

Assessment Strategies Implemented by Novice Teachers at An English Language Course Institution

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Abstract

The study focuses on the assessment strategies implemented by novice teachers at an English language course institution. Through descriptive qualitative research, the study investigates the types of assessment strategies used by these teachers and how they implement them in the classroom. Using open-ended questionnaires and observations, data were collected from three teachers with 1-2 years of teaching experience. The findings reveal that all three teachers predominantly used formative assessment, which includes exercises, written tests, and oral questions to gauge student understanding during the learning process. Each teacher employed different methods tailored to their students' needs, emphasizing the importance of formative assessment in improving student learning outcomes. The study concludes that while the specific strategies vary, the common goal among the teachers is to assess students' progress systematically to enhance learning. This research contributes to the ongoing discussion of effective assessment practices in English language teaching, highlighting the challenges and successes of novice teachers in this context.

Keywords: Assessment; Assessment Strategies; Novice Teacher; English Language Course Institution

INTRODUCTION

Novice teachers play an increasingly pivotal role in the ever-evolving field of pedagogy in the dynamic world of education. Furthermore, a thorough comprehension of effective assessment strategies is particularly necessary in the complex and intricate world of English language teaching. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate further into the topic that has not yet been covered, which is "Assessment Strategies Implemented by Novice Teachers at an English Language Course Institution."

The success of teaching and learning is a component of assessment, making it an integral part of the teaching and learning process. According to Fulcher & Davidson (2007), assessment is considered important for improving student performance as well as contributing to better teaching and more efficient learning. On the other hand, assessment aims to educate and improve student achievement (Wiggins, 1990). However, the approach and strategies used by each school and teacher to assess and evaluate the learning process are different. Formal teachers or teachers at school have a responsibility to implement a curriculum, despite the fact that each teacher teaches and assesses differently. However, semi-formal teachers, such as tutoring teachers, may employ different methods and strategies because the curriculum for tutoring is different from that of schools.

In learning, assessment refers to the examination of students' academic performance in class and how that performance may be used to improve learning and teaching by providing constructive feedback. Assessment also determines the success or failure of achieving curriculum objectives. According to Bloxham and Boyd (2007), assessment is used to measure a student's current acquired knowledge or skills. Assessment plays a crucial role in learning, primarily serving to collect relevant information regarding student performance or progress.

Assessment can be used as a system for individual evaluation and to evaluate performance between individuals. By employing assessment, teachers may obtain relevant information on students' performance or progress after learning. The use of appropriate assessment techniques can affect student learning outcomes. In addition, Harlen (2007) stated that assessment is a process of collecting, interpreting, and using evidence to make judgments on student learning achievement in education. Moreover, an essential component that teachers must be aware of when conducting a lesson is the type of assessment. There are 3 types of assessment: summative assessment, formative assessment, and diagnostic assessment. Summative assessment refers to comparing student learning to several standards or benchmarks in order to evaluate student learning progress and the outcomes of learning meetings set at the completion of a learning unit, which is usually a period, semester, or school year (Gamage et al., 2020). Summative assessment also creates socially valuable tests, grades, academic reports, and qualifications (Biggs, 2003). Furthermore, formative assessment is an assessment with the aim of providing teachers and students with information or feedback in order to enhance the learning process. It is possible to carry out formative assessment more than once when it is done during teaching and learning activities in one meeting (Kemdikbud, 2019). Meanwhile, a diagnostic assessment is an assessment with the aim of determining a student's weaknesses in comprehension of certain material or competencies and identifying the factors behind their weaknesses. The results of the diagnostic assessment can be used as a basis for providing students with follow-up in the form of an interventional method that is appropriate and in line with their individual weaknesses (Kemdisbudristek, 2021).

A novice is someone who is new to teaching or who is unfamiliar with a new cultural environment (Richard & Farrell, 2005). Moreover, there is no agreement regarding the minimum number of years of teaching required to complete the beginner stage. Certain academics have defined a novice as a teacher with less than five years of experience (Kim & Roth, 2011). Meanwhile, according to some academics, a novice is a teacher with less than two years of experience (Gatbonton, 2008). In this study, the novice teachers included as research subjects are teachers who have more than one year of experience. Novice teachers, brimming with enthusiasm and fresh perspectives, find themselves at the intersection of tradition and innovation, attempting to discover strategies to evaluate their students' language proficiency, comprehension, and communication skills. Despite some previous research that has explored and discovered various assessment practices, there is still a significant knowledge gap regarding the specific strategies employed by novice teachers in English courses.

Basera (2019), revealed that evaluation techniques, particularly in higher education, play a crucial role in enhancing students' learning outcomes. Regardless of the advantages and disadvantages of each assessment approach, combining approaches increases the likelihood that institutions will achieve their objectives of generating students with good academic outcomes. In addition, Dayal (2021), discovered that there was a connection between instructors' beliefs and actions in the classroom. Furthermore, the authors found that previous research examined experienced teachers and was conducted in formal schools, leading to the gap in this study, which examined novice teachers and was conducted in an informal school or an English language course institution.

This study was driven by the realization that the field of assessment is as diverse as the learners. The conventional assessments may not completely cover a variety of novice teachers' approaches, challenges, and accomplishments in assessing English language competencies. In light of this, the authors began focusing on a thorough investigation with the aim of revealing a variety of assessment strategies employed by novice English teachers. This study aimed to significantly contribute to the ongoing discussion over assessment practices in English language teaching. By amplifying the voices of novice teachers and illuminating their unique perspectives, it was expected that this study would enrich the pedagogical discourse and

contribute to meaningful advancements in the design and implementation of assessment strategies adjusted to the complexities of the English course. Therefore, the research questions are: what are assessment strategies implemented by novice teachers at an English language course institution, and how do novice teachers implement these strategies?

METHOD

This study employed descriptive qualitative research methodology because, according to Walidin et al. (2015), qualitative research is a method to comprehend human or social phenomena by developing a comprehensive and complex picture that can be presented in words, reporting detailed perspectives obtained from informant sources, and conducting the study in a natural setting. Furthermore, researchers may learn about the subject and feel what the subject experiences on a daily basis by conducting qualitative research. In addition, qualitative research is conducted by researchers to gain an understanding of the situational context and setting of the natural phenomenon being studied (Basrowi & Suwandi, 2009).

In order to obtain comprehensive data, this study used open-ended questionnaires and observations, which produced an observation checklist. Moreover, qualitative research has a variety of approaches from which researchers can choose to adjust the object to be researched (Yusanto, 2019). These approaches were chosen due to their alignment with the research questions. In addition, observation is a way to get any information from an event by directly observing it. The subjects of this study are three teachers who teach high-level students at an English language course institution. They were chosen as the research subjects because they have been teaching for more than one year and less than two years since they first started teaching. The three research subjects are from one of the English language course institutions in Yogyakarta. The data collection was conducted through questionnaires and observation. A questionnaire is a data collection technique that involves asking written questions to a person or a group of people to obtain an answer, responses, and information needed by the researcher (Mardalis, 2008). Therefore, questionnaires were distributed to each participant who was willing to become a resource for this study. The population of this study is composed of three tutoring teachers. In addition, the research instrument used is an open-ended questionnaire, which is a questionnaire that inquires about the knowledge or feelings of an objective source. Open-ended questionnaires are commonly used for qualitative research. Data analysis is the method of systematically examining and compiling responses from interviews, questionnaire responses, field notes, and other materials so that the results can be shared with and easily understood by others (C. Bogdan & Knopp Bilken, 2007). Furthermore, this study employed a qualitative data analysis based on a model from Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2016), which includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions or verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Assessment Strategies Applied by Novice Teachers in the English Language Course Institution

Based on the data obtained from the open-ended questionnaires and during observation using the observation checklist, among the three types of assessment, three teachers used formative assessment during learning in class and various forms of assessment such as exercises, project works, written tests, or assignments. Due to the observation being conducted in the middle of

the semester, the teachers used formative assessment rather than summative assessment, which is intended for the end of the semester when learning outcomes will be included in the report card. As a result, assessments were categorized as formative or summative based on how the results are used (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009).

According to participant 1, formative assessment was used at the beginning and at the core of the learning process.

“I use formative assessment for assessment during the learning process by asking questions related to material from the previous meeting, and then at the core of the learning process, I usually use written tests to find out students’ abilities.”

According to participant 2, formative assessment was used for assessing learning carried out through exercises, written tests, or group works.

“I use formative assessment during the learning process through exercises such as going in front of the class on certain tasks, written tests, and reviewing material at the end of the learning process.”

According to participant 3, formative assessment was used.

“I use formative assessment daily with oral questions such as asking about previous material to remember the material that has been given at the previous meeting, then written questions, and at the end of the learning process, I usually give simple questions to ensure that the material taught can be understood well by students and discuss written questions and give the correct answers.”

Based on the results of the observation checklist, teachers assessed their students’ comprehension of the material learned by asking questions regarding the ongoing learning material after beginning the learning process with oral or written questions.

The data gathered from the observation and questionnaires revealed that three teachers asked questions related to the previous material or assisted students in recalling it; teachers formulated questions using material designed to assess students’ comprehension; teachers determined the topic material of the meeting based on student learning outcomes in the previous meeting; teachers provided answer keys after discussing related questions that were done as an assessment; teachers asked students to review the material at the end of the learning process; and based on the questionnaires and observation checklist, teachers did not assign any additional enrichment tasks. Therefore, it can be concluded that learning assessment is an evaluation process carried out to assess students’ comprehension of the material in order to improve student progress and achievement. The aim is to provide an overview of the extent to which students have achieved the set learning objectives. Furthermore, learning assessment can involve various methods, such as exams, projects, assignments, or observation of student performance. Teachers may use learning assessment to determine the extent to which their students have understood the material, identify areas that need improvement, and provide constructive feedback to support students’ learning development. This is in line with the research by Jihad and Haris (2008), which stated that assessment is an activity teachers conduct to obtain objective, continuous, and extensive information about the learning process and outcomes achieved by students, the results of which serve as a basis for determining further learning.

The Strategies Applied by Novice Teachers

Based on the data from the open-ended questionnaires and observation checklist, each teacher used a different approach when implementing their assessment strategy, which was evident in the type of assessment, the way of teaching, and the implementation of the assessment strategy.

“I use formative assessment for assessment during the learning process by asking questions related to material from the previous meeting, and then at the core of the learning process, I usually use written tests to find out students’ abilities.” (Participant 1)

“I use formative assessment during learning with exercises such as going in front of the class on certain tasks, written tests, and reviewing material at the end of the learning process.” (Participant 2)

“I use formative assessment daily with oral questions such as asking about the previous material to remember the material that has been given at the previous meeting, then written questions, and at the end of the learning process, I usually give simple questions to ensure that the material taught can be understood well by students and discuss written questions and give the correct answers.” (Participant 3)

It is evident from the responses of the three teachers that they used several different methods for formative assessment. This finding is in line with a research result from Haryati (2010) about the potential for differences in assessment methods, which revealed that assessment involves the use of various methods and assessment tools to obtain various information about the stages of student learning outcomes or about the improvement of students' competencies (Haryati, 2010).

In addition, the strategies that teachers use in the learning process are as follows:

“After learning the material, I usually recall the material for a moment, then I give a written or oral test according to the material that has been learned. After that, I, together with the students, review the test answers.” (Participant 1)

“I use exercises, written tests, and oral tests.” (Participant 2)

“I apply the strategy by providing space for students to do written tests or exercises. After they are finished and corrected, I apply reflection and evaluation to them.” (Participant 2)

It is evident from the responses of the three participants that the strategy was designed in such a way that it enabled teachers to achieve certain objectives for the success of learning. Teachers have developed their own strategies to deliver learning, and as such, the strategies developed can vary. This is because each teacher already knows the character of the students and the right way to teach the material according to their characters. This finding is in line with a research result by Suyadi (2013), which discovered that strategies are developed to achieve certain goals. This implies that the achievement of goals is the direction in which all strategic planning decisions are developed.

Moreover, the data obtained indicated that there was only 1 participant who conducted an assessment at the beginning of the learning process to assess students' abilities, which is Participant 1.

“Yes, I always do an initial assessment at the pre-teaching stage to find out how well students know the material to be learned, and so far I have not modified the lesson plan.” (Participant 1)

“Yes. The assessment that I usually do at the end of the learning process is a formative assessment.” (Participant 1)

The data indicates that only Participant 1 applied an assessment at the beginning and end of the learning process. Assessment at the beginning of the learning process is used to find out how well students understand the learning in order to choose which activities or learning to carry out. Once the teacher has all the information needed, he organizes actions, including tactics, techniques, and time to take action (Sanjaya, 2010). On the other hand, assessment at the end of the learning process may serve as a means of providing learning feedback to learners in order to assess the knowledge they have gained. In addition, according to Laurillard (2002), when students receive feedback as a dialog, they not only receive the initial feedback information but also have the opportunity to engage the teacher in a discussion about the feedback.

Due to the distinct objectives and characteristics of each assessment situation or context, the assessment instruments may vary. Moreover, factors such as the type of skill being assessed,

level of difficulty, sustainability, and learning objectives can influence the design of the assessment instrument.

“Assessment rubric with short notes on the explanation of each assessment point.” (Participant 1)

“Discussion forum.” (Participant 2)

“Notes.” (Participant 3)

Based on these three statements, the assessment instrument can also be referred to as an assessment tool or evaluation tool. According to Arikunto (2002), instruments are tools for collecting data or information, while according to Sudijono (2006), assessment is the act of assessing something. Furthermore, assessing something means making a decision based on or holding on to a standard of good or bad, healthy or sick, smart or stupid, and so on.

Based on the results of the open-ended questionnaires and the observation checklists, which served as a complement, it can be concluded that assessment is a method of collecting information used to determine the value of learning in the context of education, and assessment is carried out in a systematically planned manner. In addition, regardless of their pedagogical approaches, teachers strive towards the same objective, namely the assessment of students, which is adjusted to their needs or learning styles. This is in line with research by Yusuf (2015), which defined assessment as the systematic process of collecting information about the students' achievements in learning without referring to value decisions, and it is done systematically. This indicates that there are certain sequences or rules in the application of assessment.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlighted the diverse assessment strategies that novice teachers used at an English language course institution. According to the data collected through open-ended questionnaires and observation checklists, it was discovered that there were variations in the types of assessment used, teaching methods, and application of assessment strategies among the participants.

Based on the participants' statements, it was discovered that formative assessment is a frequently used approach, with varying methods used by teachers. Participant 1 used written tests to assess students' abilities, while Participant 2 integrated class assignments and written tests. Furthermore, Participant 3 used a combination of oral and written questions, emphasizing understanding through discussion. This diversity aligns with the concept that there are a variety of methods and tools in assessment in order to gather information about student learning outcomes and competencies.

This study also investigated the strategies applied during the learning process. Participant 1 emphasized recall, followed by written or oral tests, involving students in collaboratively reviewing test answers. Participant 2 conducted exercises, written tests, and oral tests, while Participant 3 conducted written exercises followed by reflection and evaluation. These strategies are designed to achieve specific learning objectives, reflecting the individualized approach teachers implemented based on their understanding of each student's characteristics. This is in line with the opinion of Bell and Cowie (2001) that it can serve as a compass to guide students towards learning and academic achievement. Researchers and teachers have recognized the significance of formative assessment in improving student learning effectiveness through the implementation of the learning process.

The results revealed an interesting fact: only Participant 1 conducted an initial assessment at the pre-teaching stage to assess students' prior knowledge. Assessment at the beginning of the learning process is recognized as a tool to inform subsequent activities. This is in line with

educational theory, which emphasizes the importance of understanding students' prior knowledge before planning learning strategies.

The participants used a variety of assessment instruments, including rubrics, discussion forums, and notes. These instruments served as a means to systematically collect data, which reflects the uniqueness of each assessment situation. Moreover, teachers' thoughtful considerations while developing assessments are evident in the selection of an assessment instrument, which is affected by factors such as the type of skill being assessed, the level of difficulty, and the learning objectives. In addition, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) further interpreted formative assessment as an integral part of teaching and an important source for reflection by both students and teachers.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlighted the dynamic and thoughtful nature of assessment strategies used by novice teachers at an English language course institution. This is supported by the fact that the formative assessment used by them is a process that provides feedback and support during the learning process to enable teachers and students to adjust the ongoing teaching and learning process in order to improve student achievement of planned learning outcomes (Black & William, 1998). A thorough comprehension of how teachers utilized the assessment strategies is facilitated by the diversity of methods, alignment of strategies with learning objectives, and consideration of individual student characteristics. The findings of this study were expected to not only broaden our existing knowledge but also provide valuable implications for teacher training programs and educational practice. The systematic and individualized nature of assessment highlighted in this study aligns with the broader goal of improving the learning experience for students at the English language course institution.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlighted the wide range of assessment strategies implemented by novice teachers at the English language course institution. The prevalence of formative assessment was evident, with each teacher employing different methods adjusted to specific learning objectives. Moreover, these strategies have been personalized, which highlights the thoughtful approach teachers took depending on their knowledge of students' characteristics. This is demonstrated in the varied use of written tests, class assignments, oral questions, and reflective exercises.

Some teachers used initial assessments in their lesson plans, which emphasizes the importance of determining students' prior knowledge before developing learning strategies. This approach is in line with educational theories that emphasize the significance of understanding the starting point of the learning process. Furthermore, the different ways that assessment instruments, including rubrics, discussion forums, and notes, were used revealed the meticulous considerations teachers made in designing assessments, which reflect the uniqueness of each assessment situation. Additionally, the significance of these thoughtful practices is further supported by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's interpretation of formative assessment as an integral part of teaching and a valuable source for reflection.

This study contributes valuable insights into the dynamic and thoughtful nature of assessment strategies used by novice teachers at the English language course institution. It was expected that these findings would enrich our understanding of diverse methods while also providing practical implications for teacher training programs and educational practices, all of which would support the main objective of enhancing the learning experience for students in English language course institutions. In addition, this study highlighted the systematic and individualized nature of assessment, which aligns with the broader aim of fostering ongoing improvement in student achievement and learning outcomes.

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