

**INVESTIGATING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS OF AN EFL
TEACHER IN ASSESSING STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL**

Yudi Lesmana^{1*}, Pupung Purnawarman²
¹yudilesmana13@upi.edu, ²purnawarman@upi.edu)

UNIVERSITAS PENDIDIKAN INDONESIA

ABSTRACT

Inconsistent evaluations may result from unreliable assessments, which in turn may result in unjust assessments of students' abilities. Marginalised groups, such as English language learners coming from diverse cultural contexts, may experience a disproportionate impact from this phenomenon. Inaccurate evaluations have the potential to perpetuate educational inequities, reinforce stereotypes, and restrict avenues for academic progress. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to describe how an English teacher evaluate English proficiency of their students. This study employs descriptive qualitative method. The subject of this research was an English teacher with eleven years of experience at a vocational school located in Lembang. The data was gathered via semi-structured interviews. A number of processes are involved in the analysis of data, including collection, documentation, identification, and interpretation. The findings showed several strategies used by the teacher in developing assessment tools. First, learning objectives are used by the teacher in developing assessment tools. In addition, the data also revealed that there are three factors that need to be considered in developing assessment tools such as students ability, difficulty level and the effectiveness. Furthermore, feedback and and regular assessment should be provided.

Keywords: Assessment, English Teacher, Vocational School

A. INTRODUCTION

Assessment refers to the systematic procedure employed by individuals to evaluate the effectiveness of both learning and instruction through the utilization of diverse assessment methodologies, assignments, projects, continuous assessment, and objective type assessments (Aggarwal, 1997). This assessment practice serves as a valuable tool for teachers, enabling them to make informed decisions regarding the pace of instruction, the relevance of course content, the shaping of student learning, the effectiveness of teaching methods, and the cultivation of student confidence in preparation for national standardized tests. The task of conducting assessments is an integral aspect of a language teacher's professional duties (Mertler, 2003). According to Malone (2013), teaching and assessment are interrelated ideas that have a reciprocal influence on each other, leading to mutual enrichment. Hence, teachers have a significant role in facilitating the connection between these two notions. The assessment process places a significant emphasis on the role of

instructors, as indicated by various researchers in the literature (Stiggins, 1999; Popham, 2009). These study argue that language teachers can enhance their ability to make informed decisions by acquiring expertise in the field of language evaluation. The quality of education is significantly influenced by teachers' understanding of assessment, given their substantial involvement in language assessment (Malone, 2013). As a consequence of this, it is absolutely necessary for educators to develop an appropriate assessment method in order to arrive at well-informed decisions, select the instructional strategies that are most suitable for students, and get insights into the development of teaching and learning.

The integration of teaching and assessment is essential, as assessment plays a crucial role within the broader context of the learning and teaching process. As stated by White (2009) that assessment is considered as a tool that helps to start the process of learning. Therefore, assessment is a vital component of the education process. It determines the work students undertake, affects their approach to learning, and can indicate which aspects of the course are valued most highly (Rust, 2002). The importance of assessment follows from the numerous judgments that teachers must make about students' well-being and their education.

There are various types of assessment that can be used by the teacher. According to Douglas (2003), conventional assessment practices, characterized by the iconic image of students completing paper-and-pencil tests, represent a historical paradigm rooted in rote memorization. These assessments, often employing multiple-choice questions and essays, function as gatekeepers of knowledge. While lauded for their straightforwardness in gauging factual recall, scholars like Kılıc & Kurt (2012) critique their narrow scope. These methods fail to encompass the complexities of the learning landscape, neglecting the significance of higher-order thinking skills and the application of knowledge in real-world contexts. Emerging as a response to these limitations are alternative assessments. Portfolios, computer-based assessments, and projects constitute the vanguard of this new approach. Iahad et al., (2004) claim that the ability of these methods to foster active learning by requiring students to demonstrate mastery through tasks that simulate real-world applications. This approach fosters deeper student engagement and a reflective journey through the educational process. However, as Nasab (2015) explains that these innovative methods are not without their challenges. Concerns regarding time investment and the need for skilled educators implementing these assessments raise questions about their widespread feasibility.

Based on the description above, thus, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of any evaluation relies on the meticulous choice and application of appropriate tools and methodologies, together with the precise analysis of students' achievements. The importance of assessment in the pedagogical and educational process is undeniable. Effective implementation of assessment procedures is essential since the quality of assessment used is an essential requirement for the excellence of teaching and learning (Stiggins, 1999). In numerous instances, the assessment process tends to prioritize the evaluation of students' capacity to memorize grammar and vocabulary rules, rather than their proficiency in effectively communicating in the English language. In addition, the limited scope of examining isolated language components neglects the comprehensive evaluation of students' holistic language proficiency and their capacity to effectively utilize language skills within authentic, real-world situations. Oo, Tun Zaw & Nguyen (2021) emphasizes the need for assessments that encompass a broader range of language skills, including those used in real-world contexts. Similarly, Budiman et al. (2023) discuss strategies for improving student

skills, which include assessments that go beyond traditional written and multiple-choice tests to include oral proficiency and listening comprehension. Therefore, in line with Herrera & Macías (2015) stated that assessment literacy is a skill needed by teachers for their long-term professional well-being, to benefit their students and programs or institutions in which they work. While effective assessment is crucial for quality education, traditional methods often fall short.

Numerous studies have been conducted related the assessment process. Bahtiar & Purnawarman (2020) found that most teachers lack knowledge about Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) despite good results. They need training on proper assessment and question validity. Remote teachers struggle with technology integration, while city teachers use online applications. Furthermore, Orabah, Bijani & Ismail (2022) conducted the research related to the applications of Student-Centered Learning Assessment (SCLA) by English language teachers. The findings showed that each of the English teachers has their definitions and understandings of SCLA; however, it was difficult to understand teachers' definitions of SCLA due to the lack of a common definition for this term in the literature. Teachers should be encouraged to empower students by working in mixed groups on the basis that the advanced students each head up separate groups. Moreover, another study conducted by Öztürk & AYDIN (2019) investigates the Language Assessment Knowledge (LAK) levels of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in the Turkish higher education context. The research surveyed 542 EFL teachers from schools of foreign languages. The findings indicate that on average, teachers scored 25 out of 60 on the LAKS, signifying a LAK level significantly lower than the midpoint score of the scale. Teachers demonstrated the most knowledge in assessing reading skills and the least in assessing listening skills. Demographic factors, except for being a testing office member, showed no significant impact on LAK levels. The study concludes with recommendations for future research and policy makers to enhance EFL teachers' language assessment literacy, particularly in assessing each language skill. Thus, this research aims to investigate how an English teacher assess students' English skills.

B. METHOD

Descriptive qualitative method used in this research. According to Apsari (2017), qualitative research is characterized by its synthetic holism, heuristic nature, and no control and manipulation of research content. Analysis in qualitative study also be influenced by the number of data sets and people from whom data have been collected (Cohen & Soto, 2007). Collecting data from a diverse range of participants and contexts until saturation is achieved can enhance the trustworthiness and generalizability of research findings. The respondent of this research was an English teacher in one of Senior High School in Lembang. Subsequently, the researchers selected an experienced educator specializing in eleventh grade English teachers, with an extensive teaching tenure spanning eleven years at a reputable Senior High School situated in the locale of Lembang. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. According to Nunan (1992), a semi-structured interview entails the utilization of a predetermined list of questions by the interviewer, who possesses a general understanding of the subject matter to be explored. The scheduled interview is slated to occur over the course of two consecutive days, specifically Monday through Tuesday, on the dates of June 12th to June 13th, 2023. The duration of the interview ranges between 20 and 30 minutes. Due to ethical considerations involved in conducting this study, the actual names and personal information of respondents have not been revealed; instead, the pseudonym Teacher's is used throughout the paper.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This particular session encompasses the dissemination of research findings and subsequent scholarly discussions. The interview with the participant revealed some important information related to the assessment process conducted by an English teacher in assessing the students skill. The data were divided into four main categories as follows:

1. Learning Objectives as the basis for developing assessment tools

The data from interview revealed that one of the strategies used by the teacher in developing assessment tools is by using learning objectives as the basis for developing assessment tool. It can be seen in the following excerpt:

- Q : can you explain how did you develop assessment tool in assessing students' English skill? Give the example!
- T : I developed the assessment tools based on the learning objectives determined in the lesson plan. For example, if the learning objective is the students are able to communicate in pair using the expression of asking and giving opinion, thus, the test will be in the form of role play instead of writing test.

The data above showed that the teacher is able to determine the appropriate assessment tool in assessing students speaking ability. It means that writing test cannot be used to assess students speaking skill. As stated by Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) that speaking assessments, such as oral interviews, role plays and presentations, can provide useful information about students' speaking skills that written tests cannot. In other words, authentic speaking tasks, in particular, allow students to demonstrate meaningful communication in a real-world context (O'Sullivan, 2008). Thus, it can be inferred that teachers need to determine appropriate assessment criteria, such as fluency, accuracy, complexity, and suitability (Fulcher et al., 2010). These criteria can help teachers gauge not only the correctness of language use but also the ability to use language effectively in various contexts.

Furthermore, if the teacher used writing test for assessing speaking skill, it can be concluded that the teacher has lack experience in assessing skill. As found by (Mede & Atay, 2017; Kim et al., 2020) that there are still found teachers lack experience in assessing speaking and tend to focus on pronunciation and grammar rather than communicative competence. This highlights the need for professional development in assessment literacy, enabling teachers to design and implement assessments that truly reflect students' language abilities in practical communication scenarios.

2. Factors need to be considered in developing assessment tools

The data from interview showed that there are several factors need to be considered in developing assessment tools. It can be seen in the following excerpt:

- Q : What factors do you consider in designing assessments for English language proficiency?
- T : Student ability, level of difficulty, effectiveness

The data showed that there are three factors need to be considered by the teacher in developing assessment tools such as student ability, level of difficulty and effectiveness. However, teachers often encounter challenges in this area, particularly in creating

assessments that are both effective and appropriate for English language learners (De Valenzuela et al., 2022; Bailey, & Wolf, 2012). Research has shown that many standardized tests are not suitable for ELLs, as they tend to measure English proficiency rather than content knowledge (Pichardo, 2014). These tests typically prioritize measuring English proficiency itself, rather than a student's actual understanding of the content being assessed. This misalignment can lead to inaccurate assessments of students' abilities and hinder their academic progress.

Moreover, assessing students' English language skills to be challenging, particularly determining students' ability levels and assessment difficulty. The teacher's report difficulties creating effective assessments for English language learners. This is supported by research showing that teachers often lack adequate training in language assessment and struggle to determine students' language proficiency levels (Bailey & Carroll, 2015; Gottlieb, 2016). Teacher's also report difficulties in finding appropriate assessment materials and tools for English language learners (Gottlieb, 2016). Many standardized tests are not suitable for English learners, as they often measure English proficiency rather than knowledge of the content. Teachers need to adapt or make their own judgments, but often lack the expertise or time to do so (Abedi, 2008). Studies show that teachers made assessments are often not aligned with language proficiency standards and do not accurately measure students' language knowledge or content (Abedi, 2008; Bailey & Heritage, 2008). Thus, providing teachers with professional development focused on language assessment, as well as collaboration time to develop appropriate assessments (Gottlieb, 2016). This would equip teachers with the necessary skills to effectively evaluate their ELL students. Additionally, providing dedicated collaboration time for teachers to develop appropriate assessments would further enhance their effectiveness. Furthermore, teacher's also need access to a bank of assessment materials targeted at English language learners at different proficiency levels. With additional training and resources, teachers can become more effective in assessing their English students.

3. Providing Feedback

Based on the data from interview, the teacher described that the feedback were given to the students based on their assessment results. It can be :

Q : How do you provide feedback to students based on their English assessment results?

T : If the grades are good, give appreciation, if the grades are not good, then correct the mistakes, you can also provide improvements to students

Based on the data, it appears that teacher's provide feedback to students based on the results of English assessments. This is in line with research stating that providing effective feedback is important for student learning. Studies show that feedback helps students understand their current performance levels, set goals for improvement, and take action to move forward (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). For English language learners, meaningful feedback on language assessments is essential, as it helps students gain awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in the language (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

However, research has also shown that the feedback teacher's provide is not always beneficial for students. Hattie & Timperley (2007) and Shute (2008) states that feedback should identify areas students need to improve, not just overall scores. Feedback should be easy to understand and help students take clear action (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). For

students, feedback is not just about correcting errors; it's about fostering an awareness of their linguistic abilities and guiding them towards better communication skills. Thus, to provide effective feedback, teachers are suggested to be able to provide immediate feedback focusing on skills and actions, including constructive criticism, being clear and specific, and providing next steps for students. Thus, teachers can develop expertise in providing meaningful feedback that supports the language development of English learners.

4. Teacher's solution to overcome the problem in assessing the students

The final category investigates the challenges teacher's encounter when assessing student English skills and how they address these difficulties. Analyzing teacher responses in this category will shed light on the challenges they face in assessment and their strategies for utilizing assessment data to inform their teaching. It is evident from the following conversation:

- Q : Can you describe the challenges or difficulties you encountered when assessing students' English skills? How do you deal with it?
- T : Yes, the difficulty is that students' abilities are limited, they cannot easily provide the material they should, so I have to retreat to repeat the material at the previous level

Based on the responses above, The teacher's shows that assessing students' English skills can be challenging because students' abilities are limited. The Teacher's must adjust the level of material to match the student's current ability, even if it means discussing material from the previous level. This suggests the assessment should be done regularly. As argued by Bailey & Carroll (2015) that language assessment should be an ongoing, iterative process that informs teaching, not a one-time event. Teacher's need to observe students, evaluate their abilities, and make adjustments to instruction and assessment accordingly. Similarly, Brown (2004) emphasizes the importance of "dynamic assessment" – using assessment to shape teaching and reassess students to monitor their progress. This helps teachers gain a fuller and fairer understanding of students' abilities.

D. CONCLUSION

This research explores the strategies used by the teachers when designing and selecting assessments for English students. The data from interview revealed that an English teacher's uses learning objectives as the basis for developing assessment tools for example in order to improve students speaking skill the teacher used role plays and oral interviews to assess students' English language skills. On the contrary, written test cannot not be suitable for assessing students reading and listening skill. In addition, another step that the teacher do in developing assessment tools is by considering three aspect such as student ability, level of difficulty, and effectiveness. However, teacher also often faces challenges in creating effective assessments, as standardized tests often measure English proficiency rather than content knowledge. Therefore, professional development focused on language assessment and collaboration time for teachers to develop appropriate assessments would equip them with the necessary skills to effectively evaluate their English language learners. Access to a bank of assessment materials targeted at different proficiency levels would further enhance their effectiveness. In conclusion, professional development in assessment literacy is crucial for English teachers to design and implement assessments that truly reflect students' language abilities in practical communication scenarios.

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