

EFL Teacher Voices of Authentic Assessment in the Current Curriculum in Indonesia¹

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Abstract

There has been a revolutionary new paradigm shift in assessment of learning in Indonesia, from a traditional model to a more authentic approach adopted in the current curriculum. Its implementation seems to be a considerable challenge for teachers, including teachers of English. This article reports on a study of Indonesian EFL teachers' perception of authentic assessment and problems they encountered in implementing this new model. The study is mixed-method research employing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in its data collection. Eleven secondary school teachers of the English language from four schools in the town of Cilacap, Central Java Province, Indonesia, participated in this study. The data gathered through questionnaires were analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics, whereas the data obtained from interviews was analyzed inductively using a thematic analysis. The study revealed that overall, the English teachers tended to positively perceive authentic assessment. They admitted that the current assessment model benefitted students. However, in practice they considered it to be noticeably more complicated in comparison to the system applied in the former curriculum. They found it hard to implement the holistic assessment within the existing lesson time allotment, large size classes, and complicated systems. However, the benefits authentic assessment affords outweigh challenges faced by teachers and dissent from those unfamiliar with the model. Teacher training via workshops (instead of the seminars commonly held in recent years) might be highly recommended for this matter.

Resumen

Ha habido un nuevo y revolucionario cambio de paradigma en la evaluación del aprendizaje en Indonesia, desde un modelo tradicional a un enfoque más auténtico adoptado en el plan de estudios actual. Su implementación parece ser un desafío considerable para los profesores, incluidos los profesores de inglés. Este artículo informa sobre un estudio sobre la percepción de los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera sobre la evaluación auténtica y los problemas que encontraron al implementar este nuevo modelo. El estudio es una investigación de métodos mixtos que emplea cuestionarios y entrevistas semiestructuradas en su recopilación de datos. En este estudio participaron once profesores de lengua inglesa de secundaria de cuatro escuelas de la ciudad de Cilacap, provincia de Java Central, Indonesia. Los datos recopilados a través de cuestionarios fueron analizados mediante estadística descriptiva, mientras que los datos obtenidos de las entrevistas se analizaron de manera inductiva mediante un análisis temático. El estudio reveló que, en general, los profesores de inglés tendían a percibir positivamente la evaluación auténtica. Admitieron que el modelo de evaluación actual beneficia a los estudiantes. Sin embargo, en la práctica lo consideraron notablemente más complicado en comparación con el sistema aplicado en el plan de estudios anterior. Les resultó difícil implementar la evaluación holística dentro del tiempo asignado a las lecciones existentes, clases de gran tamaño y sistemas complicados. Sin embargo, los beneficios que ofrece la evaluación auténtica superan los desafíos que enfrentan los docentes y la disidencia de quienes no están familiarizados con el modelo. En este sentido, podría ser muy recomendable la formación de docentes a través de talleres (en lugar de los seminarios que se suelen celebrar en los últimos años).

Introduction

Education should ensure the future employability of graduates, making the authenticity of an assessment profile in the curriculum a pivotal condition for success. Students have expectations that as graduates they will have acquired the necessary skills to contribute to the productivity of the nation's economy and be able to transfer those skills in a global context (Bosco & Ferns, 2014). Arising from this demand, the curriculum in Indonesia has changed in the last decade. The new national curriculum officially labelled as *Kurikulum 2013*, equivalent to Discovery Learning Model with Scientific Approach, does not only focus on the cognitive domain but also the affective and psychomotor domains. Consequently, authentic assessment, which is well suited for the new curriculum, has been adopted. Since then, authentic assessment has been a ground for disagreement of pros and cons, especially among teachers.

Review of the Literature

Authentic assessment, sometimes called informal assessment, real life assessment, or holistic assessment, refers to activities such as portfolio assessment, structured activities assessment or tasks. It also introduces projects, self-assessment, peer-assessment, traditional tests, and observation conferencing which reflect

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student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitude towards classroom activities (Hanardi, 2015; Larkin, 2014).

Despite emerging debates, the implementation of authentic assessment in the teaching and learning process has been given special attention in the new curriculum. According to *Regulations of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 81A on the Implementation of the 2013 Curriculum*, teachers must adopt authentic assessment to evaluate students' competencies. While the old curriculum, known as the educational unit level curriculum, used to test the cognitive domain, the new curriculum assessment includes the affective and psychomotor domains. This by implication means that learning should not solely be evaluated by the student's ability to score good grades in examinations, quizzes, and tests. The evaluation should also include how well a student understands a particular lesson and if the student can apply that understanding to solve real life problems. It is a way of giving feedback that is not subjective, but based on real evidence.

Certain features of authentic assessment distinguish it from the old versions of assessment which make it unique. First of all, it focuses on the students' ability to communicate what they have learned in a practical way and not just based on scores without evidence of what else can be done with it (Zaim et al., 2020). This is more acceptable than mere regurgitation of fact. Second, it gives room for teachers to critique students' performances (Ukashatu et al., 2021). Even though teachers assign final grades, these must be explained in the light of their performance. In this situation, the classroom becomes more interactive and less teacher-centered. Third, students are not under pressure to memorize information to be reproduced in a particular examination in order to measure learning (Ukashatu et al., 2021). Instead, learning is based on what they can do with the information at their disposal, that is, how they can use the information and when more information is needed. This can help students overcome forgetting the information they have memorized and remembered for a short term which limits its use solving future life problems. Finally, it is more of qualitative than quantitative in nature (Sabtiawan et al., 2019). This implies that it places emphasis on what students can do on a real project rather than what they can write or say about it—a mere recall of fact.

There are some reasons behind adopting authentic assessment in the new curriculum. Mueller (2005) mentions that authentic assessment provides evidence of students' performance. He also points out that it is based on the principle of constructive learning assessment where teachers should be able to encourage students to be active and provide them with meaningful experience as they have in real life. In addition, it allows a variety of pathways to demonstrate learning (Murphy et al., 2017). These features led to the acceptance and adoption of authentic assessment over the previous method of assessment based on testing the cognitive domain, even though, many educators still believed the previous method to be easier to implement than authentic assessment.

Authentic assessment constitutes the process of collecting information about students' learning progress and achievement through diverse techniques which are expected to be able to prove that the learning objectives have been achieved (Callison, 1998; Sunarti & Rahmawati, 2014). This kind of assessment measures all competencies of students: attitudes, skills, and knowledge according to the processes and the outcomes (Hidayat, 2013). In addition, in authentic assessment, students' learning processes and outcomes are extended to cover motivational and attitudinal aspects. It is a form of pragmatic evaluation on students' achievement, motivation, and learning process (Rahmawati, 2015). In other words, authentic assessment puts emphasis on real tasks and is used by teachers to evaluate students' attitude, knowledge, and skills. Students are expected to perform real tasks in the form of presentations, demonstrations, and other forms of display rather than the traditional test method.

According to the ministry's regulation concerning educational assessment platforms (Chapter VI Article Number 9), observation is for attitude assessment, while testing is to evaluate knowledge and skills. Portfolio, product, project, and performance can be organized for assessing student skills (The Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia, 2016). A portfolio, for example, is good for use in language teaching and assessment rather than only relying on traditional tests (Hung, 2016). However, authentic assessment has challenges that could hinder its proper implementation. For instance, it may be difficult to implement in large classes because of the use of practical and real tasks (Murphy et al., 2017). It has therefore been suggested that strategies such as group work, peer evaluation and online technology can be employed among others.

Often, parents may raise objections about the validity of authentic assessment because it is not like the traditional methods they already know. They seem not to be sure whether it is a true test of what the students understand. Then, students may not be too serious about authentic assessment because it is not like the traditional tests that they are used to. Preparing for authentic assessment might not require the

same rigorous reading load. Teachers may neglect the assessment because they do not need to prepare tests as they are used to doing. Besides, teachers may find it difficult to accurately plan and carry out authentic assessment activities in the classroom (Fitriani, 2017). For example, one challenge is the issue of individual differences of the learners which may not allow for the use of the same method for everyone. Another one is the issue of learning resources that may make it difficult for the teacher to plan. Furthermore, there seems to be no clear guidelines for teachers who practice authentic assessment in their classrooms. This also might affect the issue of the standards everyone can follow and be a great challenge, especially for inexperienced teachers (Aziz et al., 2020).

Evidence has recently come to light that the school textbooks in Indonesia failed to properly reflect the application of this assessment model (Sumarsono, 2018). In the classroom, authentic assessment had to be executed by the teachers. However, the implementation of such informal assessment appears to be problematic for them. The majority of teachers believed that practicing authentic approaches in learning tasks was time-consuming, requiring more time than an English lesson that takes only a couple of 40-minute sessions per week (Wahyuni et al., 2021). This is also true in other contexts. A study in Malaysia reported that even excellent teachers in this country encountered problems in implementing the assessment system. They encountered difficulty both in prior to and during classroom learning activities assessment (Aziz et al., 2020).

As partly discussed earlier, authentic assessment provides more advantages than disadvantages. It is comprehensive in that it measures what the students say and do in the instructional process. It focuses on both process and outcome bringing about the backwash effect. It also encourages students to become critical thinkers, as the assessment requires students to create their works. For example, it is reported that using a portfolio as an authentic assessment tool has helped students with writing skill (Kalra et al., 2017). Lastly, the result of an authentic assessment provides a real description of students' competencies, as it not only covers students' knowledge, but also students' attitudes and skills. One study has shown that the benefit of implementing authentic assessment extended to a socio-cultural standpoint, where it offered the opportunity to learn with peers and with the wider community (Murphy et al., 2017). However, it does not necessarily mean that teachers must use holistic assessment all the time. Given that the quality is good, traditional assessment like objective tests, for example, could be an alternative for a limited cognitive domain (Brown, 2019).

Overall, teachers are required to use more than one technique and data resources in assessing the students' competencies. Therefore, one possible challenge of this assessment is that it requires more energy and extra time from teachers since it involves multiple assessment methods. Moreover, the teachers seem not to have been trained to be able to carry out such heavy tasks during their teacher education programs or later.

Numerous research studies have focused on English teaching methodology. For example, Disalva and Vijaayakuma (2019) carried out a study on English language teaching methodology with focus on the difficulties faced by non-native speakers when learning the language while Khalil and Semono-Eke (2020) studied appropriate teaching method for both general English and English for specific purposes considering teachers perspectives in Saudi Arabia. However, only a few have been devoted to assessment despite its important position in every teaching and learning process. Language assessment has faced a serious problems in many parts of the world. During the COVID 19 pandemic the condition was even worse (Kazemian & Khonamri, 2022). This situation added to the significance of this study.

Research Questions

Based on the background of this study, the following questions were raised:

1. *What is English teachers' perception of authentic assessment implemented in the current curriculum?*
2. *What difficulties do English teachers encounter in implementing the authentic assessment model in the English language classroom?*

Method

Research design

To achieve the objectives, mixed-methods research was employed. By combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, it was expected that the data gathered in this study would be more comprehensive, objective, reliable, and valid (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants

The study involved eleven secondary school English teachers in the town of Cilacap, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The participants were randomly recruited from four different schools. They all held bachelor's degrees in English Language Teaching and had five to twenty years of teaching experience. Prior to data collection, the project proposal had been sent to the Regional Government, in this case, the Ministry of Home Affairs and later to the Ministry of National Education for a permit. Those documents were then put forward to the school authorities to get access to the selected teachers. The teachers were told about the research goals and asked to complete a questionnaire and be interviewed individually for 20-to-30-minutes. All participants were reassured that any information that could identify them would remain strictly confidential.

Data collection

Teachers' perception of authentic assessment was examined through questionnaires. Survey questionnaires are most suitable to collect data on perception (Gay et al., 2012). Five point-Likert scale questionnaires were utilized. The questionnaires were prepared on the basis of a plan covering four aspects (see Figure 1); these were relevant to the variable elaborated in the literature review. A series of interviews was also conducted with the English teachers to obtain data on their problems with the new assessment practices. As suggested in some studies (e.g., Diharmis & Hamzah, 2021) rating scales questionnaires tend to end with positive results and are unable to reveal perception in a deeper and more comprehensive way. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for qualitative open-ended data and exploration of thoughts or feeling (Seidman, 2019).

Data analysis

The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The interview data, which were originally in the native language (Indonesian), were transcribed and analyzed inductively by identifying themes emerging across the data (Nowell et al., 2017). Results of the data analysis were then tabulated and presented in a graphic organizer and vivid discussions in the next section.

Results and Discussion

The data collected through questionnaire and interviews were subjected to descriptive analysis and the results are presented based on the research questions.

Teachers' perception of authentic assessment

Referring to Figure 1, ninety-nine percent of the teachers had a positive perception of the concept of authentic assessment as one of the aspects under study: (1) Authentic assessment constitutes an evaluation process to measure students' performance, achievements, motivation, and attitudes on relevant activities during the learning process; (2) Authentic assessment is focused on processes as well as product; and (3) Authentic assessment is necessary to visualize students' character to balance the domains of existing attitudes, knowledge and skills.

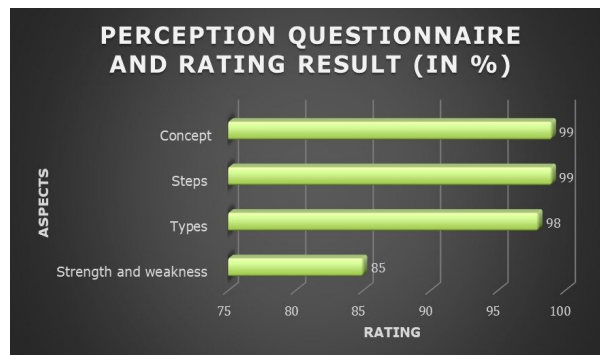


Figure 1. EFL teachers' perception of authentic assessment

The data were supported by the following excerpt from a teacher's interview (originally spoken in their native language and later translated):

Authentic assessment constitutes an evaluation of achievement, motivation, attitudes, and skills, and it's undertaken during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, obviously it's very crucial. Moreover, in English err... the skills

in particular should be assessed authentically, that is, in accordance with real life and with the actual skills acquired by the students. (T1)

Authentic assessment is a good practice. Err... It's very essential because it really measures the students' competencies – it is actually practiced by the teachers and the students. By the teachers it is to assess from process to outcome. (T2)

For me I think it's necessary, the point is that the authentic assessment consists of the assessment of process and the outcome. In this assessment, the teacher is required to be more detailed when undertaking an assessment because assessment should be done per individual and balanced in knowledge, attitude, and skill. (T4)

Most of the teachers participating in the research agreed upon the principles of authentic assessment in the national curriculum. The data have indicated that they have recognized the role of authentic assessment in the teaching and learning process which is used to evaluate both student learning process and outcome.

As can be seen in Figure 1, 98% of the teachers had a positive perception of the types of the authentic assessment. The data were supported by the following teachers' comments from the interviews:

The types of assessment are, first, performance, then assignments, but later I will return these to the students after I have finished assessing them. Regarding self-assessment, I usually do it through editing their works. I have applied peer-assessment, for example by correcting a friend's short story. (T1)

The types vary, including portfolios, observation, and projects. They are more often used to assess projects or performance. I am happy, when I'm teaching, the students have a chance to practice. (T6)

The teachers positively agreed on types of authentic assessment currently applied in the country. The data suggests that they perceived various types of evaluation should be used when assessing students depending on the learning material.

The next aspect to examine deals with the steps of authentic assessment. Based on Figure 1, 99% of the teachers had a positive perception of the proposed steps required for authentic assessment. This indicates that majority of the teachers positively agreed upon the steps used in authentic assessment during the learning and teaching process.

First, consult the Basic Competency, then check the indicators, then create a blueprint, then write the items. After that, determine the scoring criteria or scoring rubric. Then, conduct the assessment. After that, analyze students' works, and then give the score. (T3)

Yes, I examine the Basic Competency first, then determine the indicators. The indicators later will be used to determine type of task or problem that will be employed for or given to students. For the procedures, first, I look at the Basic Competency. Then, I determine the indicators. After that, I determine the appropriate problems or tasks. (T4)

From the interview data above, it can be concluded that the teachers knew and favored the steps of authentic assessment before they implemented it with their students.

The last aspect was the strengths and weaknesses of authentic assessment. In Figure 1 85% of the teachers had a positive perception of the strengths of authentic assessment. This was also consistent with the data retrieved through interviews. However, a smaller portion of those teachers seemed to have doubts or still perceived authentic assessment negatively.

It takes a very long time and requires several meetings. If let us suppose I teach 14 classes with 560 students, I would assess students one by one and basic competencies one by one. Meanwhile, within one semester there could be up to five Basic Competencies. (T1)

These teachers explicitly disagreed that "authentic assessment does not take longer to complete." The teachers required extra time for teaching and assessing students. This perception tends to be a temporary reaction over a demanding new system. Sooner or later, those who have such views will probably get used to it and recognize the new assessment as a valuable investment that gives positive impact on their teaching and learning, as wise words say, 'no pain no gain' (Suwartono & Riyani). In line with the literature review, authentic assessment offers a variety of advantages to students and learning process and outcome, efforts are worth taking to make them accept the assessment system with all heart.

Teachers' difficulties in implementing authentic assessment in the classroom

The English teachers' major problem with applying authentic assessment was the lack of time. The time allocated was two hours a week (two-hour teaching period is equal to 80 minutes). The teachers had trouble finding time to provide limited-time content to students. Many teachers, therefore, claimed that time was their highest concern, as authentic assessment takes much longer and requires extra energy in comparison to the traditional assessment previously adopted in the country.

The problem is time limit. English class time is now only two hours per week. ...straight to the point... The teaching material is a lot, [while] we must assess the knowledge, skill ...attitude. (T1)

I think the first thing complicated is that the rubric is a lot. Then, it takes a long time. Previously, I only assessed their knowledge. Currently, I must assess knowledge, attitudes, and skills ... it is more detailed. (T4)

Actually, nothing is difficult. It is only a problem of time, only two hours per week. Sometimes I find it hard to manage time in delivering materials in such limited time.... (T6)

Based on the data displayed, the teachers disagreed about the reduction of lesson time allotted. Many teachers stated that they were having difficulties applying authentic assessment with only a two hour-teaching period per week. Therefore, the teacher also added suggestions regarding time constraints in applying authentic assessments. T1, for example, suggested that time allotment for a lesson be extended because changing the assessment was impossible. The situation became worse with larger classes, as the teachers needed to care for individual students.

What becomes a hindrance to me is just time ... I consider the extension of class time. So, it's not just two hours a week, because the more students and material we have, the more time we require. It will raise difficulty in assessing the students. Teachers need to know every individual student...one by one. (T5)

The teachers were concerned with time shortage and its relationship with class size. A couple of teachers shared their opinions that if the number of students in the class is too large, then assessment would not be done to the maximum standard.

But if the number of students is too many, I have to assess the students per individual, then assessment will not be maximum. Since the time is very limited, then sometimes the assessment is done only at glance ...(T1)

Some teachers argued that with too many students, it was hard to monitor them, and it was impossible to assess them properly. That is why, as can be seen from the data, the English teachers needed extended time in the authentic assessment practice, as they had to give attention to individual students they taught. The teachers faced difficulty in assessment steps, especially assessment rubrics. Some teachers said that the scoring rubric was complicated. Teachers still found it hard to determine the rubric, because the teacher had to provide a rubric for each material or Basic Competency.

In my opinion, besides the time extension needed, err ... regarding authentic assessment that there should be evidence of student performance... It can be in the form of assessment rubric. Difficulty arises when there are many classes and many Basic Competencies to teach. For instance, what material is in Basic Competency 3.6, how to prepare the rubric for each Basic Competency. They were faced with difficulties designing an appropriate rubric for each Basic Competency. It is a big challenge to teachers. It becomes a task for teachers. How do we determine the rubric which corresponds to each existing Basic Competency? (T3)

Overall, the findings of this study concerning implementation problems faced by EFL teachers, remained consistent with previous research. However, problems are varied. For example, implementation of authentic assessment has become a serious problem in reading comprehension classes (Ekawati, 2017). This has led to poor practice in productive skills (Rukmini & Saputri, 2017) and has been equally problematic for language skills (Fitriani, 2017). On the other hand, it has been a great success in English class except for the time constraint (Rizavega, 2018); and in contrast, the authentic assessment practice did not seem problematic in speaking classes (Inayah et al., 2019).

It is normal that problems arise in implementing a new system. These are added to existing problems such as large classes; an issue that is not a new in Indonesia and many other countries throughout Asia. With regard to impractical processes within the authentic assessment, to some extent it is a matter of insights and mindset. There must be suitable strategies in implementing the authentic assessment retaining its characteristics. For example, the teacher can give general feedback instead of individual feedback.

Knowledge and skills to implement a new system cannot always be effectively transferred to pre-service program trainees nor in-service training participants within a large forum and a general theme with a focus on presentations and lectures. New topics, like the implementation of assessment system, require a forum that is more specific and hands-on. Proper in-service teacher training helps teacher develop capabilities that involve not only knowledge but also skill (e.g., Villarroel et al., 2021). Unfortunately, in-service teacher professional development programs in Indonesia have been more extensively conducted in seminar settings.

Conclusion

Research findings have shown that overall, the teachers had a positive perception of authentic assessment. They had good understanding of the new model of assessment. They were able to explain how this approach to assess students was supposed to contribute to their learning. Therefore, the survey seems to support the adoption of authentic assessment. However, the teachers highlighted major emerging issues in its implementation: insufficient teaching time allotment, big classes, and inefficient assessment. They argued

that a two hour-teaching period per week was not enough for a course to be completely delivered. Moreover, for them the assessment rubric was impractical so that assessment took more time to complete. The teachers viewed the need for a solution to these constraints. Among those three issues they were concerned with, two are inter-related, where insufficient time is attributed to the extra time required by the assessment.

As for having big classes, it is not a new issue in Indonesia as one of the world's most populous country. This problem is beyond teachers' authority to handle. However, teachers still can cope with it in another way, which closely relates to insights into pedagogical competence they would achieve not only in pre-service but also in-service professional development trainings. Teacher training via practical workshops instead of seminars (commonly held in recent years) is strongly recommended for this matter.

The present study recruited a small number of participants from a particular limited area. Therefore, it would be useful to explore the voices of teachers from other parts of the world's largest Archipelago, Indonesia. Since this study employed a close-ended questionnaire and interview protocol as data collection instruments, similar future study with in-depth interviews should be encouraged.

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