

LEARNING ASSESSMENT IN *KURIKULUM MERDEKA*: PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES IN EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Assessment is considered important for improving students' performance and contributing to better teaching and more efficient learning. This research aims to explore how EFL teacher implement the learning assessment in the class, and the challenges faced by teacher in conducting the assessment. Thus, this research was conducted at one of vocational schools in Majalengka. This research employs a narrative inquiry as the research design. This research use observation, document analysis and interview as the data collection method. The observation was conducted two times at eleventh-grade class and the interview was delivered to an English teacher. The researcher analyzed the teacher document, to determine whether they comply with the guidelines of the Kurikulum Merdeka. The research reveals that the teacher effectively implements formative and summative assessments in line with government guidelines. Formative assessments occur during group discussions with ongoing feedback, while summative assessments involve group presentations at the end of a unit to evaluate students' comprehension of report texts. These assessments incorporate Profil Pelajar Pancasila values, namely collaboration and creativity. The assessments adhere to principles of language assessment, including practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and positive washback. Practicality is seen in manageable tasks, reliability in clear scoring rubrics, validity in content alignment with learning objectives, authenticity in real-world language use, and washback in motivating students and boosting their confidence. The limited class time poses a challenge, making it difficult for the teacher to provide detailed feedback.

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INTRODUCTION

Education inherently involves both teaching and assessment. Teaching lays the foundation for learning activities, while assessment measures learning progress, helping educators enhance and develop students' abilities (Syafi'i, Marfiyanto, & Rodyah, 2018; Rahmawati, 2021; Syaifuddin, 2020). Assessments are crucial for understanding and improving the learning process, determining academic accomplishment, guiding instructional decisions, and supporting continual improvement in educational practices (Maysuroh et al., 2023). Tosuncuoglu (2018) highlights that assessment in ELT helps determine how well students meet language learning goals and identify those needing additional support. Language assessments evaluate speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (Islam et al., 2021), guided by principles of practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018).

Indonesia's education system, marked by dynamic curricular changes, has introduced the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, building upon the *Kurikulum 2013* (K13) to enhance learning outcomes. The

Kurikulum Merdeka focuses on essential, relevant, and in-depth material, develops soft skills and character through projects, offers flexible learning, and adapts to local contexts (Kemendikbud, 2021).

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* includes formative and summative assessments (Kemendikbud, 2021). Formative assessments, conducted throughout the learning process, provide valuable feedback for instructional decisions and support student improvement (Akter & Khan, 2020; Alahmadi et al., 2019). Summative assessments, administered at the end of a unit or course, measure overall learning outcomes and achievement of learning objectives (Heath et al., 2021; Menéndez et al., 2019; Treve, 2021).

The researcher compiles various previous studies to enhance the uniqueness of the current research. Shinta Amalia Ferdaus and Dian Novita conducted a study titled "The Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English Subject at a Vocational High School in Indonesia," which examined the application of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English classes at a vocational high school in Sidoarjo, focusing on an English instructor for 11th-grade students using a qualitative case study approach (Ferdaus & Novita, 2023). Another study by Anita Kusuma Pertiwi and Ririn Pusparini, "Vocational High School English Teachers' Perspectives on 'Merdeka Belajar' Curriculum," involved eight English teachers from different vocational high schools and included seventh grade junior high school students and a seventh grade English teacher, using observation, interviews, and documentation for data collection (Pertiwi & Pusparini, 2021). Maysuroh et al. (2023) conducted a study titled "Authentic Assessment of Speaking Skill in EFL Class: An Analysis on English Teachers' Assessment Process," which identified common types of authentic assessments and their impact on teaching and learning through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Additionally, Yulianto (2022) explored assessment paradigms within the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, emphasizing its role in enhancing student performance and highlighting a balanced combination of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to support continuous student development.

Some of the previous studies mentioned above focused on other variables, such as teachers' perceptions of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and only on the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. In this study, the researcher focused on the implementation of assessment in teaching English within the framework of *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the challenges faced. The researcher are interested in conducting research with the following questions 1) How does EFL teacher implement the learning assessment in the class? 2)What are the challenges faced by teacher in conducting the assessment? Therefore, the objectives of this study are: 1) To explain how EFL teacher implement the learning assessment in the class 2) To explain teacher's challenges in conducting the assessment.

METHODS

This study employs a narrative inquiry research design. Narrative inquiry, as articulated by Clandinin (2022), is a qualitative research methodology that explores the ways individuals construct and make meaning of their experiences through storytelling. This approach recognizes that humans are natural storytellers and that their narratives provide deep insights into their lives and identities. This research provide descriptive data, so the findings cannot be represented by numbers or statistics. The researcher using observation, document analysis, and interviews as instruments to collect data regarding how EFL teacher implement the learning assessment in the class, and the challenges faced by teacher in conducting the assessment

This research was conducted at one of vocational schools in Majalengka. The subject in this research is an English teacher. The researcher chose an English teacher who teaches in 11th grade because 10th and 11th grade level uses *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The researcher chose to focus on one teacher because this approach allows for very detailed and in-depth data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Result of Observation

The researcher conducted two classroom observations in Teacher A's English class to examine the implementation of assessments within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework, focusing on report text. In the first observation, Teacher A employed formative assessment through group discussions. Students formed

groups of 3-4 members to create a report text based on their Field Work Experience (PKL) using asturo paper and markers. This approach encouraged cooperation and creativity, aligning with the Profil Pelajar Pancasila. Teacher A monitored and provided guidance, assessing participation and engagement. Due to time constraints, detailed feedback was limited, and two groups had to submit their work after school hours. The implementation of formative assessments aligned with the Kemendikbud (2022) guidelines, emphasizing understanding, active participation, and creativity.

In the second observation, Teacher A conducted a summative assessment through group presentations. This performance assessment focused on speaking skills, with students presenting their previous group assignments. Teacher A evaluated self-confident, content, pronunciation and intonation using pre-established rubrics. Feedback addressed strengths and areas for improvement. This summative assessment aligned with the Profil Pelajar Pancasila by fostering cooperation and occurred at the chapter's conclusion, meeting the learning objectives.

Teacher A effectively implemented formative and summative assessments according to language assessment principles: practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback. The assessments were manageable, with clear and consistent criteria ensuring reliability. They measured defined aspects of language proficiency, mirrored real-world language use, and had a positive impact on student motivation and confidence. These observations highlight Teacher A's structured and effective approach to implementing assessments under the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

The Result of Document Analysis

The researcher conducted a document analysis of Teacher A's teaching module. The current material being studied by the eleventh-grade class is report text. According to the document analysis conducted by the researcher, it was evident that Teacher A had integrated formative assessment into the teaching module and had prepared a rubric for group assessment and writing skills.

Another finding was that Teacher A had effectively implemented summative assessment in the teaching module and had developed a rubric specifically for assessing presentation skills. This comprehensive approach to assessment underscores the importance of both formative and summative evaluations in providing a holistic view of student learning and progress.

Additionally, the document analysis reveals that, the assessment instruments employed are related to achieving the learning objective, utilizing appropriate strategies, forms, and techniques, indicating a well-planned assessment strategy and formative assessment activities are implemented in a flexible manner. This comprehensive evaluation provides valuable insights into the practical application of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the continuous efforts to improve educational outcomes for students.

The Result of Interview

The researcher conducted an interview with Teacher A. The researcher posed several questions related to the findings from the observations.

1. What do you think about the assessment concept in the Kurikulum Merdeka?

The researcher seeks to understand Teacher A's opinion on the concept of assessment in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Teacher A responds based on their knowledge and experience:

T: "According to me, the concept of assessment in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is simpler and more flexible compared to the *Kurikulum 2013*. The assessment comprises both formative and summative evaluations."

Based on Teacher A's response, it can be concluded that Teacher A understands the concept of assessment in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, as they mention that assessment consists of formative and summative. Teacher A also briefly references the previous curriculum, which they describe as not being as simple and flexible as the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

2. What is the difference between formative and summative assessments?

The researcher aims to search deeper into Teacher A's understanding of curriculum concepts. Teacher A stated that assessment consists of formative and summative components. The researcher tried to understand Teacher A's understanding of the difference between these two types of assessment. Teacher A responded:

T: "Formative assessment focuses more on students' knowledge, whereas summative assessment emphasizes skills. Thus, summative assessment predominantly evaluates students' skills."

Based on the response, Teacher A demonstrated a clear understanding of the distinct functions of formative and summative assessments, as evidenced by the statement. This aligns with the observation results, where Teacher A demonstrated an understanding of the characteristics of both formative and summative assessments.

3. Do you think the Kurikulum Merdeka is appropriate for increasing student engagement in learning English? Why do you think so?

The researcher wanted to understand Teacher A's opinion on student engagement in English language learning within the Kurikulum Merdeka. Teacher A responded based on her teaching experience:

T: "Because in the Kurikulum Merdeka, teachers are free to choose the teaching methods and media. Now, if there are students who are still struggling, we can implement differentiated learning. We group students based on their abilities: those who are proficient, those at an intermediate level, and those who are still struggling. Proficient students can help those who are not. Learning is often done in groups so they can collaborate and express their opinions."

Based on Teacher A's response, it can be concluded that due to the flexibility Kurikulum Merdeka offers in choosing teaching methods and media, Teacher A implements differentiated learning when there are students who are still struggling. The objective is to assist struggling students by grouping them with peers who have already grasped the material.

4. Do you provide feedback after conducting assessments? How do you do it?

The researcher wanted to know if Teacher A consistently provides feedback after assessing students, considering that feedback is crucial in the Kurikulum Merdeka. Teacher A responded:

T: "I like to provide feedback to students regarding their learning process. I ask whether they have difficulties or not. If they do, we find the solution together. If not, they need to further improve their learning methods."

Based on the response, Teacher A consistently provides feedback following both formative and summative assessments. This aligns with the observations, Teacher A consistently provided feedback after assessing the students, both in the first and second observations. However, during the first observation, Teacher A was unable to give detailed feedback due to time constraints, resulting in only general feedback being provided.

5. Do you have any challenges in conducting the assessment in the class? If yes, please explain your challenges?

The researcher wanted to know if Teacher A faced any issues while conducting assessments in the classroom. Teacher A responded:

T: "The current generation requires extra patience and a careful approach. Deep conversations and detailed explanations are very important."

Based on Teacher A's response, it can be inferred that today's students tend to be quite mischievous, requiring greater patience. This aligns with the findings from the first and second classroom observations, where some students had not completed their assessments due to a lack of seriousness and focus on their tasks. As a result, a significant amount of time was wasted. It can be concluded that dealing with such behavior introduces additional challenges, particularly related to time management. This situation forces teachers to juggle between delivering instructional content, managing the classroom, and conducting assessments within already limited class hours. Consequently, teachers struggle to provide comprehensive feedback, as much of the available time is spent on classroom management..

Discussions

Based on the results of observations, document analysis and interviews, researcher identified, Teacher A understands the concept of assessment in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, as they mention that assessment consists of formative and summative. The implementation of formative and summative

assessments conducted by Teacher A was aligned with their respective characteristics as outlined in the Kemendikbud (2022) guidebook. Teacher A conducts formative assessments during the learning process to gauge students' understanding of the material being taught. This aligns with Dumford and Miller (2018), who state that formative assessment is frequently conducted during the course of a lesson. This dynamic approach allows teachers to provide real-time feedback and make necessary instructional adjustments to ensure student success, rather than relying solely on summative assessments at the conclusion of the lesson.

Teacher A implements summative assessments at the end of a learning unit to evaluate students' understanding of the material taught. This approach aligns with Budiono, A. N., & Hatip, M. (2023), who state that summative assessments are conducted after the completion of a learning period, such as at the end of a specific unit, the end of a semester, or the end of the academic year.

The use of both formative and summative assessments, aligned with the principles of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, demonstrates a commitment to fostering critical skills and competencies among students. Nugrohadi and Anwar (2022) elaborate on this integration, emphasizing that the primary objectives of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila extend beyond academic achievement. According to their research, the Profile is designed to uphold and promote the nation's moral values and lofty ideals. It prepares students to become responsible and informed global citizens, capable of contributing positively to the global community.

If the assessment results do not meet expectations and there are still some students who do not understand the material, Teacher A implements differentiated instruction by grouping students who do not understand with those who do and those who have a moderate understanding. The goal is that students who do not understand the material will benefit from learning alongside their friends who have a better grasp of the subject, thereby improving their comprehension through the learning process with their friends. This aligns with Pitaloka (2022) stated that differentiated instruction is an approach undertaken by teachers to meet the needs and expectations of students. It is an effort to adapt the classroom learning process to accommodate the individual learning needs of each student.

Brown and Abeywickrama (2018) emphasize several principles in language assessment, highlighting essential aspects that contribute to the effectiveness, fairness, and utility of language tests. These principles guide the development of language assessments that prioritize practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and positive washback. The findings of this study align with these assertions, demonstrating that both formative and summative assessments are designed in accordance with these principles of language assessment.

The challenges faced by Teacher A during the assessment process is Limited Time. The limited time allocated for English classes poses significant challenges for teachers in conducting thorough and in-depth assessments, which are crucial for understanding each student's progress and providing meaningful feedback, considering that feedback is crucial in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This aligns with Ayubi et al. (2021) teachers' feedback is very meaningful to students because it serves as motivation for self-improvement and makes them feel cared for by their teachers. Comprehensive assessments require considerable time to evaluate students' work meticulously and to offer constructive feedback that can guide their learning. Teacher A highlighted that this constraint is further exacerbated by the need to effectively manage classroom dynamics. This situation makes it difficult to balance the time between delivering content, managing the classroom, and conducting assessments. This challenge aligns with Wulandari (2023) assertion regarding time constraints, emphasizing that a busy schedule makes it challenging to allocate sufficient time for comprehensive and in-depth assessments

CONCLUSION

The research findings, collected through observations, document analysis and interviews, show that Teacher A effectively implements formative and summative assessments align with government guidelines. Formative assessment is conducted during group discussions to gauge students' understanding, with feedback provided throughout the process. Summative assessment takes the form of

group presentations at the end of Chapter 8 (report text) to evaluate students' mastery of the material. Teacher A integrated Profil Pelajar Pancasila values, particularly collaboration and creativity, into the formative and summative assessments.

The assessment applied follows the principles of language assessment, including practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity and feedback. Practicality is evident from the manageable tasks, such as creating a report on asturo paper within a reasonable timeframe, considering time and resource constraints. Reliability is ensured by a well-defined assessment rubric with clear scoring criteria, resulting in consistent evaluation. Validity was addressed as the assessment content, directly assessed the language skills used. This alignment between assessment content and learning objectives ensures that the assessment actually measures what it is intended to measure. Authenticity is upheld as the report text reflects real-world language use by focusing on the PKL experience. Washback, the positive impact on student learning, is evident. The students are motivated to prepare well for the presentation and gain confidence in public speaking, which shows the positive influence of the assessment. Overall, Teacher A's practice effectively combines practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity and washback for successful language assessment.

Despite the effectiveness of Teacher A's assessment practices, one challenge emerged: limited time. With limited English class time, Teacher A had to balance class management and providing detailed feedback in each session. This problem was observed in the first observation, where time constraints made Teacher A unable to provide detailed feedback to students, thus only providing overall feedback.

Based on the research findings, the researcher offers recommendations for teachers, school principals, and future researchers. Teachers can use this study as a guide for implementing assessments and addressing challenges in the classroom. School principals can provide resources and training to enhance teaching quality. Future researchers can use these findings to inform further studies on assessment implementation and challenges

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