

Reimagining Assessment in English Language Classrooms: A Shift towards Formative Practices in Ghana and Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study explores innovative assessment practices in English language teaching, focusing on the shift from traditional summative testing to more formative and learner-centred approaches in Ghanaian and Nigerian classrooms. It investigates how continuous assessment techniques influence student engagement, feedback, and overall language proficiency.

The research draws on assessment for learning (AfL) theory and constructivist pedagogy, which advocate for ongoing, feedback-driven evaluation to support active learning and self-regulation among students.

Using a qualitative design, data were collected through interviews and classroom observations of 12 English teachers (six from Ghana and six from Nigeria). Participants were selected from both urban and peri-urban secondary schools. Data were thematically analysed to uncover common strategies, challenges, and perceived benefits.

Teachers who employed formative techniques such as peer assessment, learning journals, oral presentations, and teacher-student conferencing reported improved student participation and more accurate identification of learning needs. Learners also developed greater confidence in expressing themselves in English. However, barriers included large class sizes, time constraints, and limited assessment training.

To enhance innovation in ELT assessment, education authorities should provide teachers with in-service training focused on formative practices. Curricula should allow flexibility for diverse assessment methods, and school leaders should support a culture of continuous feedback and reflection in English language instruction.

Keywords: Assessment for Learning (AfL); Constructivist pedagogy; Formative assessment; Learner-centred; Peer assessment