

A STORY OF AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT APPLICATION IN TEYL CLASS

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Abstract:

Authentic assessment has become a complementary practice in higher education as a result of global pressures to increase graduate employability. Authentic assessment is a method of evaluating a learner's skills and abilities using a range of visible indicators to provide opportunities for them to practice solving real-world problems. The activities include demonstrations of skills, hands-on experience, and projects. This sort of assessment has been used in numerous courses at teacher education institutions that prepare pre-service teachers to become professional novice teachers. The purpose of this paper is to unfold how authentic assessment was used in the Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) course. Micro-teaching, video analysis, and service-learning were among the authentic assessment tasks offered to pre-service English teachers. Apart from improving their teaching abilities, these exercises are seen as strategies to boost their creativity and problem-solving capabilities. To make the lessons learned more concrete, this paper includes challenges in conducting authentic assessment tasks, particularly during online learning.

Keywords: authentic assessment, TEYL, creativity, problem-solving, pre-service English teachers

INTRODUCTION

Authentic Assessment: What and Why?

In higher education, there is a growing awareness of the need to create evaluation processes that are contextualized, meaningful for students, and intimately connected to real-life challenges (Way, et al., 2020). This indicates that higher education institutions need an alternative assessment to replace traditional testing techniques, such as paper and pencil tests, with a variety of question types, including true-false, matching, short-answer, and multiple-choice (Banta & Palomba, 2015; Quansah, 2018). These tests prioritize information over talent and do not accurately reflect students' entire abilities (Zaim & Refnaldi, 2016; Spendlove & Best, 2018). On the other hand, alternative assessment should be authentic to support learning and mimic the tasks that are often encountered in professional life (Raymond et al., 2013; Villarroel et al., 2017; Sewagegn & Diale, 2020). Therefore, authentic assessment has emerged as a complementary practice in higher education to promote academic integrity and enhance students with skills that increase their employability (Raymond et al., 2013; Villarroel et al., 2017; Jopp, 2018; Wiewiora & Kowalkiewicz, 2018; Sotiriadou et al., 2019; Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2021).

Authentic assessment is defined as a method of evaluation in which students are asked to complete a series of procedural activities that represent real-world tasks to show a meaningful application of essential knowledge and abilities (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Mueller, 2018; Slavin, 2017 cited in Kinay, 2018). Other common names for this form of assessment are performance assessment (performance-based) because the students are asked to perform

meaningful tasks, alternative assessment since it is an alternative to traditional evaluation, and direct assessment as it provides direct, meaningful practice of knowledge and skills being learned in the classrooms (Mueller, 2015). This kind of assessment aims to link what is learned in the classrooms with employment, replicating the tasks and performance criteria frequently faced by professionals in the world of work (Wiggins, 1990). The authenticity of the assessment is considered as realism, contextualization, and problematization (Benner et al., 2009; Raymond et al., 2013). Realism entails connecting knowledge with ordinary life and work. Contextualization describes circumstances where knowledge can be applied in an analytical and thoughtful way, while problematization conveys the idea that what is learned can be used to address a need or solve a problem. The core of authentic assessment is student-centered and active learning, which takes place in the context of a genuine activity with complicated problems, creates high-quality outputs, and is connected to a variety of learning indicators (Herrington and Herrington, 2006; Bektaş & Horzum, 2012; Mohamed & Othman, 2017).

Characteristics and Techniques of Authentic Assessment

The characteristics of authentic assessment have been listed by many academics. The 13 legitimate assessment attributes were effectively formulated by Villarroel et al. (2017, p.3 & 5) from the work of various scholars, cited in quotation marks. Initially, authentic assessment is identified with the phrase "authentic performance," which is connected to knowledge creation, in-depth comprehension, knowledge integration, use of prior information, and meaningful performance beyond assessment. It has also been linked to "practical use", implying the point, benefit, or final objective of learning, particularly in primary education. It highlights "critical thinking", "ability to solve problems", and "decision-making". Students are challenged by issues or pressing topics that "have worth beyond the classroom". The exercises are imitations or parallels of the kinds of issues encountered in the workplace. The purpose is for students to demonstrate successful and imaginative performances by utilizing their knowledge. In higher education, it is used as a strategy to connect learning with "similar tasks to those faced in real life or work". However, there isn't much information in the literature concerning these real-world components and how this kind of assessment should be carried out. Some speak of "problems contextualized to everyday life" accompanied by a rubric for evaluation. The emphasis of such an assessment is realistic and cognitively challenging. The assignment should require performance and have a "formative role". Authenticity emerges as a critical component for evaluating "relevant skills for successful job performance". Authentic assessment should be comparable to what occurs and what is evaluated in the professional area, including "collaborative" or peer-to-peer work. Authentic assessment should have a clear framework and expectations; "assessment criteria should be known in advance". In this regard, "feedback" on students' performance was crucial, and the assignment can be repeated more than once since the objective was for students to effectively learn from and improve their performance. Incorrect responses present a chance to identify areas that need improvement. Errors must be addressed utilizing procedures for peer and self-evaluation, with formative assessment serving as a form of feedback.

According to studies, authentic assessment comprises numerous techniques. Sewagegn & Diale (2020, p.261) mention a variety of authentic tasks, which are also discussed in other studies. The tasks are self-evaluation, written work, field reports, practical in-class work, group evaluation, article reviews, portfolios, proposal development, interviews, case study discussions, role-playing activities, peer evaluations, teacher observations, and group projects. These

strategies play a part in developing students' capacity for critical and creative thinking, learning proficiency, and the ability to improve their surroundings.

Benefits and Challenges in Applying Authentic Assessment

Literature indicates that there are benefits to authentic assessment. From a cognitive standpoint, it affects learning quality and the growth of higher-order cognitive skills (Wiggins 1993; Dochy and McDowell 1997; Ashford-Rowe, 2014, cited in Villarroel et al., 2017). It also improves metacognition and self-reflection (Vanaki & Memarian, 2009). In terms of students' attitudes toward learning, authentic assessment enables students to have commitment and motivation for learning (Nicol et al., 2014), and develop the capacity for autonomous and self-regulated learning (Pintrich, 2000; Swaffield, 2011; Sewagegn & Diale, 2020). From a sociocultural perspective, authentic assessment gives students the chance to learn through interaction with peers and the larger community. By allowing for active participation and deeper learning, it promotes the social components of learning (Bohemia and Davison, 2012). Furthermore, this kind of assessment is connected to the development of many graduate qualities. Critical thinking, problem-solving, communication skills, teamwork, and reflective practice are some examples of these qualities (Woodlee & Maher, 2013; Mueller, 2015; Fox, et al., 2017; Koçyiğt & Zembat, 2021).

Despite numerous advantages, many teachers find it difficult and complicated in implementing authentic assessment. One of the problems is that teachers still have limited comprehension of the recent curriculum and perceive its application has failed due to the hassle process and circumstances of the class (Trisanti, 2014). Another issue is it takes a longer time, especially if teachers have a large number of students that cause teachers to be exhausted (Aliningsih and Sofwan, 2015). Moreover, lack of teachers' expertise and experience in using real-world tasks for evaluation becomes the main concern (Rukmini & Saputri, 2017). Therefore, pre-service teachers ought to be prepared and gain more exposure to the implementation of authentic assessment by doing more hands-on activities.

Use of Authentic Assessment in the 2013 Curriculum

The use of authentic assessment in the curriculum has also been stressed in EFL teacher education institutions (Cirit, 2015; Akhter, 2017; Kaya & Özkan, 2019; Al Malki et al., 2021). This also holds true for such institutions in Indonesia (Astika, 2014; Aliningsih & Sofwan, 2015; Abid, 2018; Suwartono & Riyani, 2019), particularly in light of recent efforts to get pre-service teachers ready for the 2013 curriculum (Amelia & Rahmadayani, 2019; Jaelani & Umam, 2021). The 2013 curriculum highlights the creativity and promotes discovery learning (Permendikbud no 81A, the year 2013). The curriculum requires teachers to utilize authentic materials and authentic assessment to evaluate students' competencies regarding their behavior, knowledge, and skills (Permendikbud no. 66, the year 2013). The assignments for authentic assessment include performance, project, and portfolio assessments to provide them with opportunities to replicate real-life duties (Permendikbud No. 104, the year 2014). Such evaluation is a major shift in the curriculum, from simple cognitive domain evaluation mode to more holistic domains of cognitive-emotional-psychomotor evaluation method (Suwartono & Riyani, 2019).

This paper aims to uncover the application of authentic assessment in the Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) course at a private teacher education institution. In this course, pre-service teachers learn theories about young learners and skills in teaching English to group learners. Most assignments provided in TEYL refer to the authenticity of evaluation to help them

be ready to teach English in primary schools. Although in the 2013 Curriculum, English at this school level is not part of a compulsory subject and is often taught outside school hours, the qualification of teachers who possess experience in English for young learners (Zein, 2014). As there aren't many reports on this topic yet, this paper can fill the gap created by the shortage of this research issue.

RESEARCH METHOD

Autoethnography

This study employed autoethnography, a formal, systematic method for studying oneself (Austin & Hickey, 2007). This type of method is frequently used in research that tries to comprehend cultural experience through methodical narrative, vivid dense description, and examination of personal experiences (Sparkes, 2000). This autoethnography study looks at the possibilities for teachers to research their own practice and to bring up questions about social, cultural, and political elements of education (Dressman, 2006). This qualitative research allows us to “look inward into our thoughts, feelings, identity, and experiences and outward into our relationships, communities, and cultures” (Adams, et al., 2015, p. 46). Therefore, this method fits the aim of this study which deliberate the researcher's experience as a teacher in practicing authentic assessment to provide a thorough picture of what it's like for me to have an authentic assessment of a course. The researcher became the participant, and the data were based on personal experience, thus the findings are in the form of personal narration (Yazan, 2019).

The Objectives of the Study and Data validation

In this research, I focus on my personal experience in applying authentic assessment in the English for Young Learners (TEYL) course which is offered for third-year pre-service students at a private university in Jakarta. This type of assessment aims to introduce the pre-service teachers related to the assignments which deal with daily life contexts. In addition, challenges in practicing this assessment are discussed. To validate the data, I used two strategies including detailed descriptions of my data and other references to support the discussion of the study (Wall, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Position of TEYL in English Language Education Curriculum

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) is one of the courses that the pre-service English teachers must take in the third year of their study at my department, English Language Education. This course is offered for those who have taken Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) courses and Planning Assessment and Evaluation in their first and second year of study. These courses give pre-service English teachers the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) necessary to learn how to teach or deliver a certain subject area to a specific group of students in a specific context (Shulman, 1986; Kandasamy, et al., 2018). TEYL used to be an elective course since we thought that TEFL courses covered strategies in teaching English to various groups of students. The pre-service English teachers might take the TEYL course if they would like to have in-depth PCK in teaching English to young learners, particularly primary school students. Then, we decided to make TEYL as a compulsory course because a lot of primary schools in Indonesia need English teachers who have qualifications in teaching English

to the students (Diyanti, et al. 2020). In addition, there has been an increased number of graduates who pursue their career in TEYL. Hence, this course is necessary to be taught to equip our pre-service English teachers with the knowledge and skills in teaching this particular group of students.

The approach and delivery mode of TEYL

Prior to COVID-19, all courses including TEYL were offered offline where the pre-service English teachers came to the classroom and had face-to-face sessions. This type of delivery mode made it easy for me to conduct experiential learning that highlights the critical role of experience in the learning process (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning allows my pre-service English teachers to link the theories they learned in the classroom to real-world situations (Silver, 2021).

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, teaching and learning have been conducted online mode in which I could only meet my pre-service teachers virtually using an online platform. I tried to apply experiential learning in this mode although I faced several challenges, including the internet connection and lack of interaction among students during the virtual learning which was also found in a study conducted by Wulandari, et al. (2022). After two years of dealing with online learning, I discovered strategies that I could use in dealing with the two mentioned obstacles (internet connection and student interaction). I utilized WhatsApp and formed a group to conduct teaching and learning as an alternative to virtual meetings. The sessions in the WhatsApp group can be done both synchronously and asynchronously. The success stories of doing online learning through WhatsApp were revealed by Sodiq and Zainiyati (2020) and Alberth et al. (2020).

Implementation of Authentic Assessment in TEYL Class

The emerging curriculum of 2013 that requires teachers to conduct real-world assessment (Permendikbud no. 66, the year 2013) and the increasing need for university graduates to be equipped with work-readiness skills (Way, et al., 2020) drove me to execute an authentic assessment. Having this assessment I could ensure if the pre-service English teachers who took TEYL class had gained knowledge and skills needed in real-life contexts, particularly in teaching. In addition, I could evaluate other competencies from my pre-service English teachers such as problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (Woodlee & Maher, 2013; Mueller, 2015; Fox, et al., 2017; Koçyiğt & Zembat, 2021).

Among numerous authentic tasks that have been proposed by scholars such as Sewagegn & Diale (2020), I chose four techniques that were closely related to teaching activities: presentation, simulation/role play, team teaching, and service learning. These tasks were done as formative and summative assessment. Rubrics were provided to assess the pre-service English teachers in performing these tasks in groups and individually. All of the tasks were graded, hence they were weighted based on the complexity of their complexity. For instance, conducting service learning was weighted 30% of the total grade because this task required pre-service English teachers to conduct teaching to a group of young learners in an informal setting. They worked in a group to find their learner candidates, design the lessons, and teach them as well as write a report. The five authentic techniques are explained in the following paragraphs.

The first technique used in my class was presentation. This technique has been used in many courses at colleges and universities. It can help college students to learn the course better. Student presentations may result in improved communication and presentation skills, more engagement and involvement in class, and a higher interest in learning (Girard et al., 2011; Bower, et al., 2013). In my class, pre-service English teachers were asked to present their

understanding of articles related to the topic being discussed. They did it in groups of three to give them a chance to have a discussion on the articles prior to the presentation. Their communication and collaboration skills were gradually developed during the discussion and presentation phases. Through this task, I provide an opportunity for the pre-service teachers to sharpen their presentation skills since they will need them when they become a teacher to explain lessons to their future students. Teachers who have good presentation skills are able to communicate relevant information clearly and effectively to students (Rao, 2018).

Simulations and role plays were also used in assessing my pre-service English teachers. These techniques help students to improve interpersonal communication, evaluate text critically as new sources, and encourage individual problem-solving for more in-depth understanding (Stevens, 2015). One of the simulation tasks was integrated with the topic they shared during the presentation. In this case, I gave each group of pre-service teachers an article on the theory of child development. At first, they had to present their reading summary in the form of ppt slides. Then, they were asked to find an implication of the theory and simulate it to their peers. One of the child development theories presented was Multiple Intelligences from Gardner. The group who got this theory shared the implications by simulating on how to teach English to young learners using different kinds of activities, such as drawing, playing a game, and singing a song. This task gave pre-service English teachers a chance to put the theory into practice. This kind of assessment is important for them as they can realize how their school experience directly relates to their future professional activity (UNSW Sydney).

Another authentic assessment applied in my TEYL was team teaching that has been claimed as a new paradigm for pre-service teachers (Rosenfelt et al., 2013). This technique promotes collegiality (Tajino et al., 2016) that enables pre-service teachers to work collaboratively with their peers to prepare a lesson. Each of them can share his/her ideas in designing the lesson. Team teaching is usually done in a real classroom, in which pre-service teachers team teach the lesson with their mentor teacher or their peer (Rosenfelt et al., 2013). In my class, I modified this as they worked together with their peers instead of teachers in school. Therefore, they did not conduct their teaching in a real classroom. Rather, they chose some children who would like to join their team teaching practice. This type of assessment technique covers all elements of a teaching task, ranging from designing a lesson, preparing teaching materials, and delivering the lesson in groups. Pre-service English teachers carried out a series of team teaching based on different genres (fiction or nonfiction). In teaching fiction to students, the pre-service English teachers tried to engage students with reading aloud literary work that they got from another course, Literature for Younger and Older Children. They asked students to make predictions prior to reading activity and retell the story as a post activity. In teaching nonfiction, they picked a topic that was suitable for their students and performed active learning such as compare and contrast using a graphic organizer.

Prior to the teaching delivery, they had to design a lesson and give rationale on why they chose a certain topic and objective(s) to their students. Their lesson plan is part of the assessment criteria which I evaluated for this task. I wanted to build their awareness on the importance of lesson design. It is crucial for pre-service teachers to think about what to teach, how to teach it and how to evaluate it (Nesari & Heidari, 2014). I encouraged them to use backward design when they create their lesson. Backward design is a process in planning that includes three steps: identifying desired results, determining assessment evidence, and planning learning experience and instruction (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). Backward design is also applied in Kurikulum Merdeka to stimulate teachers to focus on student learning (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kemdikbud Ristek). After they finished with the lesson plans, I gave

feedback to make sure the lessons designed were appropriate for their students and met the objectives. Giving feedback is necessary as it is a way to encourage the students to reflect, learn, and apply it to make improvement on their work (Obilor, 2019).

Team teaching was done online through an application, Microsoft Teams, that allowed the pre-service English teachers to interact with their students virtually. During the team teaching, they employed different teaching aids, such as powerpoint slides, videos, and online games, as young learners need to have concrete objects to help them learn (Syathroh, et al., 2019). An example of integrating different teaching aids was found in teaching non fiction. First, the pre-service English teachers used power point slides to introduce the topic of the lesson, which was about fruits. Then, they provided a guessing game to check the students' understanding about the topic. They provided boxes with numbers from 1 to 16. Each box has a picture of a fruit along with a question "What fruit is it?". The students had to choose a box and guess the name of the fruit in the box. Then, the students were asked to draw their favorite fruit and label their picture. These activities are also aligned with the characteristics of young learners who understand the lessons better if they are engaged with physical experiences by seeing, hearing, touching and interacting, not from explanation (Harmer, 2007). By playing games and drawing pictures, the students were given a chance to see and hear during the guessing game, and use their hands during the drawing activity.

The last authentic assessment in my TEYL class was a service-learning project. Service learning is a pedagogical strategy that can give students life-changing educational opportunities to serve a community with a well-structured program for learning and reflection (Chong, 2014; Rusu, et al., 2015; Mergler, 2017). Service-learning is complicated by nature, making it difficult to explain or comprehend. Thus, the term "service learning" in some studies has been interchangeably used with community service, volunteer work, and internship despite their differences (Chong, 2014). As a result, there has been a significant variance in how it has been interpreted and applied. Bilig (2000) tried to define service learning precisely as a program that is designed to meet the needs of students' local community, coordinated with an academic institution or a community service program, in order to foster civic responsibility in students, which is included in the schools' curricula and to provide students with a timeline for reflecting on the service experience they have just completed. Service learning has been claimed to have significance in teaching and learning, such as providing opportunities for students to put the theories into practice, building their awareness to become active citizens, promoting their personal development and increasing their employability (Gregorová, 2016). Hence, service learning is applied in higher education around the world, including in teacher education. Service-learning practice in teacher education can support pre-service students with an experience of teaching diverse students (Mergler, 2017).

In light of the numerous benefits of service learning, providing more chances for my pre-service English students in conducting this project is paramount to preparing them with the abilities necessary for the workforce, particularly the experience of inclusive education. This project was completed as a final examination whereby they could work in groups of three to design their own service-learning program. For instance, a group of preservice English teachers in my TEYL class chose to work with a community organized by a youth group that aims to provide learning activities for children in an informal setting. The children in this community are from low-income families and most of them are not able to attend school. As a result, children at the age of 7 can barely count and read. In terms of English language skills, only a few children are interested in learning English, yet they have a desire to learn. Therefore, the pre-service English teachers were called to teach English to those children as they learned from a theory on

the usefulness of introducing and teaching English to children as early as possible to give children a greater chance for language proficiency in using the language in the modern world (2019). The pre-service English teachers also learned that children need to be exposed to a diversity of spoken and written English usages (Moon, 2000).

In delivering the English program for their service learning, they focused on helping children familiar with English and building their awareness of the importance of studying English. In this way, they were expected to be motivated in learning English. Prior to the service learning implementation, the pre-service English teachers conducted a needs analysis to find out the background of their target learners and their needs for English. This needs analysis is important for teachers as they need to find out detailed information about their target students (Morrison et al., 2004). As a result, they came out with several topics which are used in daily life such as introducing oneself, telling numbers, time, and daily routines. Then, they designed a syllabus along with teaching materials for their English program. During the process, they could consult with me on how to link the result of their needs analysis and the topics for their English program. They could also ask me for advice whenever they were not sure of how to deal with a challenge found during the service-learning implementation. At the end of the program, they wrote a report consisting of the background of their program, the implementation, syllabus, as well as their individual reflection. This service-learning program should be strongly based on reflection to ensure the service enhances the learning and the learning enhances the service (Mason & Dunens, 2019). Their reflection showed that they learned about pedagogy, emotional management, and communication skills with children and adults. They also built their awareness that every child has the right to get an opportunity to study and a good quality of education as it was found in Mergler's study in 2017.

Challenges

Authentic assessment has encouraged me to go extra mile to evaluate students' performance that is more student-centered and applicable in the real world. However, I discovered some challenges in implementing the authentic assessment. The major challenge that I experienced was time-consuming as it was found in studies done by Aliningsih and Sofwan (2015) and Aziz, et al. (2020). In each authentic assignment that I assigned to the pre-service English teachers, I had to provide detailed guidelines and feedback so that the students understood if they had fulfilled the expectation of the assignment given. Having a longer time in the assessment process made me exhausted as it was similar to what teachers experienced in a study conducted by Aliningsih and Sofwan (2015). To overcome this obstacle, I asked them to conduct the assignments without my presence, but they had to record their performance. In this way, I could assess them whenever I had sufficient time to check the recording while providing written feedback on each of their work.

In the case of pre-service English teachers doing their team teaching, some difficulties appeared similar to research carried out by Kokkinos (2022). First, they struggled to get students for their teaching practice. The pandemic situation forced them to conduct online teaching which caused a lack of interaction and immediacy with their students. Second, they had to deal with an unstable internet connection since they had to perform team teaching synchronously. One group of pre-service teachers had tried to do offline teaching. They managed to teach a group of students in face-to-face mode. However, there was a team member who lived apart from them and was only able to join the teaching performance online. I could see their students could not follow the instructions well when they had to listen to their teacher who was teaching them online. These problems were parallel with the study by Wulandari et al. (2022).

Some difficulties I ran through when putting the real assessment into practice helped me learn a valuable lesson about how to overcome them. Therefore, I will continue to use this assessment to evaluate my pre-service English teachers by giving them a chance to put the theory into practice.

CONCLUSION

The study provides a thorough picture of the authentic assessment application in Teaching English to Young Learners which is offered for pre-service teachers. There were several assignments performed by pre-service teachers including presentation, team teaching, video analysis, and service learning. All these assignments are linked to teachers' tasks which pre-service teachers should have in order to prepare them as future teachers.

Some challenges were detected in this implementation due to COVID-19 whereas the pre-service teachers had difficulties finding young learners who could be their students in doing team teaching and service learning as well as conducting online teaching. Time-consuming was also another concern in doing this assessment. Yet, recording the students' performance could be a solution for me to evaluate their performance.

Despite the difficulties of organizing the authentic assessment, I would say that teachers should try to integrate it into their classes since this assessment gives students an opportunity to put the theory into practice.

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