('hindamine' and 'hinnang/ hinnangu andmine'); however, it could be argued that the difference between the two Estonian words is not as clear as it is in English. These examples illustrate the juxtaposition of the term FA in Estonian. On the one hand, the word 'kujundav' in its essence focuses more on assessing the learning process and not only the outcome, yet the word 'hindamine' is closely linked to grading. This association can be so strong that teachers who might not have extensive theoretical knowledge of FA may not opt to use FA believing that they might not be using FA at all since the assessment process ends with a

grade as curricula demand. As a result, teachers might see FA as an alternative to grades altogether instead of combining it with giving grades.

Since the policy has established the use of FA, defined it and suggested methods for its application, it could be assumed there should be no confusion concerning FA. However, being added to the national curricula, it could be argued, does not fully guarantee that FA is being correctly applied or used at all. There are speculations that even though FA is claimed to be practised in educational establishments, such establishments are rather exceptions than the norm (Jürimäe 2013: 715). In the author's own experience, being a first-year teacher in both basic and upper secondary school and having experience as a substitute teacher prior to this, most assessment serves a summative purpose and FA is either not used enough (only some of the proposed methods are used) or is confused with giving students a non-numerical evaluation instead of a grade. Tuulik (2017) argues that despite the use of FA being a goal for the Estonian education system for almost a decade by now, teachers are still struggling to apply it. One of the main problems she notes is the concept of FA itself and its vast array of versions and interpretations, ranging from 'supporting learning' to 'ongoing process' as well as confusion with the word 'hindamine'. A recent article in *Õpetajate Leht* illustrates this. The author of the article, a teacher, while describing problems currently faced by teachers, notes that the demanded implementation of FA which amounts to writing extensive feedback comments instead of giving grades (Kalakauskas 2018) is actually not FA but summative assessment where, instead of a grade, students are given non-numerical evaluations. There is evidently a conflict.

As the concept of FA can be complicated, it requires personal interpretation, and because it requires personal interpretation, both schools of theory as well as teachers understand it differently. This is why the present thesis attempts to analyse teachers' understanding of FA. More specifically, the focus is on researching English as a foreign

language (hereafter referred to as EFL) teachers who claim to use FA to gain an understanding of their perception of FA and of the methods they use to conduct this assessment procedure. To achieve the aim, semi-structured interviews with teachers were conducted. The study is timely and relevant as there has been very little research in Estonia into foreign language teachers' perceptions and use of FA and, thus, the paper hopes to contribute to such research.

Currently there is a significant body of research into the topic of FA internationally by scholars such as Paul Black, Dylan Wiliam, Rick Stiggins, James Popham, to name but a few. The topic has also been investigated in general education studies in Estonia by Maria Jürimäe, Leelo Tiisvelt, Anita Kärner. However, there is still little research into the use of FA in EFL classes. Kätli Randmaa's 2018 paper 'Students' and English Teachers' Perceptions of the Use and Value of Formative Assessment in Two Estonian Upper Secondary Schools' along with the current paper are the first MA theses specifically focusing on FA in the Department of English Studies of the University of Tartu. These two papers have a similar focus but different methods of research. Another MA thesis defended in the Department in 2015 and connected to the topic of FA is Kersti Laur's MA thesis 'Using Peer Assessment in Basic School EFL Classes'.

The present thesis is divided into two chapters. The first chapter discusses the application of FA. The second chapter focuses on the study conducted, explaining the methodology, presenting the research questions, procedure and analysis of the three interviews in order to determine the teachers' understanding of FA. The results are followed by a discussion of to what extent their perceptions overlap with the national curricula and the theoretical background of FA.

1. APPLICATION OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The present chapter discusses the application of FA and is organised into three sections. Section 1.1 highlights different models or methods proposed by theorists as well as documents for the implementation of FA. Section 1.2 gives an overview of the aspects related to using FA in EFL classes and, Section 1.3 discusses the importance of researching teachers' perceptions and the research into perceptions of FA conducted in Estonia.

1.1. Models of Formative Assessment

While the introduction discussed the concept of FA and its definitions, it is vital to explain FA as a process – what activities and methods are necessary to apply FA in the classroom. Several authors have proposed their models for FA implementation, the best known of which are the ones proposed by Black, Wiliam, Stiggins and Brookhart. These models are presented here so as to have a point of reference for the study undertaken by the author.

Black and Wiliam (2009: 8), in an attempt to create a unified model for FA on the basis of their own and other authors' research, proposed the following model summarised by them in the table form (see Table 1).

Table 1. Black and Wiliam's (2009: 8) model of formative assessment.

	Where the learner is going	Where the learner is right now	How to get there
Teacher	1 Clarifying learning intentions and criteria for success	2 Engineering effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of student understanding	3 Providing feedback that moves learners forward
Peer	Understanding and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success	4 Activating students as instructional resources for one another	
Learner	Understanding learning intentions and criteria for success	5 Activating students as the owners of their own learning	

The model encompasses several components: five main activities, three participants and three questions to follow. Firstly, the three main questions are meant to be constantly used by the learners to self-assess and by the learners, the teacher and the peers to guide the learning process towards the learning outcomes. Secondly, the model encompasses both collaboration between the learner and peers through discussions and peer assessment as well as between the teacher and the learner through feedback. Lastly, personal responsibility is noted by the model suggesting it is up to the teacher to explain the topics and learning outcomes, but points out that it is the learner's responsibility to understand the criteria and to set goals in accordance with their abilities and needs. The overall goal of Black and Wiliam's model is to develop students' own capacity to independently move towards the target or 'self-regulation' (Black and Wiliam 2009: 12).

Rick Stiggins is a strong proponent of what he calls 'student-involved classroom assessment'. He provides a detailed example of the necessary procedures reproduced below:

- Engage students in reviewing strong and weak samples in order to determine attributes of a good performance or product.
- Before a discussion with the teacher or peer, students identify their own perceptions of strengths and weaknesses on a specific aspect of their work.
- Students practise using criteria to evaluate anonymous strong and weak work.
- Students work in pairs to revise an anonymous weak work sample they have just evaluated.
- Students write a process paper, detailing the process they went through to create a product or performance. In it they reflect on problems they encountered and how they solved them.
- Students develop practice test plans based on their understanding of the intended learning targets and essential concepts in material to be learned.
- Students generate and answer questions they think might be on the test, based on their understanding of the content/processes/skills/ they were responsible for learning.
- A few days before a test, students discuss or write answers to questions such as: "Why am I taking this test? Who will use the results? How?" "What is it testing?" "How do I think I will do?" "What do I need to study?" "With whom might I work?"
- Teacher arranges items on a test according to specific learning targets, and prepares a "test analysis" chart for student, with three boxes: "My strengths," "Quick review," and "Further study." After handing back the corrected test, students identify learning targets they have mastered and write them in the "My strengths" box. Next, students categorize their wrong answers as either "simple mistake" or "further study." Then, students list the simple mistakes in the "Quick review" box. Last, students write the rest of the learning targets represented by wrong answers in the "Further study" box.

- Students review a collection of their work over time and reflect on their growth: “I have become a better reader this quarter. I used to..., but now I...”
- Students use a collection of their self-assessments to summarize their learning and set goals for future learning: “Here is what I have learned... Here is what I need to work on...”
- Students select and annotate evidence of achievement for a portfolio. (Chappuis and Stiggins 2005: 5)

The characteristic features of Stiggins’s model are giving the students control and monitoring them. Stiggins emphasises the importance of the beginning of the process. Students are expected to learn by studying examples of weak and strong work, not merely rely on the standards set by the teacher. This way, students will phrase the expectations themselves, being in charge of their learning process from the very beginning. The monitoring method also reflects this idea of taking charge of learning, as students partner with their teacher to help monitor ‘the level of attainment in relation to the agreed-upon expectations so they can set goals for what to learn next’ and thus the students ‘play a role in managing their own progress’ (Stiggins 2005: 327). Clear and effective communication between teachers and students is the key, as diagnostic information to the teacher and frequent descriptive feedback to the learner is also the overall purpose of this assessment process: ‘provide teachers and students with information they need along the way [...] to make decisions that will bring about more learning’ (Chappuis and Stiggins 2005: 6). In short, during their learning, students are inside the assessment process, watching themselves grow, feeling in control of their journey to success, and believing that continued success is within reach if they keep trying (Stiggins 2005: 328).

In Estonia, it might appear that Tiisvelt is leading the FA movement based on the media exposure of Tiisvelt’s school using only FA and her FA courses aimed at teachers and heads of schools. The term she prefers to use is either FA or ‘assessment for learning’ (‘õppimist toetav hindamine’), adding that the latter term more successfully encompasses what FA is actually about, which is supporting the learner (Jürimäe et al 2014: 5). Despite claiming to have initially used FA purely by instinct without any outer influence, she has

now cited the work of Brookhart as the basis for her promoted methods (Eksamikeskus 2010). Brookhart's model of FA includes the following:

- 'Shared learning targets and criteria for success
- Feedback that feeds forward
- Student goal setting
- Student self-assessment
- Strategic teacher questioning
- Student engagement in asking effective questions' (Brookhart and Moss 2009: 5)

Consequently, Tiisvelt's model is very similar to Brookhart's:

- Pre-assessment – assessing what the student already knows and can do before a course (Eksamikeskus 2010)
- Sharing learning goals with students – while there is a common end-goal shared by all the student it is important to have the students set and share their personal goals according to their individual needs (what they need to achieve by the end of the learning process and what they need to do to achieve this) (Tiisvelt n.d: 3). Additionally, the students need to paraphrase the goals set by the teacher as to make the goals understandable for themselves and they have to create a marking scale to set the criteria for their work (Eksamikeskus 2010).
- Listening to students – observation and guidance in the learning process, instead of conveying the new material, the teacher assumes the role of a supervisor monitoring the students who have been trusted with the learning materials, monitoring how far they are, helping them stay on schedule (Tiisvelt n.d: 5)
- Providing effective feedback – descriptive, objective, encouraging; giving further direction instead of correcting mistakes for the student; written or oral depending on the situation; together with the entire group or individually; with a strong

performance it is important to highlight the strengths of the student and with a weaker performance it is necessary to describe the most prevalent weaknesses and give positive suggestions and instructions for further action (Tiisvelt n.d: 5); as short as possible, but as much as necessary, as soon as possible after the learning; basing the feedback on the marking scale (Eksamikeskus 2010).

- Providing thought-provoking open-ended questions for group discussions to promote interaction and self-reflection (Tiisvelt n.d: 6)
- Supporting students' self-regulation – promoting self-efficacy and the ability to keep one's development on track. The goal is self-regulating learners who can set goals, plan their learning process and keep themselves motivated (Tiisvelt n.d: 7). The students should also have portfolios that also compile self-assessments on how they have understood feedback, their work along with the marking scale and plans for further action (Eksamikeskus 2010). Teachers self-reflect and analyse how the process went, how to plan and carry out the whole process again more successfully (Tiisvelt n.d: 1), if necessary, making suggestions for change to the school (Eksamikeskus 2010).

While Tiisvelt has elaborated on her techniques in more detail, these elaborations do not make her model different from Brookhart's. Tiisvelt's has listed points that are actually the same as Brookhart's, with the exception of some being categorised under one main method, such as self-regulation, which Brookhart categorised as an outcome of both 'student self-assessment' and 'feedback that feeds forward', as well as pre-assessment categorised as a part of 'identifying learning targets'. Moreover, Tiisvelt's 'listening to students', which Brookhart refers to as 'shifting from correcting to informing' (Brookhart and Moss 2009: 44) and 'taking formative assessment schoolwide' (op. cit. 134), although not listed as specific methods, are still considered a quintessential part of FA by Brookhart.

Lastly, ‘student engagement in asking effective questions’ which Brookhart defines as students think ‘deeply about what they are trying to achieve and master, seek explanations and alternatives more frequently and use self-assessment to monitor and evaluate their own understanding’ (op. cit. 115), is what Tiisvelt describes as her ‘self-regulation’ approach, which for her is ‘students taking responsibility for their learning’ (Tiisvelt n.d: 2). Tiisvelt explains that the constant feedback on strengths, weaknesses and necessary further steps supports the development of the student into becoming a learner who is capable of accepting responsibility for their learning success and develops the habit of lifelong learning (ibid). Repeating the strategies, the students become more independent in assessing how close to reaching their goal they are. This, in turn, results in the learner becoming able to decide on further action by themselves without the teacher having to intervene (ibid). Overall, Tiisvelt’s model is completely based on Brookhart’s, with both authors promoting the same methods and striving towards the same outcome.

Finally, as the present thesis relies mainly on the Estonian National Curricula, it is important to look at the methods proposed by the document:

(2) In the course of the lesson, the pupil shall receive mainly oral or written verbal feedback regarding knowledge and skills pertaining to the subject and the subject field (including general competences, learning and educational objectives of a stage of study and cross-curricular topics). Teachers shall provide pupils with feedback throughout the school day in order to support the formation of the pupil’s behaviour, attitudes and values.

(3) Pupils shall be involved in the assessment process of themselves and their companions in order to develop their skills in setting their objectives and to analyse their learning and behaviour on the basis of their objectives, as well as to increase their motivation for learning.

(4) One instrument used for formative assessment is the portfolio. The portfolio shall be a diary of learning and shall contain assignments as well as analysis and feedback of work. The portfolio may be compiled in a subject- or subject field-based manner, regarding cross-curricular topics or general competences. (NCFBS and NCFSS 2014: §20 (2-4))

Overall, the Estonian National Curricula suggest using methods such as ongoing feedback, self-assessment and peer assessment, and portfolios, while highlighting advantages such as students becoming motivated and more aware of their skills. This can be called the curricula’s ‘model’ of FA.

It is important to compare Tiisvelt to the national curricula, since one of the reasons Tiisvelt is promoting her model and organising FA courses is to provide support to teachers implementing the document. Tiisvelt's model covers the criteria listed in the national curricula: feedback, setting goals, peer-assessment, self-assessment and portfolios. She does, however, specify techniques as well as offer additional steps. For example, the curricula state that 'teachers shall provide pupils with feedback throughout the school day in order to support the formation of the pupil's behaviour, attitudes and values' (NCFBS and NCFBS 2014: §20 (2-4)), without specifying what these attitudes and values should be. Tiisvelt argues that this feedback should lead to self-regulation and having the student in control of their learning, with the teacher monitoring them along the process and providing feedback that leads forward. Tiisvelt also offers more details, compared to the curricula, on what feedback should be like for students at different levels, how long the feedback should be and when to give it. The additional techniques she offers with her model are pre-assessment, having the students themselves verbalise the goals and create the marking scale and initiating classroom discussion on their progress.

It could be argued that the Estonian curricula have been compiled based on some of the more common techniques of FA, since FA is not an Estonian creation. When comparing the models of Black and Wiliam, Brookhart and Stiggins, there are a number of similarities. The first commonality is feedback that provides an accurate overview of both a student's strengths and weaknesses as well as clear guidelines for improvement and further action. Next, students are expected to constantly self-assess mostly using criteria and goals set by themselves at the beginning of the learning process. Students' progress is expected to be compiled into a portfolio, so that they can monitor their growth and gain a sense of control over their learning. The models also mention using peer assessment since collaboration is also an important aspect of FA. Finally, a big similarity in approaches, as

well as the final goal of FA is learners who can self-regulate. When contrasting the different models, though, there are some methods not promoted by everyone specifically. Similar to the Stiggins's model, Black and Wiliam's model emphasises having specific criteria for assessment and feedback. However, where Stiggins differs from Black and Wiliam is his suggestion of having students use weak and strong examples of the final product to make the list of criteria themselves. Moreover, Black and Wiliam do not discuss self-assessment in practice-test form as does Stiggins. Neither of these two aspects is mentioned in Brookhart's model. Brookhart's model does, however, emphasise effective questioning. Similarly, Black and Wiliam's model requires engaging the students in classroom discussion based on three set questions. While not explicitly listed as questioning, Stiggins insists on discussions amongst peers, which, it could be argued, involve questioning. Finally, while Brookhart lists pre-assessment and teacher self-reflection in her model, these are elements not specifically mentioned by the other authors. In short, the obligatory aspects of FA (aspects mentioned by most authors) are setting goals, effective feedback, self-assessment, peer-assessment, using portfolios and aiming towards learner independence. Some optional methods (mentioned by only some authors) are using weak and strong works as the basis to set goals, practise test self-assessment, pre-assessment and teacher self-reflection. It must be noted, however, that the present thesis has not compiled all the possible methods and models proposed by theorist but examples of reoccurring names, articles or documents cited in research papers or prevalent in the Estonian context.

Even though, based on the many authors advocating the use of FA with their models as well as policy demanding it, the use of FA is claimed to be beneficial for the learner, there is also research criticising the number of FA models. According to Bennett (2011: 6-19), there are many ways to implement FA and no clear consensus on which ones

are the best. As a result, the effectiveness of FA can vary greatly, depending on which methods the teacher uses and what population of students the teacher uses them on. There are differences not only in the size of benefits that are achieved (one method can generate more of benefit x than another method), but also in the kind of benefits that are achieved (one method generates benefit x, another method generates benefit y). Moreover, the empirical data which these efficacy claims are based on is often highly suspect: it is either dated, unpublished, methodologically flawed or the authors are biased. With such variance and lack of data, it is perhaps not a good idea to leave the choice of methods solely up to teachers, as the amount of pedagogical skill and theoretical knowledge may not be sufficient to make the right choices (Bennett 2011: 6-19). The dangers of this ambiguity become especially apparent as FA begins to get more widely implemented in schools around the world. Teachers and policymakers, Bennett argues, do not have the same level of understanding as pioneering authors and cannot replicate their successes. It is therefore quite a paradox that different researchers' attempts at solving this problem with their models can instead lead to further complications.

1.2 Formative Assessment in English as a Foreign Language Classrooms

The literature search using the term FA initially revealed a somewhat limited body of existing empirical information on the topic of FA in EFL classes. It could be argued that this is not due to lack of use but purely because FA has been in use in EFL classes for much longer than in other subject classes without specifically being called FA. For example, the European Language Portfolio, which is a tool through which a learner can record their learning experiences and continuously assess their language proficiency using the common Reference Scales of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, has been in use in Estonia for over 10 years by now. In 2001, the first

European Language Portfolio was accredited and in 2007 the Estonian one was approved. This portfolio has always had a very close link to FA. More specifically, its pedagogical function is underpinned by the same philosophy as FA, which assigns a key role to learner self-assessment. The characteristics of FA in the language portfolio are summarised as follows:

- it involves sharing learning goals with pupils
- it aims to help pupils to know and to recognise the standards they are aiming for
- it involves pupils in self -assessment
- it provides feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them
- it is underpinned by confidence that every student can improve
- it involves both teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on assessment data

(Little 2009: 4).

Little (2009: 4) argues that the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio is capable of supporting the implementation of language 'learner autonomy'. Little cites James and Pedder's research (2012: 38) where it is argued that when FA is fully implemented 'it gives explicit roles to learners, not just to teachers, for instigating teaching and learning'. This fosters an element of assessment that Little notes as the development of learner autonomy: 'students are not merely the objects of their teacher's behaviour; they are animators of their own effective teaching and learning processes' (Little 2009: 5). Autonomy has its clearest embodiment in processes of peer- and self-assessment when students (i) individually or collaboratively, develop the motivation to reflect on their previous learning and identify objectives for new learning; (ii) when they analyse and evaluate problems they or their peers are experiencing and structure a way forward; and (iii) when, through self -regulation, they act to bring about improvement (Pedder and

James 2012: 38). In other words, they become autonomous, independent and active learners. When this happens, teaching is no longer exclusive to the teacher. Instead, learners are brought into the heart of teaching and learning processes and decision making as they adopt pedagogical practices to further their own learning and that of their peers. These are precisely the formative effects that the European Language Portfolio is intended to have in the EFL classroom.

The Appendices for the National Curricula for Basic Schools as well as Secondary Schools that outline foreign language learning state that the ‘learning to learn’ and ‘setting learning goals’ competences must be developed. This can be done, for example, by linking new and previously acquired knowledge, applying the contents of learning in different situations, analysing one’s knowledge and skills (e.g., based on the principles of the European language portfolio), and planning one’s studies to follow a plan (Little 2009: 4). The Secondary School Appendix stresses using the language portfolio in teacher feedback, self-assessment and peer-assessment:

The implementation of the principles of the Framework and the European Language Portfolio in the study process motivates students to learn foreign languages by taking into account learners’ age-specific and individual characteristics and guides students of differing abilities to set achievable personal learning goals, and gives them objective feedback on their performance. All this facilitates enduring learning motivation and the formation of independent learners. (Appendix 2 2014: 2)

While neither document mentions the term FA, they provide another example to back up Little’s idea that in language learning using portfolios and developing learner autonomy serve a similar function to FA and are a necessary part of language learning.

Overall, assessment in language learning can serve one of two functions: either to measure learners’ proficiency without reference to a language course, or to measure the extent to which they have achieved the goals of a particular programme of learning. Within the latter function it is usual to distinguish between elements of formative and summative assessment. FA takes place during the course of learning in order to provide learners with

feedback on their progress and alert the teacher to any aspects of the course that may need adjustment. Summative assessment, on the other hand, takes place at the end of the course and seeks to measure overall learning achievement (COE n.d.). Elements of FA and summative assessment are therefore often combined, for example in Estonia in an EFL context. More standardised methods of assessment are still widely used (for example final exams or proficiency tests that generate a score which can be translated into a statement about the learner's proficiency/ achievement). On the other hand, FA methods can be used to assure the improvement of students' language skills, for example a compilation of evidence that illustrates what the learner can do in their target language. The evidence may take the form of written text (essays, letters or other documents relevant to the learner's target repertoire) or recordings in audio or video which demonstrate the learner's oral capacities (COE n.d.). A good example of this is, again, the European Language Portfolio, which combines elements of both summative- and formative assessment. Besides having functions to support the learner, it also allows for more summative methods to determine at which level the student is currently at. Additionally, the portfolio has functions focusing on the culture of the target language.

1.3 Researching teachers' perception

If we want to look at how FA is implemented, we first need to discuss the function of perceptions in education. Any change and reform in education requires teachers to employ their professional competences and adapt to new requirements. For this they have to 'make decisions in their teaching based on their experiences, perceptions, values and beliefs about their roles, activities, and responsibilities in schools' (Bentea and Valerica: 2012: 167). According to Orafi (2013: 14-16), curriculum implementation is a complex process: teachers are not just implementers of policies but they modify, interpret and

implement the curriculum according to their beliefs. Therefore, teachers' perceptions have a profound influence not only on their practice but also on curriculum implementation, and it is important to research these beliefs to determine how and whether something has been implemented.

Kärt Villemson's MA thesis *Teacher Positioning in the Context of Education Reform* examined EFL teachers' perceptions of the reform of the public education system reorganising the network of schools and the national curricula. The thesis, as the new national curricula included the term FA for the first time, also touched upon EFL teachers' perceptions of FA. The results regarding FA showed the various ways in which FA was defined by teachers: 'as feedback, as encouragement given to students ('oh well done'), or as giving process grades in every lesson' (Villemson 2014: 61). One teacher suggested that possibly the European language levels system could be used in giving feedback but in general explained that teachers have to give grades and added that the main motivation for learning is still the grade (ibid). The research concludes that teachers position FA as something that has always been done and 'it was a positive reminder' in the curricula; or claim that this cannot be done or is 'difficult to implement', especially in secondary school (ibid). These results altogether appear rather contradictory. On the one hand, they suggest that teachers might see FA as an alternative to grades while, actually, the use of FA does not exclude grades nor does it exclude the use of the language level system. On the other hand, some teachers appear to be giving grades every lesson. Teachers seem to be divided by their stance on whether FA is difficult to implement or self-explanatory. Thus, it could again be argued that examining teachers' perceptions is important as it gives insights into how a reform is being implemented. The results at hand illustrate that the definition of the national curricula does not align with the teachers' understanding and perhaps prove that changes should be made to improve the situation.

A number of specific studies on FA with the focus of teachers' understanding have been conducted in Estonia with quite a few papers on this topic coming from the University of Tartu Institute of Education. Pakosta, in her 2012 thesis *The Use of Formative Assessment in Everyday Work by Teachers with Different Length of Work Experience* reported that teachers (their subject was not specified), both beginners and long-term, are familiar with the term FA and most of its methods. Many methods were brought out as either synonymous with the term FA or being the most important out of all its methods, for example, the constant dialogue between the teacher and the learner throughout the entire learning process, and students' active participation in the process were mentioned by all the participants (Pakosta 2012: 13). Setting goals together and peer assessment were mentioned by some but not all of the participants. Personal feedback was also very frequently equated with FA by all the participants, explaining that this is where the 'formative aspect' comes out: It is highly necessary to give constant feedback, not just at the end but throughout the learning process, to inform the student about their strengths and weaknesses and advise them on how to go forward, all the while taking into consideration their personal development and giving instruction that align with the goals set by the student (op. cit. 14). This is done so as to lessen students fear of tests. The given feedback was both oral and written via E-Kool. The written feedback was mostly an explanation for the grade for the parents so that they can monitor their child's development. The thesis also examined where teachers had gained their knowledge of FA. Sources ranged from periodicals, with many teachers noting the newspaper *Õpetajate Leht*, to trainings and seminars. The study also found that most of the beginner teachers heard of FA from older colleagues (ibid).

The 2017 MA thesis *Teachers' understanding of formative assessment and expectations regarding support for its application* by Pähklemäe that specifically examined

history teachers, however, arrived at different results. For the teachers who participated in the study it was not clear what FA is and they admitted they needed know-how from practitioners, more training, and cooperation with parents to apply FA. The teachers' understanding of FA included having no understanding at all, a tool for the teacher, a method to monitor student development and a feedback tool used before eventual grading (Pähklemäe 2017: 17). There was a more negative attitude regarding FA from teachers, who have not had first-hand experience with it and for them, its place is rather in elementary school (op. cit. 34). The study also showed that according to the study participants the term FA needs national unification to ensure its application in Estonian schools (op. cit. 18).

Kuusk's 2017 MA thesis *Estonian primary school handcraft and home economics teachers' understandings of formative assessment and their willingness to apply it in educational studies* results revealed that most of the Estonian handcraft and home economics teachers use FA to some extent. Teachers mostly perceived FA as a process where the student is motivated and guided to reach the learning objective (Kuusk 2017: 18). Giving feedback while using FA was also very important aspect that was brought out by the teachers, claiming that it helps to motivate the students, especially when assessing creativity (op. cit. 28). The study also revealed that teachers have not received sufficient training about FA and demonstrated their interest in applying this methodology more efficiently and claimed that how they regard FA depends greatly on how much their school values it – whether they see its usefulness in application or whether they doubt its function (op. cit. 10).

Similarly, the results of Sõõro's 2016 MA thesis *Rural teachers' preferences on forms and methods of feedback, and their adequacy to the principles of formative assessment* show that FA is perceived as 'assessment during which students are given

feedback about their study results, the students are guided in their further learning and guided to achieve the goals they set' (op. cit. 27). Methods used by the teachers included determining the students' prior skills, self- and peer assessment, making adjustments to the learning process based on how the students are progressing, some of which teachers use every day. There were some inaccuracies regarding the methods of implementing FA, for example, teachers, despite being aware of different types of FA methods, did not identify 'determining the students' prior skills' as a method of FA (op. cit. 26). Additionally, giving written feedback on E-Kool was considered a method of FA by the teachers but the author argued that it is, instead, informing the parents of their child's progress (ibid). Teachers claimed to be ready to use FA principles in their classrooms but felt held back by a lack of a common national strategy. To solve this situation, the teachers said that their schools are attempting to write up an assessment guide, but the teachers saw this as problematic as the guide will depend on the schools' personal interpretations of FA, which could lead to problems when the students are switching schools and faced with a drastic change in the assessment procedure (op. cit. 27).

In 2018 Kätli Randmaa defended her thesis *Students' and English Teachers' Perceptions of the Use and Value of Formative Assessment in Two Estonian Upper Secondary Schools* in the Department of English at Tartu University. This was the first thesis focusing solely on FA to be defended in the Department. Randmaa used interviews with teachers and students of two Estonian upper-secondary schools: 5 interviews with teachers and 4 interviews with student focus groups, with the students' age ranging between 17 and 19 (11th and 12th grades). The aim of the study was to 'analyse students' and teachers' perceptions of the use and value of formative assessment and answer the questions whether there are differences in how students and teachers perceive the assessment and feedback they give or receive in upper secondary English classes and, if so,

what are the differences' (Randmaa 2018: 35) 'so that teachers would be more aware of the effect of the assessment methods they use on their students, their results and motivation to learn' (op. cit. 2). The results showed that the FA methods that teachers used were similar. All of the EFL teachers claimed they use presentations, self-assessment, peer-assessment and portfolios. Most of them also claimed to give constant oral and written feedback during and after instruction (op. cit. 36). All of the teachers claimed that they use formative assessment techniques knowingly, but most of them do not use them daily due to lack of time (ibid). The results highlighted a contradiction in students' and teachers' perceptions. Students did not think they received enough feedback, while teachers believed they had given a sufficient amount. Similarly, teachers believed that students preferred feedback to summative assessment, but in many cases students preferred the opposite, claiming that while FA may have a positive effect on their motivation to learn, they are more used to grades (op. cit. 37).

Altogether, these studies highlight contradicting results of teachers not understanding or grasping the definition of FA and teachers either knowing FA methods or feeling inadequate about their knowledge. It is, however, possible to ascertain that teachers' perceptions are an important determinant of the application of FA and an understanding of these perceptions could be useful in ensuring successful education reform. While the aforementioned researches have looked at teachers' understanding of FA, unfortunately, the specific aspect of Estonian EFL teachers' perceptions has not been as thoroughly studied. It is also important to compare whether these perceptions of FA methods align with the methods proposed by theorists. The present thesis hopes to contribute to understanding teachers' perceptions of FA by focusing on the EFL teachers who claim to definitely use FA in their practice.

2. ESTONIAN ENGLISH TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

This chapter discusses the study of this MA thesis. The first subchapters introduce the methodology of the study: the research questions, the method, the data gathering procedure, the participants, and finally explains how the data was analysed. The second half of the subchapters presents the results of the study along with a discussion.

2.1. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study was to research teachers' understanding of FA and its application. More specifically, the aim of this thesis is to study English language teachers who claim to use FA to gain an understanding of their perception of the term and examine the methods they use to conduct this assessment procedure. The study also attempts to determine which of the methods proposed by theorists and education specialists those used by the teachers of this case study comply with. Based on the aforementioned, three main research questions were formulated:

1. What is the teacher's understanding of FA?
2. How does the teacher apply FA in their classroom?
3. How much overlap is there between the methods used by the teacher and the methods described in education theories on FA?

2.2. Method

The study used a qualitative approach, a case study involving interviews with teachers. Since teachers' interpretations could be much more fragmentary and complex than is suggested by quantitative analyses, a qualitative approach could help gain a deeper understanding of these interpretations. Moreover, as the goal was to reach a subjective

understanding, a smaller sample enabled depth, detail and context to understand the phenomenon (Adolphus n.d), and thus case study was chosen as an appropriate method.

Since the aim of this study was to determine teachers' understanding of FA and discover what methods they use to apply it, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather the necessary rich data. The semi-structured interview allowed thorough descriptive answers, detailed explanations, as well as the possibility to ask elaborations (Lepp and Remmik n.d). The semi-structured interview format also allowed for freedom and flexibility with both questions and answers when acquiring the data (Phatak and Intratat 2012: 8), which proved vital while asking for elaborations and while allowing the interviewee to explain their interpretations freely.

Based on the three research questions, two sets of interview questions were formulated, one set for the first and one set for the second research question. The third question was answered by the author drawing conclusions based on the interview results. The first set included five questions and the second set eight, the majority of which are open-ended questions to allow for more descriptive and thorough answers. Additional questions were asked whenever an answer required elaboration or clarification. The interview questions are provided in Appendix 1.

2.3. Data Gathering Procedure

A pilot interview was conducted before the three main interviews. The goals of the pilot interview were to confirm that the interview questions were unambiguous and sufficient for providing answers to the research questions. The pilot interview was carried out with a mathematics teacher who has worked as a teacher for one year and has used FA in their classroom. Since the teacher is not an EFL teacher, the interview results are not used in this thesis.

The pilot interview confirmed that the questions were open enough to encourage rich descriptive answers. Some minor changes were made as a result of the pilot interview. Firstly, the initially planned use of the polite 'You – Teie' during the interviews was replaced with the more informal 'You – Sina', as the former would have created too formal of a situation considering the author and the teachers participating in the interviews had thus far communicated using more informal speech. Secondly, the question 'how long have you been using FA?' was omitted since the participant became focused more on the length of time they have used FA and not on the main question which followed: 'where did you get the idea to start using FA?'

The three face-to-face interviews were carried out in April 2018. At the first meeting, the research topic and aims were introduced and an agreement was made to take part in the study. Further agreements on the time and place of the interviews as well as the confirmation of agreeing to take part were made via e-mail. Prior to the interview, the participants were sent the interview questions and they were informed that the interviews would be recorded and that their personal information, including their name and school, will remain confidential. Due to the latter, the introductory questions of the interviews were not transcribed.

The interview questions and answers were recorded using the Windows 10 Voice Recorder. Before the recorder was turned on, the interviewees were encouraged to be as detailed and descriptive as possible as the aim of the study was to analyse teachers' perceptions. Two of the interviews took place in the teachers' homes and one in the teacher's classroom. The interviews lasted 33:43, 48:44 and 57:08 minutes respectively. The interviews were conducted in Estonian, despite the teachers being proficient in English. The reason for this approach was to make the teacher feel as comfortable as possible, since the use of English might have made the situation too formal as prior communication had been entirely in Estonian or might have given the teacher an

impression that the interviewer was assessing the teacher's language skills. The list of the specific interview questions can be found in Appendix 1. The transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants so that they could review it and, if need be, correct any mistakes before the process of the data analysis began.

2.4. Participants

The teachers chosen to be interviewed had to work as full-time EFL teachers during the time the data was gathered and had to be using FA with their students. All in all, three teachers were interviewed. A potential participant declined to participate as he did not think he used FA despite the other teachers of his school claiming he did.

The following short teacher profiles were compiled so as not to reveal any sensitive information about respondents. The names of the teachers and their schools will remain anonymous and each teacher has been assigned a pseudonym to maintain the confidentiality of their personal information. A summary overview of the profiles is provided in Table 2.

Teacher A is currently a basic school teacher with ten and a half years of teaching experience. She first taught grades 5-9 for one year in Tallinn after obtaining a Bachelor's degree from Tallinn University. She also attempted to teach the same age group in a small town outside of Tartu during her MA studies at the University of Tartu; however, since working and studying full time proved too difficult, she quit working after half a year. She resumed work in a Tartu basic school after obtaining her Master's degree. The school itself is a private school.

Teacher B graduated from the former Tallinn Pedagogical Institute, which today is part of Tallinn University. The five-year programme she graduated from is now the equivalent of a Master's degree from the university. After graduation, she worked for a

university for approximately seventeen years teaching English to BA students from different departments. For the past twenty years, she has worked for a school in Tallinn, where she teaches both basic and secondary school students. The school currently has an extended curriculum in English, specifically CLIL lessons in English.

Teacher C has only taught secondary school students throughout her career. She also graduated from the former Tallinn Pedagogical Institute's five-year programme and after graduation has been teaching at the same comprehensive school in Tallinn for roughly twenty-six years.

Table 2. Background information of the interviewees

Pseudonym	Age	Education background	Work experience	Location of school	Student age group
Teacher A	34	University of Tartu MA	10.5 years	Tartu	Basic school
Teacher B	61	Tallinn University MA	37 years	Tallinn	Basic and secondary school
Teacher C	52	Tallinn University MA	26 years	Tallinn	Secondary school

2.5. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used as the data analysis method. Since the objective of the study was to describe and analyse phenomena, the thematic analysis approach was suitable as it allows to categorise and systemise the rich data of the interviews. The thematic analysis acted as a categorisation tool for systematising the narrative the teachers provided.

The analysis of the data was conducted in three steps: transcribing the interviews, coding the data and finding recurring themes in the codes. The first step was to transcribe

the interview recordings verbatim. *VLC media player* was used for this process, as it enabled slowing the recording down as well as rewinding when necessary. This step was necessary for the author to ‘get immersed in the data’ for the coding process (Patton, 2002: 441).

The second step was identifying relevant data and developing codes. This required going through the data repeatedly and identifying meaningful units. These units constituted a piece of text that could be either an entire interview question answer, quote or parts of the answer, for example a sentence or phrase that could contribute to answering the research questions. These analytical units were given a name (also known as ‘code’)- ‘names or phrases that provided meaning to the segment’ (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 371). These codes were inductive codes in the sense that they were identified by directly examining the data. Once the data was coded, the next step involved looking at all the codes again and discovering the specific themes emerging from the codes to further organise and report the findings. This entire process was conducted with both the first and second research question. An example of the codes and themes has been presented in the Appendices (see Appendix 2 for an example of a coded interview question and Appendix 3 for an example of themes).

2.6. Results

The results of the data can be divided into two main categories based on the research question: perception and application.

2.6.1. Perception

The responses to the first research question ‘What is the teacher’s understanding of FA and its application?’ displayed both similar and some contrasting interpretations of FA. The main themes emerging from the data regarding this question included feedback,

contrast with grades, motivating, ongoing process, making adjustments, responsibility and raising self-awareness.

A common theme in all the participants' answers was feedback. All the participants, when asked to define FA as they understand it, said, in variations that it is the process of giving feedback to students. This feedback included informing the students *'of their strengths, their weaknesses and which further steps they need to take to rectify those weaknesses [...]to be more successful the next time round'* (Teacher C). Teacher A stressed that the feedback *'always has to be there'* in some form *'otherwise the process would not be formative'*. Teachers giving feedback was, however, not the only form of feedback the teachers associated with FA. They also noted the feedback students give themselves during self-assessment. At some points in the interviews the word 'feedback' became almost synonymous with the term FA, with the teachers occasionally reverting to the use of the phrase 'formative feedback' ('kujundav tagasiside') instead of FA. These examples demonstrate that the teachers perceive 'teachers giving feedback to students' as the key strategy for FA, and seemingly equate it to FA.

The responses also provided an interesting view on grades and FA, making 'contrast with grades' the next theme as the participants often defined FA by contrasting it with grades by claiming, for example, it to being *'more flexible than just giving a grade'* (Teacher B). Teacher A explained that FA is *'more a part of the learning or feedback process than part of the assessment process'*. The teacher expressed her distaste for the word assessment ('hindamine') in formative assessment ('kujundav hindamine'), claiming that it *'ruins the term'* by emphasising the assessment, and consequently grading, more than the learning process. In addition, the Estonian phrases 'giving a grade' ('hinde andmine') and 'receiving a grade' ('hinde saamine') were contrasted with teacher C pointing out that the Estonian school system tends to 'give grades' *'rather than say that the*

students are the ones getting the grades'. As the teachers are required to give grades, teacher B added that FA is a great tool to complement grades, which, she claimed, the students are also motivated to get. She also added that she had not used much feedback in her classroom before reading about FA. Teacher A, on the other hand, said that *'if it were up to [her]'*, she would *'get rid of grades altogether and use only FA'*. This seemed a confusing revelation as it would allude to FA being seen as an alternative to grades. This might suggest teachers are perceiving the word 'hindamine' as taking place only at the end of the learning process and not during. However, all the participants use grades and, according to their own descriptions, combine the two assessment forms since they are required to give a minimum of three grades during a study period.

Another theme was motivation, which captured the participants' reason for the use of FA. Teacher B jokingly said that *'she likes being the nice teacher and that constantly praising the students is fun'*. She explained that FA is *'a great tool to encourage weaker students by praising their efforts and for crediting the stronger students for their success and hard work'*. The other two teachers, on the other hand, mentioned motivation being more of a by-product of FA. Teachers A and C claimed that they have noticed their students becoming more self-motivated after they began using FA in their classrooms. According to the teachers, the students *'seem to be more active in class'* and that *'test results have improved'* with students *'achieving good grades already on the first take'*. This also aligns with Teacher C's definition of FA, where she said that *'the goal of FA is to shape a successful learner'*. On the basis of how the participants discussed motivation, it appears to be both a strategy of encouragement as well as a result of the use of FA.

The next two themes seemed to be intertwined: ongoing process and making adjustments. All the teachers frequently mentioned how FA is something they do constantly throughout the entire learning process and not occasionally. Teachers A and C

both emphasised that they use FA constantly, with Teacher A specifying that she uses it *'before any test'* so that *'they would not immediately get a grade based on their first attempt but that the students get several opportunities throughout the learning process to test their skills and get feedback'*. Based on how the students managed, the teachers would be able to *'make adjustments to their teaching by trying different approaches'*. The students can also make adjustments to their learning based on the feedback received from the teacher. Teacher B, however, has a different approach to this theme. While she claims to use FA constantly and make adjustments, each and every attempt *'gets a grade'*. She explained her reason for doing this as *'a way to keep the students serious and focused on achieving good results and to prevent them from getting lazy'* and that the feedback is an added bonus. All in all, in the teachers' eyes, FA is an ongoing process of making adjustments to learning and teaching.

The theme 'responsibility' emerged as Teacher A was describing why she uses FA. She said that with FA *'the student gets to be involved in the formation of the final grade'*. Her strategy was to either let the student retake the test until they were satisfied with the result or have the students correct their own tests using objective criteria lists handed out by the teacher. The teacher noted that, while initially fearing the extra amount of test correction, the students have instead started to achieve successful result on the first attempt of taking the test and have begun to take more responsibility for their learning. For example, when correcting their own tests, *'they knew why they made certain mistakes and admitted to not taking the time to learn certain materials'*. By using these strategies, the teacher has instilled into the students that learning is fully their responsibility and that assessment is not solely the final judgement call of the teacher.

Finally, when explaining their perception of FA, self-awareness was often mentioned in the context of why using FA is beneficial. Teacher B defined FA as *'the*

process that shapes the student's understanding of their knowledge', explaining that by using FA *'students will know whether they have made any progress since the last assessment or since [...] for example two months ago'*. Teacher C, claiming that she has started using self-assessment because of FA, says that she has seen an increase in students being *'more self-aware of their language skills, meaning that they have become more adequate at defining their weaknesses by themselves and that have also become capable of independently fixing these mistakes on their own before [the teacher] can make any suggestions'* on how to do so. This theme is closely connected with the theme of self-assessment, which will be discussed in the next section.

While the aim of this interview question set was to learn more about perception, the teachers several times proceeded to give examples of their methodology as well, for example, when explaining when they give only a grade or when they give feedback. These findings will also be added to the discussion about methods in section 2.7.

2.6.2. Application

The second research question *'How does the teacher apply FA in their classroom?'* aimed to discover how the teachers use FA specifically in their EFL classes. The interviews generated the following themes: their assessment process, self-assessment, all students, writing and grammar, methods not used, and creating a positive atmosphere. The responses to this research question highlighted themes that were common to all the interviewees as well as showed how different the three participants' methods were.

When asked to take the interviewer through their assessment process, the differences in the teachers' methods as well as in their understanding became more apparent. Teacher A said that she uses FA combined with summative assessment, specifying that she needs to give approximately three grades during a study period and the

formative aspect involves explaining to the students what they will be doing during the study period and giving lots of feedback to the students before and after the tests, sometimes individually but sometimes to the entire class when there are recurring mistakes. The feedback is either written or oral and before each unit she lets the students self-assess themselves. She also allows the students, after receiving feedback, to retake a test as many times as they wish until they think they have achieved the desired outcome. She explained that she feels *'it is unfair to give [a grade] based on the first try'*, for example when the student has written well in linguistic terms but off-topic, and she said that teachers must give a second chance *'because during the correction process the student learns much more than when they are studying for the initial test'*. She explained that because of her assessment system the students are *'gladly owning up to their mistakes'* or shortcomings and are more motivated to discuss them and work on them.

Teacher B described her assessment process as *'quite simple'*. She said that the students receive three to five grades a period, depending on the speed with which they obtain the material. She explained that after a test the student *'receives a grade and based on that there will be an evaluation'* on whether the student has progressed or not worked to the best of their abilities or below their expected level. When asked to elaborate, she specified that by *'evaluations'* she means *'for example, A+ is perfect, or for weak pieces of work she writes "awful" or semi-awful'*. She explained that these verbal evaluations make grades less scary and the students are aware which evaluation equals which grade. On the students' written tests, she simply points out whether the answer was right or wrong. Once the students get the tests back, they are expected to correct the mistakes themselves and add an explanation to recurring mistakes. She said that the younger students feel proud when they successfully identify their mistakes and they feel as though they have been given a huge responsibility. The secondary school students have also told her that they

enjoy this process and that it helps them eliminate recurring mistakes before the national examination.

Teacher C explained that her assessment process *'involves the students applying feedback'*. She says that she gives the students four grades during the study period. However, the final grade is given for a huge unit test that incorporates all the elements of the previous tests. This final test both revises as well as gives the students a second chance to apply the feedback they have received during the study process and after the tests. This constant feedback is individual and both written and oral, depending on which skill is being assessed. She also incorporates self-assessment, which will be discussed more thoroughly in the next paragraph.

A theme that emerged involved the strategy of self-assessment. Teachers A and C claim to use self-assessment with their students frequently. When asked to elaborate on their methods, Teacher A said that she relies on the 'can-do' statements at the beginning of the textbook units, because they are convenient. She has the students give the statements a rating and then share the results with the class before they proceed with the unit itself. However, after the unit has been completed, she admitted that they do not always manage to retake the self-analysis to analyse the learned skills before moving on to the next topic due to a tight schedule. Teacher C had a different approach. She has her students frequently write a self-analysis before and after studying a unit, where they describe their skills, weaknesses and an action plan for improvements. Sometimes, she allows *'the students to give themselves a grade based on their own opinion about their improvement'*. The teacher occasionally sets aside a lesson where she has individual discussions with the students about their self-analysis and offers suggestions, while the rest of the class has independent assignments. As a last step, based on all the self-assessments accumulated throughout the schoolyear, she asks the students to write a final self-assessment, which

they hand in to the teacher. Teacher C added that should she be cut short for time, she has the students, especially younger ones, rate their understanding of a topic on a scale of one to five by raising their fingers. Without mentioning any specific problem areas, the teacher, *'after having gained work experience, [has] become equipped to identify patterns of problems'*. Unlike Teachers A and C, Teacher B does not use self-assessment, claiming she *'already knows the students' self-esteem'* and rather than having them articulate it, she instead praises the students as much as possible to make them more motivated. It thus appears that teachers are aware that self-assessment is a strategy of FA; however, the application of it greatly depends on the strategy they personally find most suitable for their classroom.

The teachers claimed to use FA with all students, making it the next theme. When asked to elaborate whether they use FA with certain classes, certain age groups or certain students in the class, the answers were unanimously *'with everyone'*, and slightly more with the weaker students as they might require more encouragement. Teacher C added that it is also necessary to use FA with the stronger students to *'make them aware of the learning style that led to their good results as well as praise them for their accomplishments'* as well as ask if there is anything additional they wish to learn should they finish given tasks early. Teacher A said that there is always something to improve, including with the stronger students. With weaker students, the teachers usually try and give as much feedback as possible. Teacher B admitted that often the students might not take the feedback in, as becomes apparent after the results of the next test. Nevertheless, she thinks that she does not really have an alternative and *'hopes that the student eventually realises what they have to do'*. Teachers A and C did not mention any problems and said that the weaker students have become, as time has gone by, used to the FA system, and often already know what the teacher is going to give them as feedback.

When asked which skills the teachers use FA with, the most prevalent answers were writing and grammar, a common theme among all three participants' answers. Teacher A explained that FA makes the assessment of writing '*less subjective and more objective [...] as the students become more aware of the criteria*' (Teacher C). Grammar was considered important due to the teachers' own opinion that '*with proper grammar, which is like (1) the foundation of language, the students can build upon any other skill easily*' (Teacher B). When asked how they give feedback on both writing and grammar, the answers were alike – immediate oral feedback for grammar and written feedback for writing tasks. Teacher B said that, with written work, it is hard to give oral feedback, so instead she writes a lot of feedback on the written work or posts it into E-Kool. The teachers claimed to prefer oral feedback due to the speed as well as fearing that with written feedback '*students have the urge to look at the grade and toss the paper in the trash*' (Teacher A). The teachers admitted that they did not use FA with skills such as listening and reading, admitting, seemingly with embarrassment that '*unfortunately those are skills which are ignored quite often*' (Teacher C), describing the skills as almost 'self-explanatory' (Teacher A) and not needing too much time dedicated to assessment at all, except during preparations for examinations and during lessons with multiple choice exercises after either listening to a recording or reading a text, but in the case of the latter two they usually just check the correctness of the answers and occasionally analyse why they interpreted an answer the way they did, without giving almost any individual feedback. They explained that as reading and listening hugely rely on comprehension they usually practice vocabulary and grammar to enable this comprehension. The teachers explained that these skills rely on the other skills and '*go hand-in-hand meaning that [...] without vocabulary and grammar there is no comprehension of either reading or listening*' (Teacher B). As for speaking, the teachers tended to encourage any type of speaking, '*be it correct or not*' (Teacher A), and

offering instant feedback in the form of correction or praise. Again, the teachers emphasised the same points they did with listening and reading; however, all the teachers said that they give students more feedback after they have finished retelling a text. They explained that then they have time for one-on-one conversation and feedback before giving the student a grade. Teacher C said that she might also 'boost the grade' if the student manages to correct themselves based on the feedback of the teacher.

Several themes emerged among the methods the teachers claimed not to use: peer assessment, portfolios, learner autonomy, setting goals. When explaining why they did not use peer-assessment the teachers listed reasons such as the students being ashamed of their weaknesses when working with their peers, fears of students being mean to one another and not trusting the students to be capable of identifying all the mistakes in the peer's work.

Setting goals and achieving learner autonomy were not mentioned by teachers before being asked about. When asked for a reason, the teachers explained that they are still required as teachers to lead the teaching process and make the decisions themselves concerning the topics, skills and difficulty levels that they cover in class. Teacher B said that she was concerned the students do not know how to set goals, what goals to set and keep those goals in mind throughout the learning process. She also feared that teaching this would take a lot of time that they do not have within the school year. Teacher C agreed saying that she sees this happening only with older and more mature students. Teachers A and B did add that should there be time left over at the end of the school year they will ask the students to make suggestions for topics to cover to involve them more in the curricula, but usually students suggest games or other fun activities instead. This would suggest that the participants perceived the strategy of setting goals as students proposing topics for the class and not really a method of FA. Teacher A hinted back at the 'can-do' statements she

uses and added that the same statements have a part where the students can add a goal they wish to achieve. However, she said she never looks at these nor does she follow up on them, explaining that it is the students' own responsibility. The same teacher spoke about responsibility in the perception part of the interview. When answering this question about learner autonomy, however, she used the word autonomy instead of responsibility. Regarding autonomy, the other two teachers again explained that while they want students to independently fix their mistakes, the teachers still need to '*lead the learning process*' (Teacher B).

The teachers were asked whether they use portfolios or the European Language portfolio. Two teachers, B and C, did claim to use portfolios but not for any assessment goal. The aim of the portfolio was more to collect course materials all in one place. Teacher B thought that at the end of the school year '*looking at the thick portfolio, the students will see how much they have learned*'. None of the three teachers claimed to use the European Language portfolio. Two of the three teachers explained that they were not familiar with it and have not looked into it further. The third teacher, Teacher A, while saying the European Language portfolio would be beneficial for the students to monitor their own language level, said that she prefers not to use portfolios as '*the students will not stay motivated enough to collect everything and [they] will just end up losing stuff*'.

The teachers perceived positive atmosphere as a component of their FA approach. Teacher A claimed that it is important to '*make the students feel like learning is fun and that mistakes are fun because we learn from them*' and she implements this by never being rude to the students but, instead, using a friendly tone after they make a mistake. Teacher B often has picnics to reward the students for their work and gives students little trinkets she has ordered online for a small amount of money '*to give them a boost of self-esteem*'. She explained that '*even though the item is cheap, it means a lot to the children*', and added

that she often gives students with bad handwriting a pen with an encouraging message on it *‘to make the student more mindful of their handwriting’*. She later added that she often does not use the textbooks and instead creates materials based on the students’ own interests *‘to make them feel like they are cared about’*. Teacher C has created a ‘no bullying policy’ that bans *‘any snide remark or giggling at students’ mistakes’* and *‘rewards maturity and tolerance’*. She stated that this not only teaches the subject but also teaches students how to be *‘good people’*. The three teachers claimed to use these methods in an attempt to create a safe and encouraging environment for learning.

2.7. Discussion

The third research question ‘How much overlap is there between the methods used by the teacher and the methods described in education theories of FA?’ was not directly addressed to the teachers but was instead the point where the author can draw conclusions based on the gathered data.

As far as theories and theorists affecting the teachers’ approaches are concerned, none of the teachers claimed to consciously base her methods on any specific theories on FA or theorists’ approaches. Two of the three teachers initially referred to FA as having become a somewhat generally known thing among teachers over the last couple of years. When asked for more specific sources, Teacher A mentioned a teacher training course she attended led by Tiisvelt, citing it as her source of information on FA, and Teacher C mentioned national curricula as her source of knowledge on the topic as well as nonspecific Estonian articles on the internet, the latter also mentioned by Teacher C. All three teachers mentioned reading newspapers and online articles, with *Õpetajate Leht* publication mentioned as an example, which is similar to the findings in Pakosta’s thesis.

This would suggest that the teachers' knowledge of FA is largely derived from or influenced by local publications, local specialists' courses and local official documents.

Despite naming the national curricula as a source of information, there are discrepancies between the methods used by the teachers and the methods listed in the document – the teachers implement only some of the required methods. The methods that the teachers claim to use include giving feedback. The feedback which they give is descriptive, points out both strengths and weaknesses and gives further direction for future actions. This feedback is both oral and written and involves both general competences as well as learning objectives. Overall, the description provided by the teachers is similar to that of the document. In the case of Teacher B, however, who uses descriptions such as 'awful' and 'semi-awful' instead of grades, it could be argued that these codewords do not constitute sufficient feedback for the students nor are they a part of FA but instead summative assessments where number grades have been replaced with descriptive word grades. She did, on the other hand, claim to write vast amounts of feedback into E-Kool and give one-on-one oral feedback to the students. The teachers also described using self-assessment but only to a degree, with only one teacher using it to constantly monitor students' development, one to pre-assess before the course and the last teacher opting out completely. However, this is where the similarities with the national curricula end. The other three requirements – peer assessment, portfolios and goal setting- were claimed not to be used at all, with their reasons cited in the 'Results' section of this thesis. Instead, conditions such as 'creating a positive atmosphere for the students' were identified, which could be argued is the basis for any learning situation and not pertaining specifically to FA. What is more, the teachers, when describing their understanding of FA, named the principle goals and expected results of FA, such as feedback that feeds forward, increase in motivation, having FA as an ongoing process to make adjustments, giving students

responsibility and increasing self-awareness. This might demonstrate that they have an understanding of the concept of FA. However, all the while omitting some of the key techniques and relying mostly on feedback possibly confirms that the teachers do not know the techniques that constitute FA. All in all, the aforementioned suggests that, despite claiming to use FA and describing their approach as FA, the teachers are applying the assessment method partially and their practice is, therefore, not in accordance with the requirements of the Estonian National Curricula.

As for FA in an EFL classroom, it did not appear that the teachers strove towards learner autonomy, when comparing the teachers' perceptions to Little's description of autonomy. Firstly, the teachers did not use portfolios for any formative aspect, but rather to compile printed materials. What is more, they claimed not to see the value in the European Language Portfolio, but how much background information the teachers have on what the portfolio is remained unclear. The portfolio could, however, help the teachers assess different language skills, since at the moment the teachers apply FA only to writing and grammar tasks. Secondly, the teachers often mentioned involving the students more in the learning process, giving them more responsibility and aiming towards independent learners. However, when asked to elaborate, all three teachers gave explanations of how their approaches have made the students more sufficient at self-correction relieving teachers of the responsibility of error correction to some degree. The teachers gave no indication that learner autonomy could also involve learning to learn (except for teacher C claiming that she makes stronger students more aware of their learning style), or monitoring the students while they taught themselves. Instead, they viewed themselves as the leaders and at the centre of the learning process, describing having to make decisions about the course tempo and topics covered. Thus, it seems that learner autonomy was interpreted as the students' ability to correct themselves.

Teacher A and C used elements of methods cited by the theorists mentioned in the literature review of this thesis. An important technique according to Black and Wiliam is having students constantly evaluate themselves using criteria, with Stiggins going a step further and suggesting having the students make the criteria themselves using samples of both weak and strong work. Teacher A said that she has the students correct their own tests based on a marking scale the students have received and discussed prior to the test. She did not claim to use any sample works. Both of the aforementioned theorists' models along with Brookhart's also included having discussions that prove the students' understanding of the topic at hand. Again, teacher A claimed to initiate discussions concerning mistake patterns or other common struggles the students might have with the current topic. Finally, Brookhart lists pre-assessment as an important activity, which teacher A with can-do statements and teacher C with self-assessment claimed to do.

As for similarities to or differences from the results of other research papers in Estonia there are some. Overall, it does not seem that English teachers perceive FA differently from teachers of other subjects. For example, similarly to Pakosta's research, teachers seemed to perceive feedback as the most important component of FA, if not synonymous with FA. Along with Sõõro's research, the results of this study show that the teachers do not use the same methods to conduct FA in their classrooms. Contrary to the present MA thesis results, however, Randmaa's thesis found that all of the EFL teachers claimed to use self-assessment, peer-assessment and portfolios in addition to constant feedback. With the aforementioned considered, it could be argued that the overall perception of FA is the same among teachers, yet when it comes to application, the differences might become more evident.

It is also important to point out that the thesis at hand has some limitations. Even though an analysis of interviews with three English teachers offers insights into teachers'

understanding of FA and its application, the small number of participants does not allow for generalisations. Were the number of participants to increase, a different type of data analysis could have been used, such as content analysis or the grounded theory, which possibly could have led to additional conclusions as to teachers' perceptions of FA, especially since the three participants were quite different from one another. Additionally, the outcome of the coding process could have also been either altered or, instead, validated by using a co-coder for a second opinion. Finally, after having explained the aim of the thesis to the participants, the author fears the teachers could have adapted a more negative mindset in regards to the term FA as illustrated by Teacher C injecting her opinion on how problematic the term is into some of her answers and making a final remark on the confusion surrounding the term FA when asked if they wanted to add anything about any topic. The teacher explained that she believes the translation 'kujundav hindamine' is not the same as the term 'FA' as 'hindamine' has strong connotations with receiving a grade and at times it is difficult to fully understand what is referred to by 'kujundav hindamine'. The teacher's opinions may have been coincidental, but there could be a chance that the aim of the thesis could have affected their views of FA prior to the interview.

It is hoped that this analysis of teacher' understanding furthers our own understanding of the process of Estonian education reform. A possible development of the current graduation paper would be to extend the thesis to observations of the teachers in action. Observations on how the teachers' practice of FA aligns with their beliefs would complement the analysis at hand. Some FA techniques that the teachers use they may not have recalled over the course of the interview or they may apply some techniques subconsciously.

CONCLUSION

The term formative assessment (FA; 'kujundav hindamine' in Estonian) along with its definition and strategies for application was added to the National Curricula of Estonia in 2011. However, it appears that schools and teachers are still struggling to apply it. A reason for this could be that teachers do not quite understand the concept of FA. They might be confusing it with non-numerical evaluation. Secondly, the term FA has synonyms and alternative terms, such as 'assessment for learning', with small nuances which might also lead to some confusion. Therefore, this MA thesis aims to analyse teachers' understanding of formative assessment. More specifically, the aim of the thesis is to study Estonian English teachers who claim to use formative assessment to gain an understanding of their perception of formative assessment and examine the methods they use to conduct this assessment procedure. The study also examines whether the methods used by the teachers overlap with the strategies suggested in the national curricula as well as by different theorists and education specialists.

There are several models proposed by theorists and documents for the implementation of FA. Among these theorists are Black, Wiliam, Stiggins and Brookhart, whose model has been promoted by Tiisvelt in Estonia. The Estonian National Curricula have also stated their methods for the application of FA. When compiling, comparing and contrasting these models, it becomes apparent which procedures are generally regarded as quintessential for the application of FA. The first commonality is feedback that provides an accurate overview of both the student's strengths and weaknesses as well clear guidelines for improvement and further action. Next, students are expected to constantly self-assess mostly using criteria and goals set by themselves at the beginning of the learning process. The students' progress is expected to be compiled into a portfolio, so that they can monitor their growth and gain a sense of control over their learning. The authors also mentioned

using peer assessment since collaboration is also an important aspect of FA. Finally, an important similarity in the approaches, as well as the final goal of FA, is learners who can self-regulate.

It is important to note that even though FA is used in language learning, the practice may not be referred to by using the term FA. Instead, strongly advocated by Little, the concept of learner autonomy and the use of portfolios, for example the European Language Portfolio specifically developed to enhance learner autonomy, are important aspects of EFL learning.

It is also important to emphasise that teachers' perceptions of education reforms merit research, as these perceptions have a profound influence on the success of curriculum implementation. Although the topic of FA and its perception by teachers has been researched by Tartu University's Department of Education, the EFL teachers' perspective as well as comparing the teachers' methods to the theory have not been as thoroughly examined.

The present MA thesis aimed to examine how EFL teachers perceive and apply FA. The thesis also attempted to determine whether the methods used by the teachers of this case study are in accordance with the ideas and methods proposed by theorists and education specialists. The study used a qualitative approach, a case study involving interviews with teachers. The interviews were conducted with three English teachers who teach in both basic and secondary schools and claim to use formative assessment. The interviews were then transcribed, relevant information was identified and coded and finally, the codes were examined for developing themes and categorised.

The responses to the first research question 'What is the teacher's understanding of FA and its application?' revealed that the teachers regarded FA as feedback, a contrast with grades, motivating for students, as an ongoing process, making adjustments to the

learning process, giving students responsibility and raising self-awareness. The analysis of the responses to the second research question ‘How does the teacher apply FA in their classroom?’ aimed to discover how the teachers use FA specifically in their EFL classes. The techniques the teachers used included self-assessment, using FA with different level students, using FA with skills such as writing and grammar and creating a positive atmosphere. While the responses to the first and second research question highlighted themes that were common among the participants, they also showed differences when comparing the teachers to one another. For example, while two of the teachers perceived FA as giving feedback on how to move forward in addition to grades, one of the teachers described her feedback process as using descriptive word grades which, however, does not constitute FA.

The final research question, ‘How much overlap is there between the methods used by the teacher and the methods described in education theories on FA?’, which was not directly addressed to the teachers but instead the point where the author should draw conclusions based on the gathered data, revealed that although the teachers claimed to use FA, their methods do not align with the theory. Several FA methods remain unused, such as peer-assessment and setting goals. Portfolios were used by one teacher but not as an FA technique, but just to compile the course materials. What is more, self-assessment was also used by one of the teachers while the other teachers either did not see it as necessary or noted lack of time as the reason for opting not to use it. Finally, self-regulation was seen more as the students’ ability to correct themselves, with the interviewed teachers giving no indication that learner autonomy could also involve learning to learn or monitoring the students while they taught themselves. Overall, there seems to be a contradiction – the teachers claim to use FA, yet many of the methods proposed by theorists and the national curricula are not used.

The present thesis could be developed further by including a larger sample to gather data from as more than three teachers could provide more variations as well as lead to clearer patterns in teacher perceptions. Additionally, further research might include observations of the teachers' FA process to determine whether the teachers' perceptions and applications align with what they claim as well as how and whether the curricula have been implemented.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Andmete kogumise intervjuu kava

Teema: Õpetajate arusaamad kujundavast hindamisest ning selle rakendamisest.

Uurimusprobleem: Kujundaval hindamisel on palju erinevaid definitsioone ja lähenemisi, mille tulemusena õpetajad võivad tõlgendada kujundavat hindamist erinevalt.

Eesmärk: Välja selgitada, missugune on õpetajate arusaam kujundavast hindamisest ning kuidas õpetajad teostavad kujundavat hindamist oma tundides.

Uurimisküsimused:

1. Missugune on õpetajate arusaam kujundavast hindamisest?
2. Kuidas õpetajad rakendavad kujundavat hindamist oma tundides?
3. Uuriija järeldused: Kuivõrd palju kattuvad õpetajate arusaamad ja meetodid teooriaga?

Intervjuu kava

Intervjuu algab uurimuse tutvustamisega. Uuriija palub luba intervjuu salvestada seletusega, et seda ei avalikustata ning keegi peale intervjuueerija seda ei kuule.

Intervjuueerija lisab, et vastaja nimi asendatakse pseudonüümiga ja avaldatakse ainult tsitaadid, mis ei võimalda rääkija isikut tuvastada. Uuriija rõhutab, et uurib arvamusi ning seega valesid vastuseid pole.

Sissejuhatavad küsimused (et välja selgitada intervjuueeritava õpetamissituatsioon ning et aidata tal harjuda diktofoniga): intervjuueeritava haridustaust, vanus, kui kaua nad on õpetanud, mis vanusegruppe, mis koolides on õpetanud (mis tüüpi koolid, linna või maakoolid, suur väike)

Põhiosa küsimused

1. Teemaplokk „What is the teacher’s understanding of formative assessment and its application?’

1. Mis on sinu jaoks kujundav hindamine? Kuidas sa seda oma sõnadega seletaksid? (näiteks kui lapsevanemad paluvad väga lihtsalt seletada)
2. Miks ja kas on seda vaja kasutada?
3. Miks sina seda kasutad?
4. Kuidas kujundav hindamine on sinu jaoks erinev ainult hinde panemisest?
5. Kust sa said idee kujundavat hindamist kasutada? Kus oled õppinud seda kasutama? (Intervjueerija palub täpsustada: Koolitused? Midagi lugenud? Kellegagi rääkinud? Kuulnud mõnest definitsioonist/ teoreetikust/ teooriast/ dokumendist? Kas oled osalenud kujundava hindamise teemalistel koolitustel?)

2. Teemaplokk „How does the teacher apply formative assessment in their classroom?’

1. Kuidas sa kirjeldaksid kujundava hindamise protsessi oma sõnadega? Kuidas see toimub? („Guide me through it’)
2. Milliseid vahendeid ja tegevusi kasutad, et rakendada kujundavat hindamist oma klassis? (Intervjueerija palub täpsustada: tuua näiteid, selgitada miks, kuidas, tegevused)
3. (Intervjueerija küsib kui vastaja pole neid maininud) Kas kasutad ka järgnevat: kaasõppijate hindamine, enesehindamine, koos eesmärkide püstitamist/ kas õpilased seavad ise ka eesmärged, õpimappi/ Euroopa keelemappi, learner autonomy?

4. Kas kasutate kujundavat hindamist kõikide õpilastega? (Teatud klassidega? Kas vanemate/nooremate klassidega? Kõikide õpilastega klassis?)
5. Mis olukordades kasutate kujundavat hindamist hinde panemise asemel? Tihti on õpilastel vaja saada teatud hulk hindeid kursuse/ veerandi/ trimestri/ perioodi jooksul. Kas sul on vaja panna teatud hulk hindeid perioodi ajal? Mis oskuste/ teemade puhul paned hinde ja millal kasutate kujundavat tagasisidet? Kas kombineerid? Kirjeldage oma hindamissüsteemi.
6. Milliste keeleoskuse aspektide (kuulamine, rääkimine, grammatika jne) puhul sa kasutate kujundavat hindamist? Kas kõikide oskuste või ainult teatud oskuste puhul? Põhjenda miks?
7. Milliseid tingimusi on sinu arvates vaja selleks, et kujundav hindamine saaks klassis toimuda? / et oleks edukas?
8. Millist tuge sa ise tunnend, et vajate kujundava hindamise teostamiseks?

Intervjuu lõpetamine

Mida sooviksid veel lisada selle teemaga seoses, mille kohta ma ei küsinud?

Kui mul tekivad lisaküsimused, kas ma võin sinuga veel ühendust võtta?

„Täna veel kord! Sinu vastused on selle teema uurimisel väga olulised.“

Appendix 2

An example of a coded interview question

Teachers	<p>Mis on sinu jaoks kujundav hindamine? Kuidas sa seda oma sõnadega seletaksid?</p>	<p>Code</p>
A	<p>‘saab ise selles hinde kujunemise protsessis osaleda’ ‘ta ei saa selle peale umbes kohe hinnet’, ‘vaid tal on näiteks võimalik saada selle peale tagasisidet’ ‘ja siis selle alusel oma tööd veel paremaks muuta. ‘teavad mis kohast veel on vaja paremaks minna või (.) paremaks harjutada või mis on nagu need nõrgad kohad, selline analüüs sinna juurde.’</p>	<p>Involvement in the grading process Grading not immediate Receiving feedback before test Making changes based on feedback Awareness of weaknesses</p>
B	<p>‘peaks kujundama õpilase arusaamist oma teadmistest’. ‘kui vaja siis julgustades’</p>	<p>Awareness of one’s knowledge Encouraging the students</p>
C	<p>‘nagu pidev tagasisidestamine’ ‘näiteks jooksvalt’ ‘enne suuremaid töid ja siis ka pärast arvestust / kontrolltööd’ ‘selle eesmärk ongi kujundada, (.) kujundada õppijast edukas õppija’ ja ‘aidata õpetajal kujundada õpetamist.’</p>	<p>Giving constant feedback Ongoing process Receiving feedback before test Receiving feedback after test Shaping the learner Shaping the teaching</p>

Appendix 3

An example of a themes (Research question 1.)

Codes	Theme
A second chance	Feedback
Formative feedback	
Giving constant feedback	
Giving feedback to yourself	
Students making changes based on feedback	
Necessary for FA	
Awareness of one's knowledge	Self-awareness
Awareness of strengths	
Awareness of their skills	
Awareness of weaknesses	
Reflection	
Alternative to grades	Grading
Combining with graded	
Contrast with grades	
Feedback after grade	
Feedback before grade	
Problems with the term 'hindamine'	
Their grading system	

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Liisa Kubre

English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Understanding of Formative Assessment and its Application.

Inglise keel kui võõrkeele õpetajate arusaama kujundavast hindamisest ning selle kasutamisest. (Magistritöö)

Aasta: 2019

Lehekülgede arv: 61

Käesolev magistritöö käsitleb, kuidas õpetajad mõistavad kujundavat hindamist ning rakendavad seda inglise keele tundides. Vastavalt riiklikule õppekavale on kujundav hindamine Eestis nõutav hindamisvorm. Üha rohkem koole kasutavad või üritavad seda hindamisvormi kasutusele võtta, liikumaks õppijakesksema õpikeskkonna poole. Seetõttu on oluline uurida, kuidas õpetajad seda täpsemalt mõistavad ja rakendavad. Õpetajate nägemus haridusreformidest vajab uurimist, kuna õpetajate arusaamad mõjutavad oluliselt mitte ainult nende praktilist tööd, vaid ka õppekava ellurakendamist.

Magistritöö eesmärgiks on uurida Eesti inglise keele õpetajaid, kes kasutavad enda väitel kujundavat hindamist, et saada aru, mida nad mõistavad kujundava hindamise all ning milliseid meetodeid nad kasutavad seda hindamissüsteemi rakendades. Samuti uuritakse, milises ulatuses kattuvad õpetajate poolt kasutatavad meetodid riiklikus õppekavas ning erinevate teoreetikute ja haridusspetsialistide poolt välja pakutud strateegiatega.

Töö teoreetiline osa toob välja, milliseid tegevusi rakendatakse kujundavas hindamises, kuidas kujundavat hindamist kasutatakse inglise keele õpetamisel võõrkeelena, keskendudes nii Euroopa Keeleportfooliotele, kui ka keeleõppija iseseisvusele ning mõistmise uurimise olulisusele, tuues näiteid temakohastest Eestis tehtud uurimustest. Magistritöö teine peatükk on intervjuudele toetuv juhtumiuuring. Intervjuud viidi läbi kolme inglise keele õpetajaga, kes õpetavad nii põhikoolis kui ka gümnaasiumis. Intervjuudest selgus, et kujundava hindamise mõistmises ning selle kasutamises esineb õpetajate vahel nii sarnasusi kui ka erinevusi. Sarnasused ja erinevused ilmnesisid võrreldes õpetajate arusaamu üksteise omadega ning teoreetikute ja riiklikus õppekavas välja pakutud meetoditega..

Märksõnad: inglise keel, kujundav hindamine, õppimist toetav hindamine, hindamine, keeleõpe

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Liisa Kubre

20.05.2019

Lõputöö on lubatud kaitsmisele.

Ülle Türk

20.05.2019