

## **AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A CASE IN SMP NEGERI 6 SEMARANG**

Rini Maulidhawati<sup>1</sup>, Entika Fani Prastikawati<sup>2</sup>, Theresia Cicik Sophia Budiman<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Universitas Negeri Semarang*

<sup>2 3</sup>*Universitas PGRI Semarang*

Corresponding Author's Email: entikafani@upgris.ac.id

### **Abstract**

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture published the 2013 Curriculum which demands teachers to apply authentic assessment as the method of assessing the students' competence. Point to that, the implementation of authentic assessment as well as its washback should be investigated. For that reason, this study is trying to investigate: (1) authentic assessments applied in English teaching and learning, (2) the types of authentic assessment used, (3) the teachers' difficulties in applying authentic assessment, (4) washback effect of the use of authentic assessment. This study applied qualitative design to capture the implementation of authentic assessment. Observation, documentation, questionnaire, and interview were carried out to get the data. The subject are English teachers and the students. The results showed that the authentic assessment applied in English teacher class of SMP N 6 Semarang, especially in eighth grade is in the level good. The teachers had applied authentic assessments in the teaching and learning process. The types of the authentic assessments were oral interview (in speaking test), story or text retelling (in speaking), writing sample (in writing test), and experiment or demonstration. Furthermore, relating to the washback of authentic assessment, it has been confirmed by the teachers that its implementation can improves the student's English learning achievement. On the other hand, teachers also faced some difficulties in applying authentic assessment due to their lack of knowledge of authentic assessment.

**Keywords:** assessment; authentic assessment; English language teaching.

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the 2013 curriculum demands is the implementation of authentic assessment in the teaching and learning process (Akyus, 2013; Abakay, 2016). As stated by The Regulation of the Minister of Culture and Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 104 Year 2014 declares that curriculum, which is used in Indonesia right now, emphasizes the use of authentic assessment. This kind of assessment highlights the autonomous and higher-order thinking skills of learners. For that reason, teachers need to directly adjust

their assessment process to be in line with the curriculum 2013 requirements (Marhaeni & Dantes, 2014).

Assessment, on the other hand is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain (Kinay & Bagçeci, 2016). Whenever a student responds to a question, or tries out a new word or structure, the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the student's performance. According to Fulcher and Davidson (2007), teachers usually understand a great deal about the knowledge, abilities and skill of the learners in their classroom without the need to resort to formal test. Over periods, they have the opportunity to observe learners participate in a wide range of activities and task to measure whether the desired improvement has been achieved, it needs assessment process which also requires some tests.

In line with the purpose of general assessment, authentic assessment provides an opportunity for students to develop their critical thinking by involving in the productive assessment; speaking and writing. The meaningful tasks are also included in an authentic assessment so that both students' knowledge and skills can be observed well. Based on the regulation of the National Minister of Education and Culture number 104 year 2014 on assessment system, teachers are expected to assess students' skills using performance, project, and portfolio assessments (Hijriati, 2014; Idham, 2015). Those types of authentic assessment become the new challenge for teachers to spend their attention and time in the implementation of authentic assessment.

Some studies have been conducted in investigating the implementation of authentic assessments. A study conducted by Trisanti (2014) revealed that teachers were lack of understanding and knowledge on how to implement authentic assessment. It was mentioned that the problems arising in the implementation of authentic assessment were due to its difficult and complex procedures which was also complex for the condition of the class. furthermore, Al fama (2015) in her study mentioned that the teachers' lack of experience in implementing authentic assessment in assessing writing skills became the main problem. In her study, she was specifically mentioned that authentic assessment was good if it was well-implemented.

While the previous studies only investigated the teachers' perspective on authentic assessment, this study is trying to focus on investigating the real implementation of authentic assessment as well as it washback effect on the EFL students achievement.

Involving one state secondary school in Semarang, this study was conducted to answer some questions:

- 1) How is the implementation of authentic assessment?
- 2) What are types of authentic assessments implemented by the English teachers?
- 3) How is the washback of the implementation of authentic assessment?

## METHODOLOGY

This study applied descriptive qualitative research design. Kathori (2004) describes 'Qualitative research, on the other hand, is concerned with qualitative phenomenon, i.e., phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind. Qualitative research is specially important in the behavioural sciences where the aim is to discover the underlying motives of human behaviour.'

This study took place in English classroom in SMP Negeri 6 Semarang, in which there were two English teachers of the eighth grade involved. Moreover, ten students also took part in this study. In collecting the data, the writers used some instruments such as questionnaire, interview, and documentation to collect the data. As guided by Cohen et. al (2007) in a qualitative research, the main technique in collecting data is participant observation, deep interview, document analysis, and triangulation.

### a. Questionnaire

This common type of instrument used by the writers to collect the data. A questionnaire is basically a set of questions related that are to some topics which have to be fulfilled by the subject of the research in order to get the data (Tashakori & Cresswel, 2007)). In this study, the writers used open questionnaire to limit the scope of the research. This kind of questionnaire is chosen by the writers because it reveals surprising mental models, problem solving strategies hopes, fears, and much more by the objects of the research which are the students and teachers teaching authentic assessment. The following questionnaire are:

Table 1 Questionnaire

Name	:
Teaching Experiences:	
School	:

Please answer the following questionnaire according to your teaching assessment in your English class.

1. How do you understand about authentic assessment?
2. Have you applied authentic assessment in assessing your students?
3. Do you need some preparation before applying authentic assessment to your students? Mention your preparation.
4. How far is your students response when you use authentic assessment?
5. What are the difficulties that you find in applying authentic assessment?
6. How is the effect on the application of the authentic assessment to teacher and students in teaching and learning process? Explain it.
7. Do you think that authentic assessment give positive effect to your students's achievement?
8. Do you think you still used trials on how to use or apply authentic assessment in teaching and learning process?

b. Interview

The interview is carried to support and clarify the answer of the questionnaires. Based on the interview of the actual of the teaching-learning processes under the influence of the washback effect of authentic assessment in class of the eighth grade in SMP N 6 Semarang, writers made sure about the answer of the questionnaire. Cohen (2007) remarks an interview as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data. In this study, the writers asked some questions related to the used of teachers in authentic assessments and several questions for students from class of eight grade in SMP N 6 Semarang. The writers used structured interviews for the session because it facilitates data collection for research. Kothari (2004) interprets structured interviews as a method of gathering information through personal interviews that are usually done in a structured way is usually carried out in a structured way

c. Observation

The observation was carried out to see the real classroom condition and phenomena in the implementation of authentic assessment.

d. Documentation

The documentation was intended to capture the real documents of the implementation of authentic assessments in English class conducted by the English teachers.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. The Authentic Assessment Implementation in English Class

Based on the observation, SMP N 6 Semarang used curriculum 2013 and applied the authentic assessment in the English learning and teaching. The writers observed the application of authentic assessment in English class by observing teaching learning process in classroom while took documentation to support the data. Meanwhile, the writers also gave questionnaires to English teachers.

According to the observation in English class and the documentation conducted the application of authentic assessment in SMP N 6 Semarang, especially in eighth grade is good. The teachers have applied authentic assessment. The teachers have done used some authentic in assessing the students' English ability in the class.



**Figure 1**

*The student answer oral test*



**Figure 2**

*Student story telling*

According to questionnaire, the data shows that two teachers (all respondent=100%) who taught eight grades have already understood the concept of authentic assessment. From open-questionnaire, the writers found two common authentic assessments that were implemented regularly in English class; storytelling and direct oral interview. These two kinds of authentic assessment capture the students' performance in English.

### B. The Types of The Authentic Assessment Used in English Class of The Eighth Grade in SMP N 6 Semarang.

According to the observation in English class and the documentation conducted, the writers found that the teachers have applied authentic assessment, but still used the traditional assessment to assess their students' English ability. The writer revealed several types of authentic assessment that applied in SMP N 6 Semarang such as; oral interview, writing sample, story or text retelling, and experiment or demonstration. The details are in the following table 2.

Table 2  
Types of Authentic Assessment Used by English Teachers

No	Types Authentic Assessment	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
1.	Oral Interview	√	√
2.	Story or text retelling	√	√
3.	Writing sample	√	√
4.	Projects or exhibitions	-	-
5.	Experiments	√	√
6.	Constructed responsess item	√	√
7.	Teacher conversations	√	√
8.	Portfolios	√	√

Based on the table 2, English teachers applied some kinds of authentic assessments except of project exhibition. In line with the data from the questionnaire, the interview data also showed the similar finding. The most commonly authentic assessment used were oral interview and storytelling. Oral interview was conducted by the teachers for the purpose of confirming the students' understanding on the materials delivered.

*“I commonly used oral interview to assess the students’ understanding of what I have explained in the class. ...It is not too difficult since I can modify what I am asking to my students depending on the purpose of oral interview.” (Teacher 1)*

*“Oral interview assists me to check my students’ ability in using English. I implement it for assessing their speaking ability”. (Teacher 2)*

They mentioned that oral interview was helpful to be directly conducted since it also revealed the students' performance in using English (Aliningsih & Sofwan, 2015). Oral interview can be an assistance for teachers in stimulating the students to speak (Hasriani, 2019; Maca, 2020). This kind of authentic assessment also increases the students' confidence to speak in English for the teachers can modify the questions if the students do not catch the meaning of the questions in an oral interview (Aristy, et. Al, 2019)

### **C. Teacher Difficulties in Implementing Authentic Assessment in English Class**

To describe the difficulties faced by the English teachers in implementing authentic assessment, the writers conducted an interview in English class. The writers also observed teaching and learning process in English classroom to support the finding. The finding shows that the main difficulty that the teachers faced was about the time consuming of the implementation of authentic assessment. They mentioned that they need more time to plan, implement, and evaluate authentic assessments.

*"....it is not surprising that many of English teachers like me feel difficult in implementing authentic assessment. It takes time for not only the implementation, but it also takes my time in planning and evaluating process." (Teacher 1)*

*"English class just takes two hours in a week and I need to prepare a lot when I need to implement authentic assessment. I need more extra time to prepare authentic assessment in my English class". (Teacher 2)*

As it was mentioned, authentic assessment takes more time of English teachers. In the planning phase, they need to make sure that it suits the learners' need and the time allotment of English class in a week. Even, the real implementation of authentic assessment requires the longer process (Murphy, et. al, 2017).

The fact that the English teachers had difficulties in managing the time of authentic assessment implementation was regarded as the problems came from the English teachers' lack of authentic assessment knowledge. In this case they felt confused on how to start implementing authentic assessment in their English class. Their lack of knowledge was in line with the excerpt from the interview session as follows:

*“Authentic assessment is a new thing for me even I have taught English for many years. I don’t even know the procedures or the steps clearly.” (Teacher 1)*

*“I am not sure if I do the right thing in implementing authentic assessment in my English classroom. I just read some references from the community and internet resources.” (Teacher 2)*

The lack of knowledge of authentic assessment may lead to the incorrect implementation that leads to the uncertainty of the assessment process in a teaching and learning process (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000). Regard to that, the government should provide the clear and specific guidelines about authentic assessment. This idea was also stated by the English teachers.

*“I need the specific books and references on types and procedures of authentic assessments. The government should provide them for teachers rely on.” (Teacher 1)*

*“....this is why the ministry of education must give the teachers such kind of guidelines to implement authentic assessments.” (Teacher2)*

Except of what has been faced by the English teachers, the students also face some problems when their teachers implement authentic assessments. In the interview, they mentioned that they get confused when their teachers implement an authentic assessment for the first time.

*“I am confused on what my teacher did in assessing us” (S2)*

*“It was so weird when suddenly my English teacher asked me to do storytelling on a reading text. I used to get some questions relating reading text, not retelling it” (S6)*

The students’ confusion come straight after their teachers just go doing an authentic assessment without giving an explanation. It is a common thing for students to get confused on the implementation of authentic assessment (Aziz & Yusoff, 2018; DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005).

#### **D. Washback Effect of Authentic Assessment**

One of the washback effects from an authentic assessment implementation is the real capture of students’ English ability especially their productive skills. As mentioned in the questionnaires, all teachers agree that authentic assessment give that kind of benefit in assessment process.

Table 3



Questionnaire Items	Teachers' Responses
<p>How is the washback of the application of the authentic assessment to teacher and students in teaching and learning process? Explain it.</p>	<p><i>The teacher will know the real mastery of his/her students after conducting the authentic assessment. In this case, the teacher conducts the speaking test. As we know if the teacher conducts the multiple choice test or other, it may not show the real students mastery. It is because the students often asked their friends while doing test. (Teacher 1)</i></p> <p><i>Authentic assessment presents the students' mastery in a real ability in which the students could directly respond the teachers' authentic tasks (R1/Teacher 2)</i></p>
<p>Do you think that authentic assessment give positive effect to your students's achievement?</p>	<p><i>Sure, I think the authentic assessment will give positive effect to the students. The students will know their ability and also the teacher knowing weakness of the students, the teacher will design the follow up.(Teacher 1)</i></p> <p><i>Yes, the authentic assessment will give positive effect for the students. They will know their real ability in English (R2/Teacher 2)</i></p>

The washback of authentic assessment implementation for teachers is the results of authentic assessment are used by the respondent for learning programs for improvement (Mbeh, 2017; Pantiwati, 2013; Aksu Atac, 2013). In addition, the approved results are also used as material to improve the learning process that is in accordance with the Educational Assessment Standards. Assessment of the learning process is carried out during the learning process using tools: observation sheets, peer questionnaires, recordings, anecdotal notes, and reflections. The students' initial motivation to speak in English for most students at school was identified all very low. Generally, the students were afraid of making any mistakes to speak in English that affected their motivation and self-confidence to speak (Herrington & Herrington, 2006; Rennert-Ariev, 2005). A preliminary observation identified that the students tend to keep silent when they were asked to

speak in English. Some of them looked nervous; whereas others seem to be unconfident to speak in English. It is clear that the authentic assessment gives positive washback effect to their students' achievement in English. The positive washback gives the participants as sense of accomplishment, and generate positive attitudes toward teaching learning. When the teachers know to introduce change and teachers are aware of their professional responsibility and ethical aspects.

## CONCLUSION

According to the findings, it is clearly concluded that it is importance to introduce the English teachers on the concept, principles, and procedures of authentic assessment in the real classroom implementation. By having a clear conception and understanding on authentic assessment, the teachers are expected to implement it in a clear and right track in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning process. The findings of this study have revealed the fact that the government should facilitate this process of acquiring the knowledge of authentic assessment especially in ELT context. Further, this study also captures the difficulties faced by the students when getting one of authentic assessment. To enrich the findings on the benefits of authentic assessment in ELT, a further study should involve a larger sample and various English teaching context.

## REFERENCES

- Aksu Atac, B. (2012). Foreign language teachers' attitude toward authentic assessment in language teaching. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 8(2), 7-19.
- Al Fama, Y. A. A. M. (2015). The implementation of authentic assessment in teaching writing (Unpublished master's thesis). Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia.
- Aliningsih, F., & Sofwan, A. (2015). English teachers' perceptions and practices of authentic assessment. *Language Circle: Journal of Language and Literature*, 10(1), 19-27.
- Aristy, I., Hadiansyah, R., & Apsari, Y. (2019). Using Three Step-Interview To Improve Student's Speaking Ability. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 2(2), 175-180.

- Aziz, M. N. A., & Yusoff, N. M. (2018). Experiences of using Authentic Assessment with English Language Young Learners. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(9).
- Cohen, Louis, Manion, L and Morrison K. (2007). *Research method in education*. New York: Rutledge
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Snyder, J. (2000). Authentic assessment of teaching in context. *Teaching and teacher education*, 16(5-6), 523-545.
- DeCastro-Ambrosetti, D., & Cho, G. (2005). Synergism in learning: A critical reflection of authentic assessment. *The High School Journal*, 89(1), 57-62.
- Fulcher, G., & Davidson, F. (2007). *Language testing and assessment*. Routledge.
- Hasriani, G. (2019). Interview as a learning technique in speaking subject: Students' perspective. *Language Circle: Journal of Language and Literature*, 13(2).
- Herrington, J., & Herrington, A. (2006). Authentic conditions for authentic assessment: Aligning task and assessment.
- Hijriati, H. (2014). Authentic Assessment and the Implication to Students' Self-Esteem in Teaching English at Senior High School. In *Proceedings: The 61th TEFLIN International Conference, UNS Solo*.
- Idham, F. I. (2015). The use of authentic assessment in English writing skill to the eleventh grade students. *E-Journal of ELTS (English Language Teaching Society)*, 3(1).
- Kinay, I., & Bagçeci, B. (2016). The Investigation of the Effects of Authentic Assessment Approach on Prospective Teachers' Problem-Solving Skills. *International Education Studies*, 9(8), 51-59.
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. New Age International.
- Maca, S. (2020). Teaching English Speaking Skill through Pair and Group Interview Techniques. *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature*, 7(2), 329-337.
- Marhaeni, A. A. I. N., & Dantes, N. (2014). Toward Authentic Language Assessment: A Case in Indonesian EFL Classrooms. In *The European Conference on Language Learning* (pp. 1-15).
- Mbeh, A. T. (2017). Impromptu speaking and authentic assessment in English language teaching/learning. *International Journal of New Technology and Research*, 3(3), 11-16.

- Murphy, V., Fox, J., Freeman, S., & Hughes, N. (2017). "Keeping it Real": A review of the benefits, challenges and steps towards implementing authentic assessment. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 9(3).
- Pantiwati, Y. (2013). Authentic assessment for improving cognitive skill, critical-creative thinking and meta-cognitive awareness. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(14), 1-9.
- Rennert-Ariev, P. (2005). A theoretical model for the authentic assessment of teaching. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 10(1), 2.
- Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). The new era of mixed methods.
- Trisanti, N. (2014). English teacher's perspective on authentic assessment implementation of curriculum. Proceedings of the 61st TEFLIN International Conference 2014. Sebelas Maret University Press, Surakarta, Indonesia.