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ONLINE ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM: EFL TEACHERS' PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic makes many changes in the educational system. One of the changes is in the process of assessment that is conducted by the teachers. Online assessment becomes the demand for teaching and learning process. In EFL teaching context, the English teachers are also demanded to present an online assessment that meets the students' needs. The practice of online assessment needs to be investigated to capture whether it runs well or not. In line with this case, this present study describes online assessment practices as well as the challenges faced by the EFL teachers. By conducting descriptive qualitative research, the writers observed the practices of online assessment in English teaching in a junior high school in Semarang. There are three English teachers participated in this study. To obtain the data, the writers used observation and semi-structured interview as the instruments of data collection. After the data was collected, it was analyzed and interpreted descriptively. The findings show that English teachers implemented some online assessment tools such as Google Classroom, What's App, Google Form, and Zoom in online assessment practices during the English teaching and learning. During the implementation of online assessment, the EFL teachers found some challenges such as internet connection, the different level of students' intelligence, students' low motivation, and EFL teachers' lack of computer skills. The findings of this study imply that online assessment practices need to be evaluated to have a better implementation. Further, the EFL teachers' computer skills need to be improved to realize an exemplary practices of online assessment in English teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Online assessment, English teaching and learning, EFL teachers' challenges*

INTRODUCTION

The current covid pandemic has many effects, both in the economic, social, cultural, and educational fields (Aji, 2020). Education is one of the aspects affected by the outbreak, the effects of the Covid pandemic have resulted in a change in the learning system from face-to-face to being turned into online learning (Firman & Rahayu, 2020). This was ordered by the minister of education and culture Nadiem Makarim through (Kemendikbud Dikti circular letter No.1 of 2020). In the circular, there are 10 points and one of them refers to a recommendation to carry out online learning (Firman & Rahayu, 2020). Online learning is a teaching and learning system that is carried out using internet media, besides that online learning can also be referred to as mobile learning or m-learning, which uses mobile communication media such as tablet computers or smartphones (Belawati, 2019).

Regarding the changes in the educational field such as in the teaching and learning process, teachers need to integrate the use of technology in their teaching and learning process. The technologies that are used in the teaching and learning process are such as website-based teaching and learning and online mobile learning. These technologies use must be implemented in all aspects of the teaching and learning process; for example in the teaching media, teaching words, teaching methods, and the assessment.

Assessment is very important in the learning process because teachers need to measure students' abilities and to measure the level of understanding and success of teachers in teaching (Tangirova & Chiesa, 2019). There are two types of assessments carried out in the learning process, namely formative assessment and summative assessment, the first is formative assessment is an assessment conducted by the teacher to measure students' abilities and is carried out during the learning process while summative assessment is a measure to find out what students know and don't know given at a certain time (Khairil & Mokshein, 2018). In connection with learning that is carried out online, the assessment must automatically be carried out online using media that has been prepared by the teacher (Wahyudi et al., 2020).

The online assessment is an activity to evaluate student academic achievement which is conducted online via the web (Robles & Braathen, 2002). Regarding online assessment teachers must be able to change the form of assessment from paper to online assessment, this is certainly not easy and will face several challenges to do it from both internal and external factors (Kearns, 2012). Furthermore, students must also be able to adapt themselves to do online assessments ordered by the government for the continuity of teaching and learning activities (Handayani, 2020). In this case, the teacher and student have different challenges in carrying out the online assessment, most of them have problems originating from the same background Anugrahana (2020). Regarding this, teachers and students must be able to overcome the challenges in the online assessment they face.

Seeing the challenges experienced by teachers and students in carrying out online assessments, it is very possible to look for what challenges are experienced by teachers and students in carrying out online assessments and what are their ways to overcome them. Therefore, in this study, the writers focused on the challenges of EFL teachers carrying out online assessments that occurred at SMP N 9 Semarang. SMP N 9 Semarang was chosen because it has implemented English teaching and learning activities online and conducted online assessments, especially during the current Covid-19 pandemic. This means that the challenges experienced by EFL teachers carrying out online assessments need to be investigated in-depth to find as well as kinds of online assessment that were implemented in English classroom at SMP N 9 Semarang.

Based on the background above, this study is trying to present some cases by following the research questions as follows:

1. How is the implementation of online assessments in in SMP N 9 Semarang?
2. What are the challenges faced by EFL teachers in implementing online assessments in SMP N 9 Semarang?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This current study carried out qualitative design as the research design. The use of qualitative research design is intended to capture the natural process of investigation. Three English teachers in SMP Negeri 9 Semarang were involved as the subjects of this study. In this case, SMP Negeri 9 Semarang was chosen as the setting of this study for it had been observed that the school had implemented online assessments during the pandemic Covid-19. Table 1 presents the demographic information of three English teachers that were involved in this study. All of them have been English teachers more than ten years. This is shown by their teaching experience in table 1. Even, two of them have more than fifteen years of teaching. This information implies that they have more exposure of English teaching. Furthermore, all of them were graduated from English education when they were in bachelor degree and master degree.

Table 1 Demographic information of English teachers in SMP N 9 Semarang

	Gender	Educational background	Teaching experience
Teacher 1	Female (F)	Bachelor in English Education	More than 10 years
Teacher 2	Female (F)	Bachelor English Education	More than 15 years
Teacher 3	Female (F)	Master English Education	More than 15 years

In collecting the data, two instruments were carried out; observation and a semi-structured interview. The observation was conducted during one semester to capture the whole process of online assessments in English teaching and learning. Furthermore, to support the data from one-semester observation, the English teachers were invited to a semi-structured interview. This semi-structured interview was intended to gain more information of the implementation of online assessments and the challenges that they faced during the implementation. The data from the interview was transcribed by the writers. Then, the data was confirmed to the English teachers to get their agreement. All the English teachers had agreed the consent forms so that the finding can be presented.

FINDINGS

To investigate the online assessments implemented at SMP N 9 Semarang and the challenges faced by EFL teachers, the writers used the observation method and also semi-structured interviews with three English teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang.

1. The Implementation of Online Assessment in SMP N 9 Semarang

SMP N 9 Semarang has implemented the 2013 curriculum since the 2013/2014 academic year. The writer observes the online assessment that is applied at SMP N 9 Semarang. In addition, the writer made observations as well as supported by English teacher semi-structured interviews to find out the online assessment that was applied. The following is a process to describe the online assessment that is applied in the English class of SMP N 9 Semarang.

a. Based on observation

The writer made observations at SMP N 9 Semarang to find out the online assessment applied at SMP N 9 Semarang with the help of an English teacher as a valid source of information. Based on the results of the observations, the writer knows that the online assessment implemented at SMP N 9 Semarang is an online assessment by utilizing social media platforms and also education-based online applications. This was explained by one of the English teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang when the author made observations, in the application of online assessment, especially in the English class at SMP N 9 Semarang using several online media platforms that help teachers and students to be able to carry out assessments and also online learning, here are some platforms used in online assessment at SMP N 9 Semarang:

1) Google Classroom

Google classroom is used as an online assessment media, when the teacher conducts online teaching and learning activities using the google classroom application, the teacher will ask questions directly to the selected students after they finish explaining the material being discussed in online English class. This will result in student points that will be used by the teacher as a benchmark and final grade calculation, this activity is also called summative assessment using google classroom media.

2) WhatsApp Group

WhatsApp group is used as an online assessment media, besides using google classroom, teachers also use social media facilities to implement online assessments, the social media used is WhatsApp group. Teachers use WhatsApp groups to give tests, daily test questions, or even final assessments through a group in the WhatsApp application which consists of students and English teachers, so this will save more time in the assessment process.

3) Google form

Google form is used as an online assessment medium, in conducting online assessments of course the teacher wants to maximize the time that has been scheduled, related to this, the English teacher uses google form media to conduct online assessments because it is more effective in implementing the online curriculum that is being implemented in all schools in Indonesia. In the application of online assessment through the google form, the teacher will enter the assessment questions or final test into the google form which will later generate a link and be distributed to students. In addition, the results of student work through Google Forms make it easier for teachers to process grades or scoring because the output from Google Forms is in the form of percentages or diagrams.

b. Based on the semi-structured interview

The writer has conducted interviews after making observations regarding the application of online assessment and the platform used to assist the online teaching and learning process and also online assessment of English teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang. Therefore data collection using the semi-structured interview method can also support data from observations to answer online assessment problems implemented at SMP N 9 Semarang, considering that there are already many types of online-based learning platforms or media used by all schools during distance learning. Therefore, the writer also needs the direct response from the English teacher at SMP N 9 Semarang regarding the platform for online assessment and also the online teaching and learning process.

When the English teachers were asked about Q1 and Q5, some responses were got. In Q1, it is asked "In today's English teaching and learning process, which one do you prefer to use as online assessments? ". Responding to this, T1 said "*I prefer to use online teaching and learning process using WA, WA group, Zoom, Google Classroom, and Google form*". Another teacher, T2 explained that she prefers the online teaching and learning process and online assessment through google meet or zoom. She mentions "*I like Google Meet as my online assessment tool. I use it to have my formative assessment by directly questioning my students*". On the other hand, the last English teacher T3 stated "*I choose to use an online or daring process to carry out the learning process*".

Responding Q5, the English teachers were asked about kinds of online assessment used in their class. Responding to this question, T1 says "*...In my English classroom, I use Google form to do the online assessments*". The similar idea was also derived from T2 by responding "*I used several platforms that he used for the online assessment process, namely Google classroom, Google Form, WA, and also Zoom*". On the other hand, T3 deliver the different kind of online assessment by saying "*I usually use the Quizizz application to help me make it easier to do online assessments*".

According to the answers to the questions, numbers 1 and numbers, 5 from R1 to R3 stated in their answers during interviews that they prefer to use online assessment and online learning processes by using several learning applications such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Quizizz, Google Classroom, Google Form, Google meet and also WhatsApp Group. all teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang prefer to use the online system, because of the conditions and policies from the government that is being carried out for the teaching and learning process and also assessment, in addition, teachers can still make assessments of students even though online.

2. The Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers in Implementing Online Assessments in SMP N 9 Semarang.

To find out the answers to the challenges faced by teachers when conducting online assessments, the author uses a semi-structured interview instrument conducted to three English teachers, in the semi-structured interview the author asks several things related to online assessment consisting of comparison between online assessments and offline assessments, the benefits of online assessments, how to score students' work, problems faced when conducting online assessments, and ways to overcome these problems.

As we know that currently the teaching and learning process and assessment in schools use an online system, this will be a new color and also a new problem for student teachers in learning process, some English teachers, especially at SMP N 9 Semarang have implemented a learning system and online assessment, from this the English teacher at SMP N 9 Semarang experienced several problems and obstacles that interfered with the continuity of the online assessment process. In this case, the writer needs to know what obstacles are disturbing the teacher in the online assessment process in the English classroom.

In this study, the semi-structured interview method was carried out to obtain and complete data regarding any challenges faced by English teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang when conducting online assessments in the English classroom. In this semi-structured interview, the writer gives several questions related to the obstacles faced by teachers when conducting online assessments. Moreover, the author also allows participants to ask and clarify questions if they feel they do not understand. In addition, the data obtained from semi-structured interviews were clarified, analyzed, and revised word for word to make it easier to understand. Some statements from semi-structured interviews are presented by the author as follows:

Participants' opinions below are based on semi-structured interview question number 9 (Q9): *“What are the barriers or obstacles that you face in implementing online assessments?”*

“When conducting online assessments in English classes there are some students who cannot complete assignments or tests given by the teacher because of inadequate or bad internet facilities and connections, besides that

there are some students who do not understand the operating system of the application used to conduct online assessments, thus complicating the online assessment process”(T1)

“students' self-study skills are poor or lacking and the level of intelligence of students is different, resulting in the dishonesty of students in doing online assessments, technical problems that are often experienced by students regarding new technology and internet connection problems with erratic networks, besides that lack of or low student motivation and also a less supportive environment”(T2)

“The most important and frequent problem when conducting online assessments in English classes is internet connection problems experienced by some students, which results in students being less than perfect to capture the intent of the assessment desired by the teacher, thus preventing the teacher from assessing student work” (T3)

Three opinions from the semi-structured interviews showed that they had the same technical barriers, namely the unstable internet network connection or even no connection. This is an obstacle that often occurs in the online assessment process, therefore teachers must be able to resolve these obstacles by making assessment plans in other ways.

The three English teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang have different obstacles in the online assessment process, T1 and T2 have the same barriers regarding students' lack of knowledge of new technologies or applications that help teachers to conduct online assessments, thus some students choose do not do online assessments due to lack of understanding of the applications used by teachers as online assessment media. In the opinion, T2 states that the level of honesty of students is low in doing assessments, resulting in the same answers between students with one another, this of course will hinder the assessment process and also give scores to students.

Furthermore, in opinion T2 explains that the lack of support and also support from the environment causes students to be less enthusiastic or even lazy to do the assessment given by the teacher, this often happens in students whose parents do not support their children to be disciplined in the teaching and learning process and also online assessment.

In addition, English teachers who have minimal knowledge of technology experience obstacles when implementing online assessments. So they need more time to study the online media used and prepare materials for online assessment. This was stated by two English teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang in the semi-structured interview process.

“I am not really good in my computer skill. It make me difficult to implementing online assessments”(T1)

“I don't really master IT, so I feel the diffulities when applying online assessments”(T2)

Based on the two opinions expressed by the two English teachers, it was explained that English teachers who were accustomed to using the traditional assessment process had difficulties with the online assessment process due to their lack of knowledge about IT.

The results of semi-structured interviews show that the English teacher at SMP N 9 Semarang has the same main obstacle, namely an unstable internet connection or even no connection which makes it difficult for students to understand the message intended by the teacher to do online assessments. In addition, the student's low motivations lead to students' disinterest when the EFL teachers conducted online assessments. Moreover, the EFL teachers also faced the different levels of students intelligence. In implementing online assessments, the EFL teacher felt difficulties when not all students perceived online assessments. Furthermore, the English teacher experienced obstacles and found it difficult with online media that was used for the online assessment process.

DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the media or platform used for online assessment as well as the problems faced by teachers. The results of this study indicate that teachers experience several challenges that prevent them from conducting online assessments in English classes. To find out how the problems faced by teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang in online assessment practice, several points were put forward to clarify it.

First, in carrying out online assessments in English classes, teachers and students need assistance from technological sophistication in the form of applications, these applications which will be used by teachers and students as online-based learning and assessment media. Some examples of applications that are used as learning media and online assessments include Google Form, Google Classroom, WhatsApp Group, Zoom. This is in line with research conducted by Singh et al (2020) who revealed that in the current pandemic era teachers and students must continue to run the learning and assessment system even though it must be online, therefore teachers and students need online media to help them carry out these activities, some effective online media are used for learning and assessment online namely WhatsApp, Google classroom, and Zoom. With the help of the media, it provides effectiveness for teachers and students in carrying out online learning and also online assessment in the pandemic era (Wiyaka & Prastikawati, 2020).

Second, in the use of online applications that are used by teachers like online learning and assessment media, teachers need time to adapt and also get used to new things that they must master. Based on the findings in existing research, most teachers experience several challenges that hinder them in carrying out the teaching and learning process and online assessment, this is caused by various factors originating from technical factors and non-technical factors. This is following what was stated by Gibson & Blackwell (2007) that obstacles in conducting online assessments are caused by influences from oneself and also influences from outside humans or also

called technical problems. In addition, online assessments also affect English teachers to be more creative in delivering material during online learning and also a way to conduct online assessments so that students do not feel bored when learning and also online assessments (Prastikawati, 2021). This is following what was explained by Gillett-Swan (2017) that the problems that often arise in students when conducting online assessments are the lack of enthusiasm for students and the emergence of a sense of laziness when conducting online assessments.

In addition, English teachers also face several obstacles when preparing online assessments. They feel it takes longer for online assessments compared to in-person assessments. Online assessment requires English teachers to make an assessment form with creativity that is different from direct assessment (Mariam, 2021; Listyowati et al., 2021). In addition, based on the writer's findings, English teachers explain that in the online assessment process, they are required to be able to master the platform used and ordered by the school as a medium of learning and online assessment. So they need time to learn more about the platform that is used as an online assessment medium in English class.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of the research finding in the previous chapter, it can be concluded as follows:

1. The implementation of online assessment at SMP N 9 Semarang using online application-based media, several applications used by English teachers and students in English classes to conduct formative assessments include Google classroom, Google form, and WhatsApp group. In addition, the teacher also conducts summative assessments to students when carrying out the teaching and learning process in English classes using the Zoom Meeting application media. This means that the application of online assessment in English classes at SMP N 9 Semarang utilizes media in the form of education-based applications.
2. In the application of online assessment, English teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang experienced several challenges that hindered them in the online assessment process. Based on the results of this study, it showed that the three English teachers at SMP N 9 Semarang experienced the same main problem, namely the unstable internet network connection for students which caused the message conveyed by the teacher to students not fully understood by students. In addition, English teachers also need more time to prepare online assessments as well as to adapt and learn the media that will be used. On the other hand, differences in student intelligence levels, lack of motivation and support for students, and low levels of student understanding of the technology used as online assessment media create new problems that arise for teachers when implementing online assessments in English classes. This explains that in implementing online assessments in English classes at SMP N 9 Semarang, English teachers experience several challenges that hinder them in the online assessment process.

Furthermore, it implies that online assessment practices need to be evaluated to have a better implementation. Finally, the EFL teachers' computer skills need to be improved to realize an exemplary practices of online assessment in English teaching and learning.

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