

UNCOVERING STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

This research is intended to investigate the student perceptions of English classroom assessment at an Islamic Senior High School in terms of congruence with the planned learning, authenticity, transparency, student consultation, and diversity. The research involved 75 students out of an entire student population of 578 students from 20 different classes across three academic years. The instrument used was 30 five-point Likert scale items from Students' Perceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (SPAQ) developed by Waldrip, Fisher, & Dorman (2008) with Cronbach alpha internal consistency ranging from .68 to .86. The data were collected and were analyzed using SPSS20 to find if the data were valid and reliable. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency/reliability was .95 while the discriminant validity was .71. It indicates the data were valid and reliable. The data were then analyzed descriptively and reported in mean and standard deviation format. It was found that diversity was the highest and student consultation was the lowest. It implies that although the mean of each scale was high, the students need to be consulted and assessment need to be more authentic.

Keywords: classroom assessment practice, student perception, student involvement

INTRODUCTION

Assessment plays a critical role in bridging teaching and learning activities in a classroom. Based on this fact, it implies that there is a disparity between teaching objectives and students' current ability. Thus, assessment is required to close the disparity. It means that assessment is more than just score the student learning. In detail, Crook (1998) as cited by Cheng, Wu, & Liu (2015) states that assessment has actually long been used in teaching and learning for various decision-making, such as for selecting and placing students, correcting and guiding learning, and grading the achievements. It implies that assessment is administered before, during, and after learning process takes place. This holistic assessment is also called as classroom assessment.

A classroom assessment practice during learning process has drawn a lot of researchers' attention currently since they believe that it is educationally useful to help students learn and progress. Based on the current perspective, assessment relies not only on traditional paper-pencil test, but also on alternative assessments such as portfolio, peer assessments, self-assessment, project assessments, etc. Thus, the current assessment practice is more varied

and hence more learner-centered than the conventional or mere summative assessment.

This holistic approach to assessment enables students to gain complete information about their learning. Assessment Reform Group (1999) in Birenbaum et al., (2015) define assessment as "the process of collecting and interpreting evidence to be used by learners as well as their teachers to decide where the learner position is in their learning, where they need to go next, and how best to get there." Based on the definition, assessment is aimed at unlocking the students' current learning position, the learning goal to achieve and the best way to achieve those goals. Thus, assessment is a process where teachers as well as students collaborate to ensure a learning process goes toward the intended goal.

The role an assessment practice plays has been growing more important lately since lockdown and home learning is enforced to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The global pandemic forces the school to close and move to home. Teaching and learning activities take place using the online platform such as Google Classroom, Moodle, Zoom, WhatsApp, etc. This new learning experience requires students, teachers, and parents or legal guardians to have some basic knowledge and skill to use information technologies to access learning materials.

However, there are some challenges in home learning period in Indonesia. Ariyanti (2020) found out that there are three major types of challenges encountered by the students, such as internet connection, health reason, and the usage of certain online learning application. This is interesting because internet connection becomes a major challenge the students faced. Internet connection in Indonesia is not among the best. In addition, the parents' socio-economic status let students to rely on cheap mobile connection with limited internet quota for learning. This situation forces the teachers to depend on assignment and especially assessment as a home learning medium.

In short, the global pandemic due to Covid-19 has accelerated the assessment global trend to combine assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning. These two latter formats of assessment emphasize the role of students in informing classroom assessment practice. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate student perceptions of classroom assessment.

Richards & Schmidt (2002) define perception as recognizing and understanding of events, objects, and stimuli through the use of senses (sight, hearing, touch, etc.). Based on this etymology, it implies that perception refers to how students recognize and understand classroom assessment initiated and monitored by teachers. In most cases, perception measures to what extent students understand what teacher does to assess their current learning progress against the preset learning goals. Despite limited number of research on student perceptions of classroom assessment, there are three relevant previous researches worthy of discussion here.

First is a research by Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani, & Alkabani (2014), in which they examine the impact of teachers' classroom assessment practices and the student perceptions of assessment tasks on students' academic self-efficacy beliefs. Their research participants were 1,457 students from 99 classrooms of public secondary schools in Oman. It was found that student perceptions of the assessment tasks significantly and positively correlated with student academic self-efficacy beliefs. However, this study was conducted for all subjects, not specific for English language.

Second is a research by Ibrahim & Khairuddin (2018) about relationship student perceptions and student soft skills. In this study, 109 first semester students of diploma in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions (MHEIs) were randomly chosen. It was found out that student perceptions had a significant positive relationship with student soft skills. The participants in MHEIs agreed that the classroom assessment practice were congruent with planned learning, authentic and transparent, serving as a means to consult the lecturers and classmates, appropriately met their level and capability, and have assisted them to develop and improve their soft skills. Just like the previous research, this study is not specific to English language learning and was intended for students at tertiary levels.

Third is a study in Indonesia by Rahman (2020), who aimed at exploring how students perceive assessment in a grammar lesson in the EFL classroom at the English Department of UIN Ar-Raniry. It was found out that the students perceived that grammar assessment and the planned learning is slightly congruent. In addition, there was inadequate transparency in relation to the authenticity, purpose, and assessment forms. In short, the student perceptions of classroom assessment were not good. This study was specific for English grammar class at tertiary level in Indonesia.

From the previous three related research, it is clear that there is no specific ELT research on student perceptions of classroom assessment at middle school level in Indonesia. Therefore, this research aimed at closing the gap and investigating student perceptions of English classroom assessment in one of the Islamic private senior high school during home learning.

METHOD

Research Design

This research employed a descriptive quantitative research to investigate the student perceptions on classroom assessment at this school. Quantitative research was chosen because this research mostly dealt with numerical data (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010). Descriptive research was chosen since this research aimed to describe a given state of affairs as fully and carefully as possible (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008).

Population and Sample

In this research, the population was 578 students spread across three academic years and 20 classes. A stratified random sampling was employed to select a sample. In total, 25 students were selected from each academic year.

Total 75 students were given the Student Perceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (SPAQ) through Google form link.

Instrument

In this research, the researcher used the Student Perceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (SPAQ). This was developed by Waldrip, Fisher, & Dorman (2008). The questionnaire was then adapted as the instrument to inquire about the student perceptions. The original questionnaire was for general assessment, therefore the researcher adapted it. There were 30 items, which were divided into five scales: congruence with planned learning (items 1-5); authenticity (items 6-12); student consultation (13-18); transparency (items 19-24); and diversity (25-30). Five Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree was put for each statement.

This instrument was chosen because the instrument has been tested for validity (.50) and reliability (Cronbach alpha internal consistency ranging from .68 to .86) during the development and validation phase. Thus, it has been valid and reliable.

The instrument was then translated into Bahasa Indonesia and checked for the accuracy by an experienced translator. The instrument was further checked by the researcher again. In addition, the researched then clearly explained on how to complete questionnaire.

The researcher measured the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire by trying it out. It was delivered by using Google Form, and the students who responded to this tryout were 10 students of the same private Secondary School where this research was conducted. Then, the validity and reliability were assessed by using SPSS 20. Overall, the questionnaire items were all valid at the .05 level based on the Pearson correlation ($r > r\text{-table} = .227$) and it also gained a very high reliability level with the coefficient of Cronbach alpha was .945 ($r \geq 0.80$).

Procedure

In collecting the data, the online questionnaire was distributed to the 75 students through their homeroom teachers. The deadline for completion was also provided in questionnaire. After the data were completed, the data from Google form were exported into Microsoft Excel. The researcher checked the data once again to make sure that the data were complete.

Data analysis

As written earlier, there were five scales based on which the data were arranged. The data were analyzed using SPSS20 to find out the mean as well as standard deviation. The data were presented from the lowest to highest.

FINDINGS

There are two parts in findings section, i.e. main finding and finding for each scale. In the main finding, general information about student perception

on the English classroom assessment is presented. The presentation of each scale follows.

A. Main Finding

The data on the student perceptions on English classroom assessment were analyzed descriptively. In Table 1, the highest mean came from statement number 30 ("There are different ways I can complete the assessment") with mean of 4.45. It means that most participants agreed that there were different ways offered in the classroom to complete the assessments. This statement belongs to "Diversity" scale. The lowest mean was item 16 ("I have helped the class develop rules for assessment in English") with score 3.05. Thus, it means that some participants perceive that they did not help the class to develop rules for assessment in English language learning activities.

Table 1. Perception of English Classroom Assessment

Item	N	M	Item	N	M
1	75	3.63	16	75	3.05
2	75	3.69	17	75	3.79
3	75	4.19	18	75	3.51
4	75	4.07	19	75	3.61
5	75	3.75	20	75	4.01
6	75	4.11	21	75	4.16
7	75	3.47	22	75	3.99
8	75	3.75	23	75	3.85
9	75	3.73	24	75	3.65
10	75	3.49	25	75	4.31
11	75	3.55	26	75	4.23
12	75	3.59	27	75	3.97
13	75	3.53	28	75	4.07
14	75	3.71	29	75	3.99
15	75	3.55	30	75	4.45
Total mean			3.82		

The standard deviation (SD) of all the items ranges from .90 and 1.16. This indicates that the data deviation on the student perceptions of English classroom assessment was standard and the data were close to the mean.

B. Finding of Each Scale

In this part, each scale is further explained. It consists of the congruence with planned learning, authenticity, student consultation, transparency, and diversity. This was sorted from the lowest to the highest.

a) Student Consultation

Student consultation refers to how far students were asked for opinion and communicated about the types of assessment tasks. This scale consisted of 6 statements with grand mean 3.52. In the below table, the detailed result is presented.

Table 2: Student Consultation

Items on Questionnaire	M
1. In English lesson, I am asked about the types of assessment that are used	3.53
2. I am aware how my assessment will be marked	3.71
3. I can select how I will be assessed in English lesson	3.55
4. I have helped the class develop rules for assessment in English lesson	3.05
5. My teacher has explained to me how each type of assessment is to be used	3.79
6. I have a say in how I will be assessed in English lesson	3.51
Mean	3.52

As shown above, the highest mean is item number 5 with mean 3.79 and the lowest mean is item number 4 with mean of 3.05. It suggests that the teachers had asked the students about the types of assessment, explained how the scoring would be done, and given the students the freedom to choose assessment method. However, some students perceived that they did not help the class developed rules for assessment.

b) The Authenticity

Authenticity refers to how far the assessment tasks visualize real life situations that were relevant to the learner. This scale consisted of seven statements with grand mean 3.67. In the below table, the detailed result is presented.

Table 3: Authenticity

Item on Questionnaire	M
7. I am assessed on what the teacher has taught me.	4.11
8. Assessment in English examines my ability to answer every day questions	3.47
9. My English assessment tasks are useful in everyday things.	3.75
10. I find English assessment tasks are relevant to what I do outside of school.	3.73
11. Assessment in English tests my ability to apply	3.49

what I know to real-life problems	
12. Assessment in English examines my ability to answer every day questions	3.55
13. I can show others that my learning has helped me do things	3.59
Mean	3.67

As shown above, the highest mean is the item number 7 with mean 4.11 and the lowest mean in this scale is the item number 11 with mean of 3.49. It implies that the assessment was in accordance with the lessons the teachers taught. However, the students could not transfer the skill/knowledge to real life problem. This is consistent with finding on congruence with planned learning scale that what they learned and what they knew was a bit different.

c) The Congruence with Planned Learning

Congruence with planned learning means how far the assessment tasks are in line with the objectives, goals, and activities of the learning. This scale consisted of five statements with grand mean 3.86. In the below table, the detailed result is presented.

Table 4: Congruence with planned learning

Item on Questionnaire	M
14. Questions in English subject tests what I know	3.63
15. My English assignments/tests examine what I do in class.	3.69
16. My assignments/tests are about what I have done in class.	4.19
17. How I am assessed is like what I do in class.	4.07
18. How I am assessed is similar to what I do in class.	3.75
Mean	3.86

As shown above, the highest mean is item number 16 with mean 4.19 and the lowest score is item number 14 with mean 3.63. It indicates that the assessment given in the class was about and similar to the lesson/activity they had learned in the class. However, what they learned and what they knew is slightly different.

d) Transparency

Transparency refers to how far the forms of assessment and the purposes of tasks are explained clearly to the learner. This scale consisted of six statement with grand mean 3.88. In the below table, the detailed result is presented.

Table 5: Transparency

Items on Questionnaire	M
19. I understand what is needed in all English assessment tasks.	3.61
20. I know what is needed to successfully complete a English lesson assessment task.	4.01
21. I am told in advance when I am being assessed.	4.16
22. I am told in advance on what I am being assessed.	3.99
23. I am clear about what my teacher wants in my assessment tasks.	3.85
24. I know how a particular assessment task will be marked.	3.65
Mean	3.88

As shown above, the highest score is the item number 21 with mean 4.16 and the lowest score is item number 19 with mean 3.61. It indicates that the informed the students the time and the aspects of lesson that would be assessed. However, the students had some difficulties in understanding what they needed to prepare for the assessment task.

e) Diversity

Diversity refers to how far all students have an equal opportunity at completing assessment tasks. There were six statements in this scale with grand mean 4.17. In the below table, the detailed result is presented.

Table 6: Diversity

Items on Questionnaire	M
25. I have as much chance as any other student at completing assessment tasks.	4.31
26. I complete assessment tasks at my own speed.	4.23
27. I am given a choice of assessment tasks.	3.97
28. I am given assessment tasks that suit my ability.	4.07
29. When I am confused about an assessment task, I am given another way to answer it.	3.99
30. When there are different ways, I can complete the assessment.	4.45
Mean	4.17

As shown above, the highest score is item number 30 with mean 4.45 and the lowest score is item number 27 with mean 3.97. It means that the students had the freedom to complete assessment at their own speed. The students were also given a choice of assessment task and different ways to complete assessment. The teachers have even given the students another way to complete the assessment task.

DISCUSSION

It is noteworthy that the research on student perceptions on English classroom assessment is very limited, especially at secondary school in Indonesia. Therefore, this research is to fill the gap. After the research was completed, a number of findings have shed the light into the nature of classroom assessment as perceived by the students.

The total mean of the completed SPAQ was 3.82, which can be categorized as high since it is much higher than the median of the Likert scale (2.5). It means that the students agree that the assessment were consulted with the students, authentic, congruent with the planned learning, transparent, and diverse.

In relation student consultation, it was found out that the mean score was the lowest. This was also the case in the previous studies (Cheng et al. 2004; Wang et al. 2013; Cheng et al., 2015). In Indonesian context, this phenomenon is like the research by Rahman (2020) that the students were not really consulted for the assessment. For the authentic assessment, the assessment is also perceived to authentic. This is very important since authentic assessment is critical in communicative language teaching (Esfandiari & Gawhary, 2019).

The assessment was also perceived to be congruent with the planned learning. The students agree that the teachers planned and based on the plan executed the tasks and the assessment in advance. It is good since the students are more enthusiastic when they know that the lessons they are learning will be assessed and tested (Santhanam, 2002). The assessment is also seen as transparent. Transparency has positive impact on student learning (Settiawan & Hilmawan, 2016). Another interesting finding is that the assessment given by the teacher is diverse. It is important for classroom learning since variety of assessment types improve students' motivation (Seale, Chapman, & Davey, 2000). In addition, it also increases students achievement (Umar, 2018).

The result of this study is similar to the finding in research conducted by Alkharusi et al., (2014) and Ibrahim & Khairuddin (2018) that the students have positive perception on classroom assessment in terms of five scales, i.e. congruence with planned learning, authenticity, student consultation, transparency, and diversity. However, the result of this research was different from Rahman's (2020) research. In his research, the student perception on classroom assessment was low.

CONCLUSION

This research was focused to investigate the student perceptions of English Classroom Assessment, which was Students' Perceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (SPAQ) during Covid-19 outbreak. The findings of this research demonstrate the students to agree that English classroom assessment in their English subject were diverse, transparent, congruent with planned learning, authentic, has been consulted with the students.

For future researchers, this study can be replicated in another Indonesian middle school to confirm if this trend is nation-wide. In addition, future researchers may also correlate this theme with other variables.

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