Classroom-Based Assessment Practices during the COVID-19 Outbreak in Indonesia: EFL Students' Perceptions and Challenges

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Abstract

The perceptions of Indonesian EFL students on classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak and the challenges they faced have received little attention. This phenomenon is the basis for why this research was conducted. To collect the data, questionnaires, and interviews were applied to 20 senior high school students from grades eleventh and twelfth in Indonesia. Using a mixed-method design, this study declared that most students preferred classroom-based assessment during the COVID-19 outbreak, which was conducted online rather than traditional assessment before the outbreak. Classroom-based assessment practices during COVID-19 are considered more convenient and flexible, feel relaxed and less anxious, and improve their self-regulated learning. Moreover, Indonesian EFL students also revealed the challenges they faced in completing the assessment, such as internet network problems when the weather was terrible, the data package they used during the learning and assessment process being extravagant, and the lack of physical interaction with teachers and classmates. Further discussion about classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak is necessary for more effective implementation and to positively affect EFL students and teachers.

Keywords: Challenges, classroom-based assessment, online language assessment, perceptions

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak accelerated a problem in the educational field that was already escalating by forcing a rapid transition from face-to-face to online learning (Hodges et al., 2020). In particular, when assessing students' learning and participation, teachers are requested to teach online while having no professional training in online teaching techniques or standards (Borup & Evmenova, 2019). Classroom-based assessment, or assessment in general, is one of the crucial responsibilities for teachers to perform during online teaching and learning (Hung & Chou, 2015; Lewis, 2020). It denotes whether or not

students are capable of achieving the goal and, depending on the findings, aids teachers in enhancing the quality of learning and instruction (Iskandar et al., 2021). Furthermore, the assessment's findings are crucial for the educational field, especially for policymakers and stakeholders, to lead them in the future.

Numerous experts have discussed their respective theories regarding classroom-based assessment. From a technical perspective, Mcmillan (2013) described the classroom-based assessment as a series of tasks that involve acquiring data on students' learning, evaluating the data, and using the data to guide the upcoming teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, from a conventional perspective, the classroom-based assessment provides formative and summative purposes, commonly referred to as formative and summative assessment. In some circumstances, summative assessment can be applied as a formative tool and vice versa (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Dolin et al., 2018). Contrary to external standardized exams, classroom-based assessment refers to the assessment of student learning in the classroom (Leung, 2014). Because classroom-based assessment is primarily conducted in the classroom instead of psychometrically oriented assessment, it is crucial to consider students' perspectives and understandings of the curriculum and assessment requirements (Lewkowicz & Leung, 2021). In short, classroom-based assessment is an activity to assess students' learning outcomes carried out in the classroom to know students' learning progress and as a reference for the following teaching and learning process.

Students' perceptions are crucial in making good decisions regarding the teaching and learning process. It assists instructors in determining the efficiency of their instruction (Iskandar et al., 2021). According to Amalia (2018), students' perceptions of online assessment are critical because they provide educators with insights into what students believe about conducting assessments online, the challenges they encounter, the kind of online assessment they prefer, and how to perform realistic online assessments that fulfill students' requirements. Students' perceptions will affect motivation in the online classroom (Barbera et al., 2016). The hierarchy of needs hypothesis by Maslow, according to Ehiobuche (2013), suggests that someone's essential and urgent demands should be fulfilled before more advanced-level learning requirements can be met. Moreover, Maslow thought that internal reasons drive people and that motivation is founded on fulfilling a set of needs (Ediger, 2015; Ehiobuche, 2013).

During these past few years, many studies have been conducted on perceptions of assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak from both the students' and teachers' points of view. For instance, Tam (2021) investigated students' perceptions of and learning practices in online timed take-home examinations. Another study was also conducted by Fitriyah & Jannah (2021) regarding students' and teachers' perceptions of the online assessment effect in EFL classrooms in Indonesia. The last study is about students' perception of the use of online assessment at the University Putra Malaysia during the COVID-19 outbreak conducted by Iskandar et al. (2021). These three types of research were conducted at higher education level or university. In contrast, the current study was conducted in senior high school and concentrated on the perceptions and challenges of EFL students in Indonesia regarding the classroom-based assessment practices that the teacher has conducted. Brown (2014) stated that the most crucial thing to do to assist students in learning is probably assessment. Some students may dislike grading, but if they want to

graduate, they must participate in the assessment procedure that the teacher has developed and implemented. Accordingly, the following research questions are addressed in this study; 1) what are Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak? Moreover, 2) what challenges do Indonesian EFL students face in completing classroom-based assessments during the COVID-19 outbreak?

METHOD

The study proposed to investigate the perceptions of Indonesian EFL students on the practices of classroom-based assessment and the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 outbreak. A mixed-method design was applied in this current study. According to Heigham and Crocker, a qualitative method emphasizes gathering primarily textual material and analyzing it via interpretative analysis (2009). The qualitative method uses open-ended questions to elicit additional information from respondents. Meanwhile, a quantitative method works with numerical data or may be transformed into numbers. Sheard (2018) defines quantitative methods as statistical procedures dealing with the arrangement, explanation, analysis, and numerical data display.

Furthermore, 20 senior high school students from grades eleventh and twelfth in Indonesia were chosen to participate in this study. The participants were chosen using purposive sampling with the consideration that the students engaged in a classroom-based assessment in their EFL classes during the COVID-19 outbreak. The 20 eligible EFL students were from SMA, MA, and SMK in different areas in Indonesia. They were sorted by survey link through social media platforms like Telegram and Twitter. A set of questionnaires and interviews adopted from Iskandar et al. (2021) were used to collect the data. The questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia using Likert scale data to avoid misinterpretation. The questionnaire result was collected through Google form consisting of 30 close-ended questions related to their perceptions of classroom-based assessment and their challenges in completing it. Meanwhile, the interview was conducted after the questionnaire had been done. A numeration formula and thematic analysis were employed to examine the responses submitted to the Google form. Gerald Holton pioneered thematic analysis in the 1970s, and it is today acknowledged as a unique approach to social study with a well-defined set of procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In conclusion, thematic analysis is a technique for data analysis that aids in discovering subjects and patterns of meaning within a data collection in connection to a specific research issue.

Table 1. The demographic information of the participants

Variables	(n)	(%)
Gender		
Male	5	25%
Female	15	75%
	20	**100%**
Grade		
11th	7	35%
12th	13	65%
	20	**100%**

Age		
15	1	5%
16	5	25%
17	10	50%
18	4	20%
	20	**100%**

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this part, research findings will be presented, emphasizing Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak and the challenges they face in completing the assessment.

Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak

Table 2. List of statements about the perceptions of Indonesian EFL students on classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak

Items	Statements (Iskandar et al., 2021)
1	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 improves the quality of my learning.
2	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 improves my English skills.
3	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 enhances my self-regulated learning.
4	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 provides direct feedback on my performance.
5	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 provides an unbiased or fair assessment.
6	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 does not allow me to cheat.
7	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 is appropriate for all students.
8	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 is in accordance with all the materials taught.
9	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 reduces stress levels in facing the tests.
10	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 feels more comfortable and flexible.
11	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 motivates me to study the materials.
12	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 is easier than assessment conducted before the outbreak.
13	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 is more effective than assessment conducted before the outbreak.
14	I prefer online English assessments, such as quizzes, presentations, and other forms of the online assessment.
15	I prefer online English assessment to traditional assessment.

Table 2 shows a list of statements in the questionnaire that have been responded to by the participants. Fifteen statements highlighted Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of classroom-based assessment practices during COVID-19.
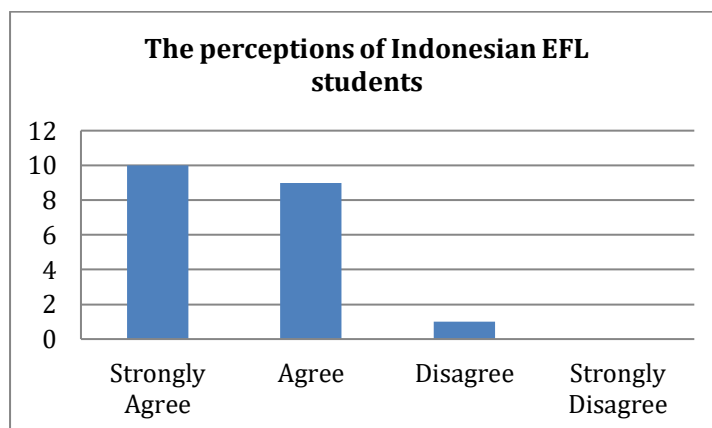

Figure 1. The result of Indonesian EFL students' perceptions

Furthermore, figure 1 summarizes students' perceptions of classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak. The findings reveal that 10 of 20 students (50%) strongly agreed, nine students (45%) agreed, one student (5%) disagreed, and 0 students (0%) strongly disagreed with the statements given. Since every student has unique psychological quirks, skills, cognitive preferences, and cognitive qualities, they will respond differently to the new pandemic (Hindal et al., 2009). Motivation, memory, comprehension, and relaxation are internal psychological learning components that interact with various external influences (Pascu et al., 2023). This demonstrates how a student's personality influences their engagement in and methods for learning (Lynam & Cachia, 2018; Tam, 2021). Most of them stated that classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak improved learning quality, enhanced self-regulated learning, and improved English skills. In addition, they felt that classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak were more flexible and convenient, more accessible than the assessment conducted before the outbreak, reduced their stress level in facing the tests, and motivated them to study the material more. However, in some statements, for instance, classroom-based assessment during the COVID-19 outbreak does not allow cheating, they expressed that they disagreed.

In addition, students' answers also support the results of this questionnaire during the interview. Most students expressed that their English skills improved because they could freely explore additional material on the Internet. They also gain a lot of new vocabulary from listening to music and watching English movies. It is possible to deduce that students' self-regulated learning abilities improved during the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, factors from the learning and assessment process conducted by the teacher during the COVID-19 outbreak also had an effect. The teacher made the learning and assessment atmosphere comfortable and more enjoyable for students. Here are some of the students' answers:

"I gained many new vocabularies since learning during the COVID-19 outbreak, which significantly impacted me." (FY)

"My English skills improved because I could explore English through music, movies, etcetera." (FB)
"I feel that during COVID-19, my skills have improved, and I was freer to search for additional material on the internet." (ZA)
"The assessment was done through presentations, Zoom meetings, group discussions, and assignments." (FY)
"The assessment in my class was quite good because my teacher interestingly presented the material and could guide the students to participate in the assessment process actively. Usually, quizzes are held as well as short questions and answers." (NM)

Moreover, the students declared that classroom-based assessment during the COVID-19 outbreak was more effective and flexible. Some students' statements are as follows:

"I think classroom-based assessment practice during the COVID-19 outbreak was more effective because there was much time to explore English through games, videos, and other media. In addition, the teacher was required to be creative in giving assignments during the outbreak, so sometimes we were ordered to make English videos, which also demanded our activeness." (VA)
"The assessment was more effective during the outbreak because we students were taught to instill better self-awareness." (ER)
"During the outbreak, when I was doing my assignment, and I did not know, I could immediately look for the answer via the internet." (FN)

The findings of this current study affirm that assessment promotes learning in various ways that can bring about positive changes in the learning process. Classroom-based assessment practices carried out by EFL teachers during the COVID-19 outbreak greatly affected students learning through a constructive approach (Tam, 2021). This aids students learning through engaging in active behavior or can be addressed as self-regulated learning (Biggs, 1995). In this case, for instance, students review the material given or delivered by the teacher, ask for help and feedback from their teacher, and look for additional helpful information from the internet. In this sense, classroom-based assessment during the COVID-19 outbreak is a means to channel students' energies and support students' self-regulated learning. The changes in the form and difficulty level from face-to-face to online assessment encourage students to advance their learning approach from traditional learning to more in-depth and more active learning. This is in line with the findings presented by Bengtsson (2019). Students can discover their own mistakes and weaknesses, increasing their motivation to continue learning and expanding their knowledge. This is also in agreement with Fitriyah & Jannah (2021). They clarified that high learning motivation might result in autonomous learning.

Furthermore, this study also shows that classroom-based assessment practices during COVID-19 are more flexible and convenient. Students have the option to complete their assignments whenever and wherever they want, as the findings described by Spivey & McMillan (2014) and also Khan & Khan (2018) that online assessment allows both teachers and students to adjust when and where the testing can be conducted. The flexibility then makes students have less anxiety and stress levels because the assessment does not receive direct supervision from the teacher. This finding confirms the previous finding by Fitriyah

& Jannah (2021), which explained that due to the absence of control, the online assessment did not cause students anxiety during testing. In theory, it is preferable to administer a test when students feel less anxious (Aydin et al., 2020). However, this differs from what Tam (2021) stated, that due to time limits, more incredible difficulty, and unforeseen technological issues, online assessment causes stress and anxiety among students.

Additionally, classroom-based assessment practices during COVID-19 are considered more convenient and flexible, which makes students feel relaxed and less anxious. This is in line with the findings of Bengtsson (2019) and Tam (2021), who explained that the community prefers online assessment because it requires more time and puts less strain on students. They also explained that with the appropriate design and implementation, online assessment could offer a good change in the learning approach so that the teaching and learning process is more in-depth. However, Iskandar et al. (2021) argued that students prefer traditional assessments to online assessments conducted during the outbreak. Students think traditional assessments provide more effective feedback and have lower levels of academic dishonesty than online assessments.

The challenges Indonesian EFL students faced in completing classroom-based assessments during the COVID-19 outbreak

Table 3. List of statements about the challenges Indonesian EFL students faced in completing classroom-based assessments during the COVID-19 outbreak

Items	Statements (Iskandar et al., 2021)
1	Lack of adequate physical space and facilities during classroom-based assessment during COVID-19.
2	Lack of access to the library during the classroom-based assessment during COVID-19.
3	Lack of internet access during classroom-based assessment during COVID-19.
4	There are disturbances at home during the classroom-based assessment during COVID-19.
5	Lack of motivation during classroom-based assessment during COVID-19.
6	There are economic challenges (internet data package fees) during the classroom-based assessment during COVID-19.
7	Lack of feedback from the teacher during the classroom-based assessment during COVID-19.
8	Classroom-based assessment during COVID-19 makes me nervous.
9	Lack of awareness about internet skills and reluctance to take responsibility for completing given questions/tasks.
10	There are technological challenges (lack of technological knowledge or unavailability of technological equipment).
11	I have difficulty understanding the assignments given by the teacher during the classroom-based assessment during COVID-19.
12	I have to think fast in doing assessment tasks such as quizzes, tests, and others.
13	I have a hard time answering essay questions quickly.
14	Limited time in working on the questions given.
15	The tasks assigned during the assessment during the COVID-19 outbreak are more difficult than before the outbreak.

Like in the previous section, table 3 presents a list of statements in the questionnaire with 15 items. These statements highlighted Indonesian EFL students' challenges in completing classroom-based assessments during the COVID-19 outbreak. Statements about Indonesian EFL students' perceptions and challenges to classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak were combined and distributed to the participants.
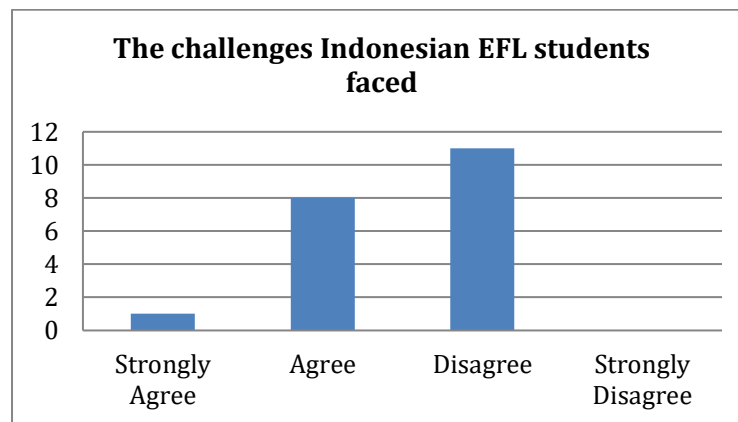

Figure 2. Indonesian EFL students, challenges in completing classroom-based assessments during the COVID-19 outbreak

Figure 2 summarizes Indonesian EFL students' challenges in completing classroom-based assessments during the COVID-19 outbreak. In contrast to the responses to the questionnaire from students' perceptions which showed almost perfect results (95%) agreed and strongly agreed, the responses to the challenges questionnaire faced by students were relatively balanced. The findings reported that 11 of 20 students (55%) disagreed, eight students (40%) agreed, one student (5%) strongly agreed, and 0 students (0%) strongly disagreed. Several challenges related to technology and internet access during classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak did not pose a significant challenge for students. It is infrequent nowadays to find students who do not understand the use of smartphones and internet access (Adiarsi et al., 2015). The same response was also given to statements about students' psychological state during classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak. Students did not feel nervous during the assessment process and tended to have motivation and awareness to complete the assessment given by the teacher. Meanwhile, during the outbreak, students experienced challenges during classroom-based assessment practices, such as disturbances at home, increased internet data package fees, and lack of access to the school library.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted with participants to discover the most dominant challenges faced by participants during classroom-based assessment practices during the outbreak. The majority of students answered that the most dominant challenges were internet network problems when the weather was terrible, the data package they used during the learning and assessment process being extravagant, and the lack of physical interaction with teachers and classmates, which made it difficult for students to

discuss with their friends when given group assignments by the teacher. Here are some interview answers from students:

> *So far, there have been no challenges for me. It is just that sometimes the internet signal is not good when the weather is terrible so it hinders my work. (ER)*
> *It was not easy to interact with the teacher because the teacher often responded slowly. (FI)*
> *Economic factors. There was a waste of internet data packages, and teachers were less concerned with the student's learning development. (CN)*
> *The biggest challenge was when the internet data package ran out. (AR)*
> *I could not discuss appropriately with friends, so group assignments did not go well. (DY)*

Although classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak offer many positive effects for students, particularly students who prefer classroom-based assessment during the COVID-19 outbreak to traditional assessment, challenges during the assessment process also emerge. This study expresses several challenges EFL students face in Indonesia, including internet network problems and the lack of physical interaction with teachers and classmates. The finding confirms the findings of Fitriyah & Jannah (2021), who stated that students and teachers are all in agreement that the internet connection throughout the assessment process is the most concerning aspect. As it has also been stated in some research that internet connections play a significant role in how well online assessment work (Mohamadi, 2018; Spivey & McMillan, 2014; Wang et al., 2014; Wihastyanang & Latief, 2018). Teachers are concerned about the possibility of misinterpretation of student test results. Their research also showed that teachers and students are less engaged in online assessment. It is possible since there was no direct interaction during the online assessment. As Obasa et al. (2013) stated, a sense of learning and belonging is enhanced by observing teachers directly during face-to-face teaching.

In their research, Iskandar et al. (2021) also revealed that inconsistent internet connection is one of the most significant issues students confront when conducting online assessments. Most urban or rural students struggled to obtain a reliable internet connection to complete online tests or quizzes, give online presentations, and submit assignments punctually. Students who have difficulties accessing technology and the internet will also find it challenging to complete the assessment (Azmina et al., 2017). Moreover, Iskandar et al. (2021) explained that most students encountered communication issues when completing online assessments because there was no two-way communication and no immediate feedback from their teachers or peers.

CONCLUSION

Implementing classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak has underpinned this study. This study investigated the perceptions of Indonesian EFL students on classroom-based assessment practices and the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 outbreak. From a psychological aspect, the students feel relaxed and less anxious during the classroom-based assessment practices during the COVID-19 outbreak. It is also considered more convenient and flexible. This assessment also motivates students to improve their self-regulated learning. Furthermore, Indonesian EFL students also revealed the challenges they faced in completing the assessment, such as internet network problems when the weather was terrible, the data package they used during the learning and assessment process being extravagant, and the lack of physical interaction with

teachers and classmates, which makes it difficult for students to discuss with their friends when given group assignments by the teacher.

However, this study still has many weaknesses, particularly the limited number of participants, which causes limited research results obtained. Since implementing classroom-based assessment practices in online EFL classes tends to be new in Indonesia, additional investigations with broader sample size and more supporting materials are recommended to acquire more accurate research results. By considering the perceptions and challenges faced by EFL students in Indonesia, it is expected that EFL teachers and test developers can improve the development of online assessments so that they can be implemented more optimally in the teaching and learning process and positively affect students' English skills.

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