Assessment of students' EFL learning outcomes during emergency remote teaching: teachers' challenges and practices

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Abstract

The assessment of students' learning outcomes during COVID-19 pandemic has become a burnng issue among educators. The extreme diversion from face-to-face learning to emergency remote teaching resulted in the assessment being carried out remotely. This case study research is aimed to investigate how the assessment practices of students' EFL learning outcomes during emergency remote teaching and to discover the challenges faced by the teachers in assessing students' EFL learning outcomes. To obtain the data, interviews were conducted with two senior high school teachers. Both teachers are from different regions in Indonesia. From the data analysis, it was revealed some findings that the challenges faced by EFL teachers in assessing students' learning outcomes are mainly related to the (1) academic dishonesty, followed by (2) deciding the appropriate tools or applications for assessing students' outcomes and the last is (3) engaging students in the assessment process. Teachers' creativity is regarded as critical in order to effectively assess students' EFL learning outcomes.

Keywords: Assesment, learning, EFL

Introduction

It In any educational field, assessment is critical to the teaching and learning processes. Compared to teaching, assessment had the greatest impact on students' learning process (Islam et al., 2021). The language curriculum and objectives play a role in guiding assessment plans. As a result, it is critical to ensure that assessment methods are designed in accordance with the curriculum aims and objectives. However, conducting assessments during remote teaching makes the assessment more complex (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). It is difficult for teachers to prevent students' from cheating and to ensure that students complete the assignments independently because teachers have little control over their students work when they apply remote assessment (Heng & Sol, 2020). However, such information is expected to contribute insights on how assessment

might be implemented into foreign language contexts to promote students learning, specifically in the post COVID-19 situations (Yan, Zhang, & Cheng, 2021). Therefore, implementing effective and appropriate assessment during emergency remote teaching is necessary.

Since the global COVID-19 outbreak, emergency remote teaching and related matters including assessment have been studied by previous researchers. For instance, Cahapay (2020) showed the assessment practices in a Philippine Teacher Education Institution. The results highlighted four major points of discussion regarding assessment practices. Another research by Guangul, Suhail, Khalit, & Khidhir (2020) presented the different challenges of remote assessment in higher education in Middle East College during COVID-19 and the current assessment practices. Furthermore, Al-Ahdal & Alqasham (2020) who conducted a research in Saudi Arabia discovered that exit tasks are always used as online assessment techniques by the majority of respondents.

Although there have been many studies related to the teachers' challenges and practices in assessing students' EFL learning outcomes have been conducted, still few of them conducted the research in this field during emergency remote teaching particularly in EFL classes. Regarding this matter, the researcher decided to conduct this research. Considering the current situation of the COVID-19 outbreak, assessing students' EFL learning outcomes will be a tough challenge for teachers. As a result of the teaching and learning process carried out remotely using an internet connection, consequently, the assessment of students' EFL learning outcomes are also carried out online. Teachers must be able to find an alternative method for assessing students' learning outcomes during the current unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak for the sake of learning objectives that can still be achieved maximally. The purpose of this research is to investigate the challenges faced by EFL teachers in assessing students' learning outcomes. Moreover, this research is aimed to know how the EFL teachers practice the language assessment of students' learning outcomes during emergency remote teaching. Accordingly, two questions are formulated as follows; 1) what are the challenges faced by the EFL teachers in assessing students' EFL learning outcomes? and 2) how do the EFL teachers practice the assessment of students' learning outcomes during emergency remote teaching?

Methods

This research applied a qualitative method with a case study approach. A case study is a type of research study that focuses on a single unit to produce an in-depth, rich and holistic description. As the name implies, the case study is an in-depth description of a single unit. An individual, a group, a site, a class, a policy,

a program, a process, an institution, or a community The unit can be an individual, a group, a site, a class, a policy, a program, a process, an institution, or a community can all be considered units (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010). Furthermore, senior high school EFL teachers were chosen to be the participants of this research. The data employed in this research were obtained through interview, and document analysis. The interview was carried out by the researcher to find out the teachers' challenges and practices in assessing students' EFL learning outcomes during emergency remote teaching. Considering the current condition of COVID-19 outbreak, the researcher chose to do the interview by telephone. The questions delivered to the participants are regarding their opinion about assessment during emergency remote teaching, challenges they faced in assessing students' EFL learning outcomes, and the assessment practices in this current situation. The interview was conducted using Indonesian language to make the interview process easier. To further complement the research data, this research used document analysis to analyze the result of students' tasks either in the form of students' worksheets or other assignments during emergency remote teaching obtained from the teachers.

All data that has been obtained were then analyzed using a particular technique. Interactive Model Analysis by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) was chosen to be the technique in analyzing the data. The data were analyzed through the processes of 1) condensing the data, 2) displaying the data, and 3) drawing and verifying conclusions. In data condensation, the researcher selected and simplified the intact data from the interview results. This is a type of analysis that focuses on and organizes data so that final conclusions can be drawn and verified (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014). Data display is the second most important process of analysis activity. The researcher displayed the data illustrated by the figure and table to be more systematic and engaging. The last process is drawing and verifying conclusions. In this process, the researcher drew and verified the conclusions from the data that have been through in data condensation and data display. The conclusions must be able to provide a detailed explanation regarding the result of the research.

Results and discussion

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Assessing Students' EFL Learning Outcomes duringEmergency Remote Teaching

The analysis data of the interview revealed that there are three challenges faced by the EFL teachers, particularly senior high school teachers in assessing students' EFL learning outcomes during emergency remote teaching.

1. Academic dishonesty

According to RW, assessing students' learning outcomes during emergency remote teaching has become a barrier. She stated that there are so

many obstacles faced by the teacher in order to assess students' outcomes optimally. Giving scores to students that are appropriate to the students' abilities and learning outcomes is also a great challenge. Because the teacher cannot monitor students directly when students take the test, there are many possibilities that students do the test dishonestly. He said as follow:

> *...assessment of student learning during COVID-19 is considered less effective. because during online learning the teacher cannot directly monitor the progress of students in understanding the material. Because the teacher cannot monitor students directly when students take the test, there are many possibilities that students do the test dishonestly, they work together with their friends or by looking at the dictionary or searching on google...* (RW - interview 1)

Agreeing with RW's answer, TR explained that the result of assessment of EFL students' learning outcomes is far from expectation. By assessing students remotely, teachers cannot score students' outcomes based on their own capability. He said,

> *...we are difficult in giving the real score to the students. We don't know whether they do the task independently or do it with their friends.* (TR - interview 1)

Furthermore, in the another session of interview, he emphasized that,

> *In my opinion, online learning does not guarantee that students will do the task independently and based on their own. Because it is still difficult to understand the material because it is online, let alone, ask to work on questions. So yes, the assessment that I applied mainly was the activeness of students in doing questions, following the teaching and learning process, asking questions online, and their attitude in accepting and collecting assignments.* (TR - interview 3)

On the other hand, TR stated that assessing students' learning outcomes remotely is not effective. The teacher also could not transfer the material maximally to the students, as the result students could not master the material well. RW said,

For the assessment of learning during the COVID-19 situation, it must be very far from expectations and there are many obstacles because I believe that the delivery of material that isnot optimal in the online period affects how much material is mastered by students, so that the assessment did not go well. (TR - interview 1)

2. Deciding the appropriate platform for assessing students' learning outcomes
Another challenge faced by the EFL teachers in assessing students' outcomes remotely is deciding the appropriate platform for assessing students' learning outcomes.

Based on the interview with RW, she stated that the difficulty of assessing language learning outcomes is that the teachers cannot assess all language skills because of limited technology infrastructure used. In the interview session she said,

...the difficulty is that the teacher cannot assess all students' kills, the teacher can only access reading and writing, because there is no platform that can be used to assess speaking and listening... (TR - interview 1)

Furthermore TR explained that it is difficult to assess students' outcomes using application, because it was something new in the school. As he said in the interview session,

It is because the use of the application is relatively new to us and not all students can use it. (TR - interview 2)

3. Engaging students in the assessment process
Another case besides academic dishonesty and deciding the appropriate platform, engaging students in the assessment process also becomes a challenge. According to TR in the interview session, there are difficulties in directing students to take a proactive role in the assessment and difficulties in getting their seriousness in carrying out the assessment. Students tend to underestimate the assessment and do not mean it in doing theirwork. TR said,

*There is a big challenge in directing students to always play an active
and serious role in carrying out the assessment.* (TR-interview 1)

TR emphasized that,

*Teachers have difficulty in giving instructions to students when students
are at home, because students tend to be more difficult to be directed by
the teacher when they are at home* (TR- interview 1)

Assessment Practices of Students' EFL Learning Outcomes duringemergency RemoteTeaching

To explore how the teachers do the assessment practices during emergency
remote teaching, the researcher askedseveral questions to the EFL teachers. RW
explained that the teacher assesses the students' learning outcomes by using the
school web. There is a website that is particularly used by the teachers for
conducting a summative assessment.

*The platform that is used for online learning for daily scoring is Google
Classroom. If we conduct the final assessment, we use the school
website. So students are required to take tokens and log in and do test
questions according to the time limit given. The number of questions is
limited, only 25 questions with a time of approximately 30 minutes.* (RW
- interview 1)

While for formative assessment, TR explained that he used to use several
applications such as Kahoot, Edmodo, Youtube, and Google Form but it did not
work. As a result, TR tried another way, that was capturing the questions then
sharing the task via Whatsapp.

*....We have ever used the application but it didn't run well, so I returned
to the classic way of capturing the questions and the students sent the
answer in the form of photos.* (TR - interview 1)

Referring to the results of the interview, it was found that academic dishonesty is the major challenge the EFL teachers faced in assessing students' learning outcomes. It is due to teachers' inability to fully supervise students during the process of assessing their learning outcomes. Students may take test that should be done individually but instead work with their peers. This finding was in line with the previous study (Guangul, Suhail, Khalit, & Khidhir, 2020). Furthermore, this challenge actually can be overcome by the teachers with applying appropriate tools or applications which can provide more integrity in assessing students' learning outcomes. However, this becomes the other challenges for the teachers. All participants agreed that deciding the appropriate tools or applications for assessing students' learning outcomes is challenging. It is hard to discover the application which can cover the teachers' needs regarding to the assessment. The conditions that changed greatly quicked limited the teachers and students to explore the technologies for better teaching and learning process.

Furthermore, the last challenge teachers faced in assessing students' learning outcomes is engaging students in the assessment process. The participants stated that students tend to do the test carelessly. Students did not pay attention to the time limitation in doing the test even though the teachers have set the time limitation for finishing the test. The teachers need to encourage the students to finish the test based on the specified time. To make more engagement of students in the assessment process, the teachers can also make a commitment with the students to submit the assignments or tests on time.

Even though there might not be enough proof in researcher's findings, still, it can be a consideration for the EFL teachers in conducting the assessment of learning outcomes in the future. The findings of this research provide a guide for EFL teachers and students in teaching and learning process, specifically in assessing students' EFL learning outcomes during emergency remote teaching. As such, teachers may manage classroom activities and the assessment process and encourage the students to engage more in the teaching and learning process.

Conclusion

During this COVID-19 outbreak in mid-March 2020, emergency remote teaching started to be applied in all educational institutions around the world. Consequently, this affected the aspects within the educational system such as the assessment of students' learning outcomes. Teachers faced a lot of challenges in

practicing the assessment of students' learning outcomes. Considering this issue, the researcher conducted this research.

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher summed up the challenges faced by EFL teachers in assessing students' learning outcomes are mainly related to the academic dishonesty, followed by deciding the appropriate tools or applications for assessing students' outcomes and the last is engaging students in the assessment process. These challenges may be faced by most of the EFL teachers in Indonesia but it does not rule out that other challenges also arise as the time goes by.

This research was carried out in the initial phase of the COVID-19 outbreak. In the future, there might be development in educational system and the researcher hopes that this research will be a consideration in conducting a better assessment of students' EFL learning outcomes.

Acknowledgments

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