

Investigating English Teachers' Understanding of English Language Assessment at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare

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ABSTRACT

There are instances where teachers encounter confusion when distinguishing between the terms of assessment, test, evaluation and examination. Moreover, the teachers' understanding of these terms also plays a critical role for students. Based on the reasons above, this research aimed to describe the English teachers' understanding of English language assessment and how the teachers assess the students' work.

The research was conducted at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. There were five English teachers as research subjects. The research method used qualitative design. The data collected through interview. The interview results were transcribed, then analyzed qualitatively by reducing data based on the research questions. The data that has been reduced is then converted into narrative text, making it easy to understand. The last was making conclusion and suggestion based on the data obtained.

The research findings revealed that, there were differences and similarities in the understanding. Four teachers showed differences, with only one teacher had relevant understanding toward the assessment understanding. The other four teachers, in addition to assessment understanding, also had understanding relevant to instructional, subject matter, and pedagogical. The data indicated that Assessment understanding was the most dominant among the five teachers, suggesting that all the teachers were able to differentiate testing, examination, and evaluation. Furthermore, the teachers prioritized their assessment in learning to students by using a variety of assessment methods such as daily tests, semester exams, attitude assessments, as well as group activities and projects to enhance students confidence and encourage active learning in the classroom.

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INTRODUCTION

In education matter, assessment holds a very important position. Teachers and students pay attention to assessment considerably since through the result and process of Assessing, in broad term, is the process of acquiring information and making judgments about students' learning. The purposes of assessment include the following; to assist student learning related to outcomes, to make judgments about students' achievements, to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching programs, to inform decisions about students' future learning. Hence, sound assessment should be both a barometer of how well things are progressing as well as a compass indicating future direction. Sound assessment results only when there is a clear purpose for assessment, clear and appropriate targets, proper methods, an appropriate sample of the targets, and elimination of bias and distortion in measurement. Assessment as the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning. Assessment in education

institution like school is ideally educative. It means, the assessment should be informative or rich with information about what the students have achieved, and at the same time, its existence provides opportunity for educating human components to develop themselves and make progress in what they are doing. The human components in education are not only students and teachers, but also stake holders and parents at large.

UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare located in Matahari Street No. 3, Mallusetasi, Ujung Subdistrict, Parepare City, South Sulawesi Province. This school is a one of favorite high school in Parepare. This is shown based on the number of students recorded. In 2023, UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare has the most high school students in Parepare with 1.020 students based on Directorate General of Early Childhood Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of Parepare. UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare strives to equip students with strong language skills, enabling them to engage effectively in a globalized world. However, the extent to which English teachers at this institution possess an understanding of English language assessment remains a topic of interest.

In the context of education, particularly in the teaching profession, "teachers' understanding" refers to the depth of comprehension and insight that educators possess regarding specific concepts, pedagogical methods, and educational contexts. It influences teaching practices, decision-making, and interactions with student. Teachers' understanding is pivotal in promoting effective instruction and fostering students' learning experiences. This integration highlights the multidimensional nature of understanding, encompassing both the cognitive dimensions identified by scholars and the application of understanding within the teaching profession. Teachers' understanding plays a critical role in facilitating meaningful learning experiences for students.

Ideally as a teacher whose job assesses the students' work he or she must understand about the assessment, testing, examination and evaluation. In fact, we sometimes find phenomena where the teacher gets confused to differ among them. They think all of them are the same. Assessment is popular but sometimes misunderstood term in current educational practice. Sometimes, we think of testing and assessing as synonymous, but they are certainly not. One of the misunderstandings of assessment is it is only "test" at the end of a unit of work of series of lesson. The phenomena can be found in UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare where some of the teachers have been asked about the assessment including testing, examination and evaluation and did not give the clear answer about them. This problem is also supported by the students where they said many of their teachers just assess them based on their final project and even there are also teachers involve their personal feeling toward their like or dislike in assessing the students. Based on the problem above, the research entitled Investigating English Teachers' Understanding of English Language Assessment, wanted to conduct. The teachers today must know or understand about assessing, how he or she assesses the students. That is one of the reasons why the researcher is interested in carrying out an indepth interview to the teachers. The other reason is the researcher wanted to investigate how the teachers assess the students' work.

The questions of this research are how is the teachers' understanding of English language assessment and how do the teachers assess students' work at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. While the objectives are to describe the teachers' understanding about English language assessment and to describe the teachers' assessment of students' work at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. The significances of this research are theoretical benefits, which this research is expected to be useful information for the development of English language study especially for assessment and practical benefits which divided into two that are for researcher that can be used as one of the bases or guidelines to further investigating about teachers' understanding of assessment, for teachers and lectures that are can provide some information about teachers' understanding of assessment, for other researchers that are expected to be able to find insights and ideas from the contents of this research and develop scientific ideas related to conducting more in-depth research. With that further research will provide a lot of insight and knowledge in the research process. The scope of the research is English teachers' understanding of English language assessment aspects, such as testing, examination, and evaluation and how do they assess the students' work at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare.

METHOD

The researcher conducted in-depth qualitative research of teachers' understanding of English language assessment. This research conducted at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare which located in Jl. Matahari No. 3, Mallusetasi, Kec. Ujung, Kota Parepare, Sulawesi Selatan. The duration of the research was according to the teachers' teaching schedule in school to be available to interview. The researcher took around 20 minutes for each teacher to interview. The research subjects were the English teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. There were 5 English teachers, they are Mr. U, Mrs. S, Mrs. N, Mrs. R, and Mrs. H and the researcher took all 5 teachers as subject of this research. In this research, researcher used interview. Researcher used in-depth interview to get more accurate data. The data gained from the interview were the teachers' explanation of English language assessment and the teachers' assessment of students' work. The data next analyzed to get the result as on the research problems that are the teachers' understanding of English language assessment

and the teachers' assessment of students' work.

The procedure of collecting data for this researched was conducted through some steps. The researcher contacted the teachers as the subjects of this research. Then the researcher asked about the teachers' available to interview. The researcher interviewed the teachers about how is the English teachers understanding about language assessment that are testing, assessment, examination, and evaluation and how they assess the students' work. They have interviewed around 20 minutes for every English teacher. The data collected through interviews should be transcribed. The researcher recorded the interview process then transcribing them.

The technique to analyze the data is by identifying the answers of the teachers related to the questions given by the researcher and classified them into the right teachers' understanding. To analyze the interview data, the researcher used interactive model analysis of Miles Mathew dan Michael Huberman (1992). They are data collection, data reduction, data display, and data conclusion and verification.

RESULTS

This study found that all five teachers offered valuable insights into assessment practices and their understanding of effective teaching strategies. Mr. U underscored the significance of formative and summative tests, differentiation, and assessment methods that related to Assessment understanding of teachers. Mrs. S discussed the integration of attitude assessment and differences between curricula that related to Assessment understanding and Instructional understanding of teachers. Mrs. N focused on English language assessment, including attitudes and participation, aligning her criteria with the curriculum that related to Assessment understanding and Subject matter understanding. Mrs. R highlighted active learning, peer tutoring, and diverse assessment methods that related to Assessment understanding and Pedagogical understanding. Mrs. H emphasized cognitive and attitude assessments, technology use in quizzes, and final grading processes that related to Assessment understanding and Subject matter understanding. Their explanations emphasize the importance of comprehending assessments, including cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of student learning, differentiation, and the integration of technology in the assessment process. Each teacher's unique approach to assessment reflects their expertise and teaching philosophy, highlighting the multifaceted nature of effective teaching and the essential role of assessment in gauging student progress and fostering meaningful learning experiences.

Regarding about the teachers' way in assessing the students it can be concluded that all five teachers, each provide insights into their assessment practices and teaching philosophies. Mr. U employs a combination of formal written tests, daily quizzes, unwritten assessments, evaluation of behavior and participation, and differentiation based on student abilities to assess his students effectively. Mrs. S utilizes various assessment types, including daily quizzes, mid-term assessments, and end-of-semester examinations, distinguishing between formative and summative assessments. She also incorporates differentiated learning, attitude assessment, project-based assessments with an emphasis on the learning process, and integration of assessments. Mrs. N focuses on assessing language skills, particularly speaking and writing, preferring practical and direct tests that evaluate grammar, pronunciation, and spelling. She places significance on affective and attitude assessments, integrating various evaluation criteria aligned with the K-13 curriculum. Mrs. R underscores the importance of providing theory initially to understand students' abilities and employs diverse assessment methods, including speaking, Q&A, interviews, and written assessments. She fosters an engaging learning environment through peer tutoring and positive reinforcement. Mrs. H assesses students' cognitive attitude in English language skills, uses rubrics for speaking assessments, shares material with students before class, and employs a mix of manual and application-based assessments. The approach to assessment remains consistent between the Merdeka and 2013 curriculum.

DISCUSSION

English teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare have both differences and similarities in how they assess students. One key difference is how the curriculum, like the Merdeka and K13 Curriculum, affects their assessment methods and teaching styles. Despite these differences, all teachers share a strong emphasis on understanding assessments, knowing how to create, carry out, and understand assessments effectively. The most dominant understanding possess among all the teachers was Assessment understanding. It can be seen from the analysis of the interview that all five teachers implicitly can differentiate testing, examination and evaluation. They have ability to design, implement, and interpret assessments effectively. They know how to create assessments that align with learning objectives, measure student progress, and provide meaningful feedback. The teachers also can use various assessment methods, such as quizzes, tests, projects, and observations, to measure student learning and provide better instructional decisions.

The teachers also agree on the importance of understanding how to teach well, manage classrooms, and use technology for better learning. Understanding the subject matter and effective teaching methods, called pedagogical understanding, are common themes too. Some teachers stressed that knowing your subject well could help in creating assessments that match learning goals. They also agree that recognizing each

student's abilities and attitudes is crucial. In a nutshell, while curriculum differences impact methods, a common commitment to understanding assessments, teaching, subject matter, and effective methods unites these teachers in providing student-focused language education.

The assessment approaches of the five teachers, demonstrated both differences and similarities in their methods of evaluating students. The teachers employed a comprehensive approach, incorporating daily tests, semester exams, and assessments of attitudes and active learning, all aligned with the K13 Curriculum and emphasizing differentiation based on individual abilities. They also utilized diagnostic and formative assessments to understand learning styles, complemented by summative assessments focusing on competencies and attitudes, particularly through the P5 project.

Some teachers emphasized differences in students' abilities within the Merdeka Curriculum. The assessment covers speaking skills, pronunciation, grammar, spelling, and participation, combining daily grades and attitude assessments. They adopt a unique approach by starting with theory and employing various assessment methods in English, emphasizing active participation and group activities to boost confidence. The teachers also utilized the K13 Curriculum for assessment, incorporating attitude assessments through direct observation and cognitive assessments related to the studied topics.

In the comparison of previous studies, it can be seen that the previous studies are more focused on English teachers' understanding and practices related to authentic assessment, their understanding of various types of assessments (such as portfolios and formative assessments), and the assessment literacy of EFL teachers in various contexts. Meanwhile, the researcher in this study more focused on English teachers' understanding of English language assessment and the various assessment methods used by teachers in that environment. Both previous studies and the researcher provide valuable insights into English teachers' understanding of assessment in the context of English language instruction, with different focuses according to the research objectives of each study.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that, English teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare have both differences and similarities in how they assess students. One key difference is how the curriculum, like the Merdeka and K13 Curriculum, affects their assessment methods and teaching styles. Despite these differences, all teachers share a strong emphasis on understanding assessments, knowing how to create, carry out, and understand assessments effectively. It means all five teachers implicitly can differentiate testing, examination and evaluation. Among all five teachers, the most dominant understanding possess among all the teachers was Assessment understanding. They know how to create assessments that align with learning objectives, measure student progress, and provide meaningful feedback. The teachers also can use various assessment methods, such as quizzes, tests, projects, and observations, to measure student learning and provide better instructional decisions. The teachers also agree on the importance of understanding how to teach well, manage classrooms, and use technology for better learning. Understanding the subject matter and effective teaching methods, called pedagogical understanding, are common themes too.

Relating to the teachers' way in assessing the students, all five teachers employ diverse yet effective approaches to assessment within the context of either the K13 Curriculum or the Merdeka Curriculum. They prioritize individualized learning by using a range of assessment methods such as daily tests, semester exams, and attitude assessments. Diagnostic and formative assessments also play a crucial role in understanding learning styles and adapting instruction. Emphasis is placed on competencies and attitudes, with a notable focus on English language skills, including speaking, pronunciation, grammar, spelling, and active participation. Group activities and projects are utilized to enhance confidence and encourage active learning. Overall, the teachers' commitment to differentiation and a comprehensive evaluation framework contributes to a well-rounded educational experience for their students.

RECOMMENDATION

This research recommends to the teachers and lectures who want to get the different insight in assessing their students and also to the next researchers who want to conduct research in different and focused field.

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