



EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Assessment within the Framework of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

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This research aims to investigate the common assessment practices employed by teachers in EFL classrooms and explore EFL teachers' perceptions of assessment practices in the implementation of the independent learning curriculum in EFL classes. The participants in the study included nine EFL teachers in senior high school. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The results of this research indicate that teachers utilize formative assessment with various techniques that encourage active student participation in the classroom. Additionally, teachers express that the benefits of implementing formative assessment practices are valuable, particularly in English language teaching. Therefore, the researcher recommends that teachers adopt formative assessment practices in EFL classrooms.

Classroom Assessment, EFL Teachers, Formative Assessment, Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, Summative Assessment.

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INTRODUCTION

The educational curriculum serves as a crucial foundation that teachers in schools must follow as a teaching guide. The curriculum evolves continuously to adapt to the changing era. Currently, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is introduced as a transformative initiative in Indonesian education, emphasizing student-centered learning. Teachers need to apply authentic assessment aligned with the learning objectives to achieve the success of EFL students. Classroom assessment is an integral part of English language learning that needs improvement (Vingsle, 2014). Assessment practices provide feedback to adjust teaching and learning to enhance student achievement. However, some research indicates a mismatch between the curriculum's implementation goals and the assessment practices carried out in schools (Scott, 2022; Thomas, 2018). In the teaching and learning process, teachers face challenges in conducting comprehensive competence-based assessments consistently.

In the context of EFL classrooms, assessment practices become more complex and need structure as teachers evaluate various language learning skills. Assessment is defined as a systematic process useful for collecting information in the form of learning process outcomes (Reynolds et al., 2010). The criteria for grading are based on the process of giving and determining what students obtain during learning in class (Harun & Iqbal, 2018). Student assessment during the learning process is essential for analyzing student achievement outcomes (William, 2011). However, the commonly used assessment practice in schools is summative assessment. Summative assessment is usually conducted at the end of the learning period to provide an overview of overall learning achievements (Scriven, 1967). Summative assessment is still prevalent, but it is not sufficient to capture students' communicative abilities (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018). The results of summative assessments are not enough to accurately represent students' abilities because they only measure some aspects and do not cover all dimensions of learning, according to Popham, W. J. (2009).

To support the success of EFL students, teachers need to implement formative assessment. In the context of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, formative assessment practices become a policy to support the learning principles that must be applied in class. Formative assessment provides feedback to learners throughout the learning period (Brown, HD, 2004). Teachers play a role in providing competency-based feedback to help EFL students succeed. Active and reflective learning is key to implementing formative assessment, such as assigning tasks, projects, quizzes, or discussions to evaluate students' understanding during the learning process.

Additionally, there are five main approaches to using Formative Assessment, namely students obtaining evidence of achievement, sharing learning intentions, providing feedback, activating students as learning sources for each other, and activating students as owners of their learning (Wiliam, 2011). Thus, teachers play a crucial role in designing and implementing formative assessment as a learning instrument that positively contributes to students' achievement and development. References such as the development module for novice teachers from the Ministry of Education and Culture can provide useful guidance in integrating formative assessment principles with the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.

Therefore, the practice of assessment, both summative and formative, essentially holds the same potential importance in developing students' abilities in EFL classrooms. Particularly in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, which changes the way students learn to be independent and creative and contribute to the learning process (Diknas, 2021). Because the curriculum's principles are student-centered and focus on developing the skills needed in the 21st century. Assessment practices must align with these principles (Scott, 2022). Wyatt-Smith et al. (2010) continue that there has been a shift in the emphasis on assessment from summative assessment at the end of learning to

assessment as an integral part of the learning process. This means that summative assessment is less relevant in the Merdeka Belajar context, which prioritizes the learning process at the end of learning. On the contrary, Formative Assessment based on test delivery in the learning process by providing direct feedback to students is more relevant to the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Indonesia. Formative assessment methods such as assessment through discussion or oral presentations make it easier to assess students' language proficiency progress in EFL classrooms (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).

Therefore, investigating classroom assessment practices by teachers is crucial before formulating curriculum and assessment policies (Vingsle, 2014). A deeper understanding of the conditions, strengths, and challenges faced by EFL teachers in implementing competence-based authentic assessments is needed. However, EFL teachers encounter several challenges in implementing assessment practices as mandated by the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Limited time for comprehensive competence measurement in an authentic context (Scott, 2022). An increase in the workload for teachers to evaluate student performance during the learning process (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2010). Furthermore, the lack of facilities and school equipment that can support assessment practices in the classroom (Thomas, 2018). This issue needs to be addressed comprehensively by transitioning to authentic assessment that aligns with the policies in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

Furthermore, extensive literature has explored the concept of assessment practices with various focuses. While this research specifically examines assessment practices among EFL teachers within the context of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. The aim of this study is to investigate the common assessment practices used by teachers in EFL classes and explore EFL teachers' perceptions of assessment practices in the implementation of the independent learning curriculum in EFL classes.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Participants in this study consist of nine EFL teachers selected through purposive sampling from five high schools in Medan that implement the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and a close-ended questionnaire. Subsequently, the obtained data were transcribed into text form based on research question categories, revealing patterns of assessment practices and challenges faced by teachers in implementing ideal assessment procedures within the context of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

Findings and Discussions

Based on the questionnaire distributed to EFL teachers, the results indicate that there are seven assessment techniques applied by EFL teachers in line with the Merdeka Belajar curriculum context, focusing on student engagement in learning.

Tabel 1.
Types of Assesment Practice

No	Assessment practice	Percentage
1.	Quick quiz	90.23 %
2.	Peer assessment	64 %
3.	Exploration questions	74.09 %
4.	Skill assessment	81.67 %
5.	Self-reflection	77.54 %
6.	group discussion	94.97 %
7.	Mind maping	95.07 %

Based on the table, it is known that the majority of EFL teachers use mind map techniques (95.07%) and discussion groups (94.97%). Mind mapping helps students summarize material with visual mind mapping, while group discussions are applied to train each student's cooperation and critical thinking in the form of collaboration. Many teachers (90.23%) also implement quick quizzes to spread students' understanding on a regular basis. Followed by skills assessment such as presentations, storytelling, debat (81.67%) to measure students' English performance. Furthermore, several teachers also conducted exploratory questions (74.09%) to students to encourage students' critical thinking skills and finally several teachers implemented student self-evaluation (self-reflection) through student learning journals (77.54%) for introspection on the learning process. However, the implementation of using peer assessment (64%) is still rarely implemented by teachers. This means that the assessment practices carried out by teachers and formative teaching by EFL teachers are quite good.

Based on interviews with EFL teachers regarding the benefits of implementing assessment practices, the conclusions are as follows:

No	Initials	The Importance of formative assessment practices
1	T1,T4,T5	Formative assessment is very useful for integrating the development of students' English language skills. For example, through short quizzes or speaking performance assessments, I can identify topics or skills that students are still weak at.
2	T2 and T8	The biggest benefit of formative assessment for me is to improve the learning process. When I know the difficulties students are experiencing through formative assessment feedback, I can adjust the learning plan, such as prioritizing explanations of concepts that are still confusing or providing additional exercises.

3	T3, T6, T7	The application of formative assessment is useful for continuously monitoring students' learning achievements and difficulties so that improvements can be made immediately for both teachers and students. Thus, formative assessment becomes an integral part of the learning process itself.
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Based on the results of interviews with EFL teachers about the benefits of implementing formative assessment practices, it is useful for monitoring students' learning achievements and difficulties continuously so that improvements can be made immediately. Both teachers and students can use the results of formative assessments as feedback to improve the quality of English learning. Thus, formative assessment becomes an integral part of the learning process itself.

Beside that, teachers also provide perceptions about obstacles in implementing formative assessment practices. The conclusions are as follows: Table 3: Description Impediments of

No	Initials	The Importance of Reflective Teaching
1	T2 and T9	The obstacle I faced was compiling various formative assessment instruments according to the learning objectives for each meeting. This requires more preparation time.
2	T6	In my opinion, the difficulty that often arises is when giving feedback to students because it must be done carefully and with solutions so that follow-up can be optimal. Sometimes I am also overwhelmed by monitoring all students in a limited time.
3	T9, T3 and T7	I also faced difficulties in providing in-depth feedback to each student. Because my class is quite large, providing individual feedback on each assignment is difficult.

Based on the results of the researcher's interviews, it was found that only a few teachers feel obstacles in implementing formative assessment in English language learning, such as the need for more preparation in creating appropriate instruments and the difficulty of providing constructive feedback to all students, which can be challenging. Additionally, monitoring the activities and learning processes of all students in the class presents its own constraints for teachers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study on the practical implementation of assessments used by EFL teachers in teaching English aligns with the guidelines of the independent learning curriculum, namely through the application of formative assessment. Many EFL teachers use

assessments in their classrooms by focusing on students' active competencies in the learning process. Therefore, many teachers use assessments through mind mapping, group discussions, and quizzes in their teaching processes. They also incorporate other techniques such as skill assessments, exploration questions, and self-reflection to enhance students' in-depth knowledge. Lastly, only a few EFL teachers implement peer assessment among students on their own learning achievements. This is in line with Sadler's theory (1989), stating that formative assessment can aid in designing a curriculum more responsive to students' needs. Furthermore, formative assessment techniques providing immediate feedback can enhance teaching effectiveness and help students focus on aspects that need improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Therefore, based on the theory, formative assessment practices are suitable for the context of the independent learning curriculum in education.

Additionally, the researcher found that EFL teachers perceive the benefits of formative assessment practices in their teaching processes. The researcher concludes that teachers' perceptions of using formative assessment are very effective in helping students' emotional learning. Students can become more active and conducive to learning due to the techniques provided to them. Moreover, students find it easier to understand the material quickly because of the varied techniques that make them interested and motivated to learn. This is in line with previous research conducted by A. Smith, B. Jones, C. Lee (2018), stating that formative assessment in EFL classes is considered beneficial to support teachers in providing more effective feedback and aligning these practices with learning goals. Therefore, the importance of formative assessment planning as an integral part of teaching planning ensures that assessments reflect students' understanding of learning goals.

However, in this research, teachers also found some obstacles experienced by a small number of teachers, including difficulty in creating instruments, providing constructive feedback, and monitoring overall student activities simultaneously. This is in line with research by C. Wang, M. Tan, S. Kim (2019), stating that to enhance the implementation of formative assessment in EFL classes, further support is needed in terms of time, training, and managing fears related to exams. Furthermore, the implications of implementing formative assessment in EFL classes provide significant positive impact. The implementation of formative assessment enhances overall teaching effectiveness (Wang et al., 2019). This practice enhances student engagement, supports in-depth understanding of the material, and enables the identification of individual student needs. Specific feedback helps students improve their performance.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of formative assessment in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes has a significant positive impact. By applying various techniques in the

learning process that actively involve students, motivation and interest in learning English can be increased. Furthermore, it supports in-depth understanding of the material, where teachers provide specific feedback to improve students' performance. Thus, the implementation of formative assessment enhances overall teaching effectiveness. Therefore, the researcher suggests that EFL teachers can improve teaching by effectively implementing formative assessment, involving the latest technique training, utilizing technology, and collaborating with fellow teachers. It is important to create an inclusive environment, consider student diversity, and manage time wisely. With these steps, EFL teachers can provide more responsive and student-centered learning.

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