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ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study aimedto find the English teachers' perceptions and practices of authentic assessment in the pilot project schools of the 2013 curriculum in Grobogan regency. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, first, a survey was done. Then, to obtain more in-depth information about the teachers' perceptions and practices of authentic assessment, a case study research was conducted. In this case, interview and classroom observation were conducted. Then, the data were analyzed through reading or memoing, describing, and classifying.The study revealed that the teachers have positive perceptions towards authentic assessment as they agreed that the assessment approach is beneficial to assess students' progress and achievement. However, the teachers perceived insufficient time, crowded classes, exhausting and time consuming activities, and also complicated administration as the main problems in applying authentic assessment. There were no significant differences among the teachers on the way they applied authentic assessment. In this case, they preferred written and task basedassessment, performance assessment, and also classroom observation in assessing their students. Nevertheless, in some cases, they did not apply the assessment properly as they did not put the assessment principles into practices.

Keywords: Authentic Assessment; Perceptions; Practices; the 2013 Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Authentic assessment has become a crucial issue in the current curriculum in Indonesia. Since the new curriculum was introduced in 2013, consequently teachers started to engage with the assessment approach. As it is mentioned in *Permendikbud no 66 tahun 2013,* the 2013 curriculum explicitly suggests authentic assessment to be applied in order to evaluate the student's competence. In this case, authentic assessment is believed to adequately measure and evaluate the students' progress and achievement in all domains of competence.

Authentic assessment itself emerges from the constructivism approach. To support this theory, assessment should provide the students with opportunities to construct responses and to apply their competence in the authentic classroom activities. That is why assessment should be an authentic reflection of how the students apply the skills in meaningful ways. Based on the characteristics, O'Malley and Pierce

(1996:4) define authentic assessment as multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities. While Cohen et al. (2008) describe it as assessment which uses real evidence from real situation rather than through the use of tests.

Based on the definition above, there are some techniques which are included as authentic assessment,such as oral interviews, story or text retelling, writing samples, projects and exhibitions, experiments and demonstrations, constructed response items, teacher observation and portfolios(O'Malley and Pierce, 1996). Meanwhile, Cohen et al. (2008) stated that authentic assessment could be applied through portfolios, self and peer assessment, observation, recording, interviews, role play, etc.

As reported by many experts, authentic assessment is beneficial to provide clear and realistic information of students' achievement (Cohen et al., 2008; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Marsh & Wills, 2007). In addition, Winogradand Perkins (1995) argue that many authentic assessment techniques such as teacher's observation will decrease anxiety during the assessment process. Furthermore, O'Malley & Pierce (1996) and Brown (2001) find that some techniques of authentic assessment such as portfolios, self and peer assessment promote students' involvement. Consequently, it will enhance students' participation both in learning and assessment, encourage students' autonomy and enhance their motivation.

However, authentic assessment requires teachers to have proper understanding and commitment to use, because it needs an intensive preparation and procedures to be applied effectively (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996). In this case, teachers play a significant role as the assessors who are supposed to master how to assess their students well. In contrast, the real condition shows that some teachers are not familiar enough with some techniques in authentic assessment such as self-peer assessment, project based assessment and portfolio (Chan, 2006; Oz, 2014). Consequently, without adequate and proper knowledge and skills, some problems will almost certainly appear among teachers who apply the assessment.

For that reason, this study was conducted to find out the English teachers' perceptions and practices of authentic assessment in the 2013 curriculum context. As a result, it hopefully finds out the problems, constraint and also strategies of designing, developing and applying authentic assessment in the English language teaching. Eventually, it will show a clear picture to evaluate the 2013 curriculum implementation, especially in the English assessment context.

METHODOLOGY

In investigating the English teachers' perceptions and practices of authentic assessment, a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach was utilized. Firstly, a survey was conducted to 15 English teachers in 6 junior high schools in Grobogan regency which implemented the 2013 curriculum. Then, to obtain more in-depth information about the teachers' perceptions and practices of authentic assessment, a case study research was conducted. In this case, three English teachers were interviewed. Moreover, their assessment practices, assessment document and products were examined also. Secondly,

the collected data were analyzed separately. The data which were obtained through questionnaire were coded, classified, tabulated, and described. Meanwhile, the qualitative data on the interview, classroom observation and document analysis were analyzed through reading or memoing, describing, and classifying (Gay et al., 2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following part discusses the findings and interpretation of the teachers' perceptions and practices of authentic assessment. Besides, it would explain the influence of the teachers' perceptions on their practices of authentic assessment.

Teachers' Perceptions on Authentic Assessment

The findings were obtained through the questionnaire completed by the 15 teachers. The survey revealed that generally, the teachers perceive authentic assessment positively. It reported thatthe majority of the respondents agree or strongly agree that authentic assessment integrates teaching, learning, and assessment activities.In other words, it is an ongoing process which emphasizes on both process and product of learning. Moreover, the result also told us that the teachers are aware to the importance of authentic assessment to provide clear and sufficient information about students' competence.Besides, the majority teachers agree or strongly agree that this kind of assessment is done through multiple techniques of assessment and through meaningful tasks in real classroom-context activities.

However, the survey found that the majority teachers use some techniques of written assessment such as essay and task based assessment more often than spoken one. Besides, in assessing students' skills, it revealed that performance assessment is used more often than portfolio and project based assessment. Meanwhile, it was reported that teacher's observation is the most preferred technique used by the teachers to assess students' attitude. It indicated that although teachers have good perceptions towards authentic assessment, it did not significantly determine whether they frequently used authentic assessment in their teaching practice. In this case, it showed that the teachers apply paper and pencil test more often than the other techniques.

Besides, the result data on the questionnaire showed that the teachers experienced some benefits in applying authentic assessment. They got many advantages as it is effective to assess students' achievement in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Besides, they benefited the assessment to assess students' knowledge, skills, and attitude, as well as to see students' strength and weaknesses in learning, and to promote students' participation. However, their perceptions varied whether the assessment enhances students' autonomy, motivation, and self-esteem, and whether it lowers students' anxiety for learning and assessment.

Moreover, the findings revealed that the teachers perceived time constraint, crowded classes,time consuming activities and students' involvementas the main problems in applying authentic assessment. Furthermore, it found that the teachers mostly have some discussion with their fellow teachers in order to share and solve their problems in applying authentic assessment. Besides, they also discuss

together to develop teaching documents, and assessment tools.

Meanwhile, the findings through the interview showed that all the three teachers also have positive opinion towards authentic assessment as they thought that it was beneficial to apply such assessment in the 2013 curriculum. Mostly, their perceptions of the assessment concept were influenced by the knowledge they got through the official training of the 2013 curriculum done by the Ministry of Education. Besides, the interview revealed that the teachers are aware of some principles in authentic assessment. First, they highlighted the concept that the assessment is an ongoing process which should be done during the lesson. Their perceptions were reported in the following statements.

"Assessing students' knowledge is simply done during the learning activities. I give them some tasks. Sometimes, I ask them to do some interviews at school or in the environment with teachers or others" (Teacher 01)

"In my understanding, a project based assessment does not only assess the students' product, but it also sees the process of doing the project" (Teacher 04)

"I often ask them to perform dialogs or conversations in front of the class in pairs. Besides, I also frequently ask them some questions" (Teacher 15)

Moreover, the excerpts illustrated that the teachers perceived that such assessments are applied through some meaningful tasks in order to relate the learning activities with students' real life. Besides, it implied that the teachers do not only assess the final product, but also the ongoing process of completing it.

The next findings reported that the teachers have similar perceptions on the preferred techniques of authentic assessment. The study revealed that in fact, the teachers still relied on written assessment as it was easily and simply prepared, applied, and scored. The following excerpts would clearly illustrate their perceptions.

"I usually utilize some different kinds of written tests. But, the most often… are essay, short response, and task based assessment. We know that the tasks do not need many preparations and it is easy to score the students' work" (Teacher 01)

"However, I apply the written ones more often especially essay and task based assessment as they are simply prepared and applied. Besides, written tasks are easy for scoring" (Teacher 04)

"In assessing knowledge, I use written test more effectively. In this case, in the end of a lesson, usually I evaluate what competence that the students' achieve. Then, I got the students' score directly. In doing so, the process does not take too much time." (Teacher 15)

Meanwhile, in assessing students' skills, the teachers preferred performance assessment. It was probably caused by its simplicity in the implementation too. The next statements described their perceptions in applying the technique.

"I often assess my students' skill through looking at their performance. By assessing their performance, I will see their language skills, especially in speaking and writing" (Teacher 01)

"I use performance assessment more often because I want to know students' pronunciation, then err… what is it? …

err... I want to know how they perform the knowledge they have achieved" (Teacher 04)

So, I exactly know the students' language skills which are reflected through the interaction with me and their peers. I often ask them to perform dialogs or conversations in front of the class in pairs" (Teacher 15)

Besides, through the interview both Teacher 01 and Teacher 03 claimed that they also apply portfolios and project based assessment in assessing the students' skill. In this case, only Teacher 02 admitted that she rarely uses the technique. Further, she elaborated on her reasons for doing so through the following statement.

In the past, I asked each student to have their own file of portfolio. However, it is very exhausting to score all their products in many sequences, from draft, revision, final draft, revision again, etc. It is time consuming. I rarely apply project based assessment because of its complicated process and scoring. I usually apply it once in a semester only. (Teacher 04)

At last, the teachers implied similar perceptions that applying single self or peer assessment only would not reflect valid and accurate assessment. Thus, they used observation as triangulation in assessing students' attitude. Their opinions were described through their statements below.

"In assessing attitude… I often observe my students in the classroom. I will see how they control their feeling, how they behave, etc." (Teacher 01)

"In other case, if I only apply self-assessment or peer assessment, it is also not fair and valid. So, I apply the three techniques in balance, in the same proportion" (Teacher 04)

"I select 1 student in each group as a leader. Then, I give them the checklist, the scoring rubric, and the criteria to assess the members in each group. And, I myself will observe and assess them through my observation checklist I have prepared" (Teacher 15)

The next findings showed that the teachers experienced some benefits in applying authentic assessment. They argued that by doing the assessment, they would evaluate their students' progress and achievement easily. The opinion was stated as follows.

"At that time, I asked them to finish it in some minutes and to rearrange it as quickly as they could, and the students did the tasks very enthusiastically." (Teacher 01)

"The benefit is through authentic assessment we may improve the students' awareness of having broad knowledge, good skill, and also good attitude. That's the benefit. The competence is achieved through authentic assessment". (Teacher 04)

"When I assess their skill, I can see each student's strength and weakness in certain competence. That is why, by applying such assessment, as a teacher I will know and understand all my students well." (Teacher 15)

Moreover, the following statements illustrated that the students' interest and motivation are increased when authentic assessment was applied. The teachers thought that authentic assessment is beneficial to enhance students' interest and participation both in learning and assessment activities.

"In my opinion, my students become more motivated to learn new knowledge. Besides, they are motivated to perform their skills well and confidently" (Teacher 04)

"And my students immediately realized that they were being assessed. They knew and were aware. So that they were motivated to cooperate and participate in their group" (Teacher 15)

Meanwhile, the interview revealed an interesting finding in Teacher 01's case. In this case, Teacher 01 claimed that she had no significant problems, while the two other teachers admitted that they faced some constraints in implementing authentic assessment. In this case, Teacher 01 only once stated about her disappointment.

"Yes, I have ever felt disappointed. At that time, I gave an assignment which must be done in a week. When I asked them to submit it, some students haven't done the assignments by reasoning" (Teacher 01)

On the other hand, both Teacher 04 and Teacher 15 perceived that authentic assessment is complicated in some cases. Their perceptions were described clearly through the following statements.

"In applying project based assessment, I think the preparation is very excessive and complicated" (Teacher 04)

"It seems that it is very time consuming. In doing so, sometimes I cannot assess all my students because it is very exhausting, etc." (Teacher 04)

"Honestly, it takes too much time and sometimes it becomes a burden to me. Because sometimes the time provided at school is not enough to assess all students" (Teacher 04)

The above statements explicitly described Teacher 04's difficulties as she found that complicated administration, time consuming and exhausting activities, and also large numbers of students become her problems in applying authentic assessment. Likewise, the following excerpts illustrated Teacher 15's problems in implementing authentic assessment.

"It happens as in my school, the classes are very heterogeneous. It is impossible for me to assess all the 40 students in each class. It is clear enough that our constraint is the big classes, which consist of 40 students" (Teacher 15)

"Authentic assessment is time consuming, I think. And it is also exhausting. Besides, it also consumes err… takes everything. We have to pay much attention to students" (Teacher 15)

At last, through the interview, it revealed that in facing the problems in applying authentic assessment, the teachers usually benefited from teachers' forum discussion, especially in developing the administration. Besides, they also shared their problems and experiences to solve the problems. The following statements clearly showed their strategies in reducing difficulties in applying authentic assessment.

"I have ever shared with my fellows at school or other school. At school is more often" (Teacher 01)

"Usually, we discuss about assessment, and anything related to teaching learning. When we face any problem and difficulties, we discuss and share each experience to solve the problem" (Teacher 04)

"…, in developing a worksheet for my students I often discuss with my fellow

English teachers at school. For example, when I teach about "notice", I will discuss about how to make the proper assessment tasks and worksheet" (Teacher 15)

Teachers' Practices
Through the classroom observation, the study revealed that there were no significant differences between the public and private teachers in the way they apply authentic assessment. It revealed that teachers' professional status also did not take much effect in the assessment practice. However, the school management seemed to play important role in the teachers' practices. The data showed that the teachers in the public schools had more well organized administration than the one in the private school.

The findings showed that the three teachers applied the assessment in a similar way. In assessing knowledge, they applied written techniques more often as it was simply in preparing, applying, and scoring. Meanwhile, in the skills evaluation, the teachers assessed their students through performance assessment. In contrast, the use of portfolios and project based assessment were not clearly found in this study. Meanwhile, the teachers preferred observation and peer assessment as they thought that self-assessment would not show a valid result of assessment.

Through the document analysis, it revealed the teachers' weaknesses in preparing the assessment tools, including developing the instruments, determining the indicators, assessment rubrics, checklist, criteria, rating scale, etc. Recently, the teachers only copied the models of assessment tools provided by the curriculum document instead of modifying or adapting it to their class' characteristics. As a result, sometimes the tools were not appropriately match with the real class condition. Thus, it revealed that actually, the teachers did not have clear understanding, enough knowledge and skill in applying an ideal authentic assessment.

Moreover, if examined holistically it became clear that in most cases, the teachers were simply engaging with authentic assessment on a technical level only, without engaging the students in continuous activities which would show their progress of achievement. For example, in using portfolios, the teachers only asked the students to write without giving chances to revise, and make it better. Moreover, the teachers did not used proper instrument to assess the product as they directly scored it without assessing each indicator. It implied that the teachers have begun to engage with authentic assessment but still needs guidance in developing the assessment tools and applying it.

Influence of Teachers' Perceptions on the Teachers' Practices
The study found that the teachers' perceptions towards authentic assessment had a significant effect in their practices. As they have a positive opinion towards its implementation in the 2013 curriculum, the teachers tried to fully apply it in their teaching learning process. The result of this study showed that the teachers tried to emerge from the use of conventional assessment techniques to authentic assessment approach as they started to use some new techniques of assessment such as portfolios, project based assessment, observation, self and peer assessment.

However, their positive perceptions were not always successfully reflected into the practice. As it was explained in the previous findings, the teachers also perceived that other factors such as limited time, big classes, complicated administration, and over-loaded work in scoring influenced the implementation of the assessment approach. Besides, the teachers also thought that some techniques were new for them. As the result, their perceptions on the problems in applying authentic assessment also greatly affected their practices. In this case, the teachers tended to only apply some techniques which would not become more burden for them. For example, they applied written and task based assessment more often than other techniques.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of data interpretation and discussion above, the conclusions could be drawn that the teachers have positive perceptions towards authentic assessment. However, the teachers perceived insufficient time, large numbers of students, exhausting and time consuming activities, and also complicated administration as the main problems in applying authentic assessment in the 2013 curriculum.

Meanwhile, the analysis of classroom observation, teachers' assessment documents and students' products revealed the teachers' practices of applying authentic assessment. The study showed that the teachers applied the assessment in a similar way. It revealed that they preferred written and task based assessment, performance assessment, and classroom observation since it was simple in preparing, applying, and scoring. In contrast, the use of unfamiliar techniques such as portfolios and project based assessment were not clearly found in this study. Moreover, sometimes the teachers did not apply the assessment appropriately as they did not put the assessment principles into practice. In some cases, they directly assessed the students without utilizing proper instruments like question-answer, scoring rubrics, criteria, rating scale, checklist, etc.

Furthermore, this study revealed that the teachers' perceptions towards authentic assessment played a significant effect in their practices. As they had positive opinion towards authentic assessment in the 2013 curriculum, the teachers tried to fully apply the assessment approach in their teaching-learning activities. However, their perceptions on the problems in applying authentic assessment also greatly affected their practices. In this case, the teachers tended to only apply some techniques which would not become more burden for them.

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