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A Novice Teachers' Familiarity with Assessment for Learning in EFL Classroom

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Abstract

This case study aims to find out a novice teacher's knowledge of assessment for learning (AFL) and which AFL strategies are frequently used and considered helpful to enhance students' English proficiency. This study digs into the experience of an English teacher who has been teaching for two years in a secondary school in South Sumatra, Indonesia. The data of the study were mainly obtained from interviews and teaching artifacts. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that the teacher's understanding of AFL is sufficient to implement AFL. On the other hand, support from the principal, fellow teachers, and students for the teacher to conduct the AFL was perceived as lacking. Despite the limitations, the teacher reported an attempt to conduct AFL using several strategies. Sharing learning intentions and success criteria with students, asking questions, and classroom discussion are among the strategies that are considered helpful. In contrast, teacher feedback and self and peer assessment are considered less effective. The findings imply a lack of teachers' professional competence, particularly in conducting AFL. Suggestions are drawn to address the issues.

Keywords: Assessment for learning, Assessment strategies, EFL teaching, formative assessment,

INTRODUCTION

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Assessment in education is important in teaching and learning since it determines which learning components will be provided (Baird et al., 2017). Formative assessment is one of the assessments that English teachers can use to measure student learning outcomes. Formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning, is described as a strategy that focuses on everyday experiences involving instructors and students in order to monitor student learning attainment levels and offer appropriate feedback as needed (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Stiggins, 2002; Klenowski, 2009; Chen et al., 2014; z, 2014; Hawe & Dixon, 2016; Gan et al., 2017; Kippers et al., 2018; Black & Wiliam, 2018; Deeley, 2018). Formative Assessment (FA) or Assessments for Learning (AFL) strive to obtain insight into students' learning processes in order to improve future learning and offer appropriate feedback to students (Heitink et al., 2016).

AFL is the daily evaluation of teachers, students, and peers with the goal of seeking, gathering, and responding to information in order to improve continuous learning (Klenowski, 2009). As a result, more evidence should be provided to teachers in order to improve less beneficial teaching and learning, and students should be included in the process (Stiggins, 2002). Furthermore, an assessment for learning is any evaluation that may offer information to instructors and students that can be utilized as feedback in learning and making decisions regarding students' improvement. Black et al., 2004; Heitink et al., 2016). As part of the AFL strategy, Black et al., (2004) mention questioning, feedback through grading, peer assessment and self-assessment, and the formative use of summative examinations. Sharing learning goals and success criteria, asking questions and having class discussions, offering feedback, and self and peer evaluation are all crucial AFL tactics in the classroom, according to Kippers et al., (2018). To summarize, AFL is a daily assessment that is conducted on a regular basis by teachers, students, and peers in order to provide appropriate feedback and gather information about students.

In addition, since the both assessments provide relevant feedback, the terms AFL and formative assessment are used interchangeably. The type of the feedback, its substance, and how students absorb and apply it in writing and classroom interactions are all important parts of AFL techniques (Kleij et al., 2015; Carless, 2017; Panadero et al., 2018). AFL's major strategies include clarifying and communicating learning objectives and success criteria, asking questions and leading class discussions, providing feedback, self-evaluation, and peer assessment. (Stiggins, 2002; Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Klenowski, 2009; Carless, 2017; Kippers et al., 2018). All AFL practices are carried out in the classroom by teachers, but the active participants must be student-centered (Klenowski, 2009; Sambell et al., 2013; Heitink et al., 2016; Kleij et al., 2015). No-hands-up, traffic light, waiting time, cheerful faces, and two stars & a wishes are common AFL methods taught in AFL classes (William et al., 2004; Black et al., 2004; Gardner et al., 2011). The teacher makes every effort to provide the greatest feedback available in order to assist students learn more successfully (Zhang & Zheng, 2018).

Several researches have explored into instructors' and students' perceptions on utilizing AFL in the English language classroom. They demonstrated the significance of keeping a positive attitude regarding all AFL initiatives. To fit the essential ideas of AFL, teachers think that a positive attitude toward employing evaluation for learning procedures is required (Kippers et al., 2018). Furthermore, DeLuca et al. (2018) discovered that by researching students' viewpoints, students are more inclined to use and accept teachers' feedback and success criteria to aid their learning process. The two AFL processes that are least used or appreciated by all students are self-evaluation and peer assessment (MacLellan, 2001; Kippers et al., 2018). MacLellan (2001), DeLuca et al., (2018), and Kippers et al., (2018)

Furthermore, teachers noticed that pupils are only evaluated when they are ready, and the majority of students do not receive feedback on their learning (MacLellan, 2001). Another research showed some discrepancies between students and instructors, such as teachers assuming that using AFL in the classroom will result in big changes, but students are skeptical (Pat-El et al., 2013). Teachers are perceived to be more educated about their exams, therefore this occurs. Pupils, on the other hand, are less aware of the aim and objectives of the assessment, which leads to AFL failing to produce meaningful progress for students.

Several studies have found a lack of favorable views regarding different AFL tactics, such as instructors and students viewing just particular AFL strategies as vital. In contrast, other AFL tactics are either disregarded or employed sparingly in the evaluation. Sharing learning objectives and achievement criteria, getting verification regarding student learning task through questions and classroom discussion, providing feedback, and doing peer and self-assessment are all basic AFL methods in classroom practice (Kippers et al., 2018). Chen et al. (2014) discovered that Students were still skeptical of their classmates' feedback evaluation and saw academics as a good source of feedback in classroom assessment techniques in a study conducted at two Chinese institutions. Another finding is that some Dutch instructors employ strategies that do not adhere to authorized AFL practices and ideals (For example, teachers may utilize feedback not to improve teaching but to penalize students who perform poorly.) Students are regarded to be weak in peer and self-evaluation knowledge and abilities (Kippers et al., 2018). In

addition, students in a public-school district in Southeastern Ontario require long-term instruction in the concept and application of AFL because AFL is a new concept for them and they have not fully internalized the AFL approach as a study habit (DeLuca et al., 2018). The unsatisfactory results were obtained primarily in the classroom prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the researchers wanted to investigate how teachers' knowledge and experience with AFL have changed in the post-pandemic era. Indeed, few studies of AFL in education have been conducted (e.g., feedback, task assessment, success criteria). Researchers, on the other hand, are curious about the teacher's knowledge of AFL, as well as which AFL strategies are commonly used and thought to be beneficial in improving students' English proficiency. This study digs into the experience of an English teacher who has been teaching for two years in a secondary school in South Sumatra, Indonesia. AFL implementation, both online and offline learning during the pandemic and post-pandemic, is almost the same conditions. There are several challenges on the side of the students because they carry out learning activities from home during the pandemic, and student study hours are also limited. Based on some of the problems mentioned above, the research questions in this study are "What is the novice teacher's knowledge of the conception of assessment for learning" and "What AFL strategies are frequently used and considered helpful in EFL teaching?"

METHOD

Research Design

In this study, the case study was used as a research methodology. Based on their understanding of the case, the researchers intended to learn about and investigate a phenomenon. In line with the case study, there are three forms of case study analysis, namely explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive case studies (Yin, 2018). In this study, the researchers used an exploratory research form because they wanted to explore a problem that existed and wasn't very well understood yet, but it would not provide definitive results. Researchers used this study as a medium to recognize issues, focusing on the teacher's knowledge and experience in using AFL and what strategies are helpful and often used in the ELT classroom. Data collection used retrospective studies that retrospectively maintain memories through current perspectives, and retrospective data allow representatives of events, experiences, and more rich meaning for individuals (O'Rand, 1998). In sum, the researchers objectively describe the teacher's condition in light of the teacher's prior experiences.

Research Context and Participant

This study was conducted in a junior high school in South Sumatra, Indonesia. The school is a private Islamic school. Participant in this study was a 7th-grade teacher at a junior high school. Participant was chosen based on several indicators, including the teachers who had utilized AFL in their classrooms. The researcher initially ascertains which teachers use AFL before choosing the participants. Then look into it to make sure the assessment teachers are using is AFL and not another method.

Nana (pseudonym) is a new teacher who has been at the school for about two years after graduating from college. She worked as a permanent tutor at a tutoring center

for over a year before beginning at the school. This research investigated her two-week experience teaching AFL following the outbreak. This study was conducted in the post-pandemic period under similar conditions to the pandemic period, with the exception that the problem was with students who were required to study from home and for shorter periods during the pandemic. However, in terms of learning, offline and online learning are the same. This story showcases her interactions with students and her role in classroom assessment.

Instrument

The researchers sent out several interview questions in advance so that participants could prepare answers and deliver them during the interview. The questions included five about the concept of AFL and five more about implementing AFL in the classroom (covering AFL strategies that are considered helpful and often used). Furthermore, the researchers documented and summarized all interaction outcomes in field notes. The researchers took critical information revealed by the participant through teaching artifacts of her class activities while making these field notes. These field notes may be utilized to triangulate data, augment interview data, and give fresh insights about the AFL activities that teachers can participate in during a pandemic.

Data Collection

The data for this study was gathered through interviews and the collection of teaching artifacts (i.g. photos and teaching videos). Based on existing data, the current study examined teachers' knowledge and experience with AFL practice in the classroom, as well as several AFL strategies. The data collection process began with an hour-long semi-structured informal interview. The researchers conducted interviews in which they asked approximately ten open-ended questions. The researchers conducted the interviews for about 50 minutes. In this interview, the participant discussed her experience implementing AFL during the post-covid-19 pandemic. ¹

Another source of data was teaching artifacts from the teacher's AFL practice in class. All data collecting activities were carried out in Indonesian so that participants could freely relate their stories and express themselves, eliminating misunderstandings between researchers and participants. After that, the data is translated into English. The researchers validated the results for the participant before drafting the final research results to retain the story's uniqueness and secure participant consent. All information obtained throughout the study, as well as the final text agreed upon by the participants that is directly relevant to their personal experiences, must be kept by the researchers. The final report will be released when the participant has approved the outcome.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study by coding the information gathered in the field. It entails reading data over and over again, coding and categorizing data extracts, and reorganizing under thematic headings. Furthermore, the fundamental steps of coding are becoming acquainted with the data, generating initial code, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing reports/manuscripts. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researchers reviewed and reread textual data, as well as coded interview transcripts and field notes, paying great attention to classroom interactions and incorporating the teacher as a key position bearer in the implementation. The researchers learnt about employing AFL during the learning process as a

consequence of the teacher's knowledge and experience. Furthermore, several AFL components have been discovered here (i.g. sharing learning intention, classroom discussion, feedback, self, and peer assessment). Furthermore, some teaching artifacts are used to validate and enrich research findings. The preliminary results are then sent to the participant for review and feedback before being published based on her approval.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents teachers' knowledge and experience in implementing AFL (including AFL strategies often used and which AFL strategies find helpful for classroom implementation). This study chose and displayed transcripts from interviews that demonstrated various AFL strategies.

1. Teacher's knowledge of AFL

According to the findings, the teacher can convey AFL's fundamental ideas and concepts. Even though the teacher cannot go into great detail, it may still be argued that the teacher is sufficiently knowledgeable about AFL to implement it in the classroom. Students must actively participate in the assessment while implementing the AFL strategy.

"As far as I know, AFL is a daily assessment done by teachers and students to gauge how well they are doing with the content being taught".

Thus understanding the AFL principle makes the teachers can determine the goals that need to be met during learning. It's essential to keep in mind that learning objectives are crucial because they relate to what pupils must accomplish. The teacher can explain the goal of all in this situation.

"The objective is to monitor student progress, identify student needs, assess student quality, and gather data to deliver relevant feedback".

Additionally, the teachers can mention a few known AFL strategies. These strategies include class discussion, peer assessment, questioning, and feedback. She had implemented one to two AFL strategies in their class. So that teachers can demonstrate how the assessment process works in their version. The teacher explains it by understanding, but AFL flow doesn't stray too far. Indeed, several strategies are implemented differently than the AFL principle, but they all have the same goals.

"I was informed that it would involve group discussions, question and answers, peer assessment, and feedback on student work. The methods I used in class are what I said."

Several strategies are identical to AFL, such as no-hands-up, traffic lights, waiting times, smiley faces, and two stars & a wish. But on several occasions, the teacher did not mention this strategy because teachers tend to use general strategies with the same goals as AFL. Indeed, teachers are not aware of many AFL strategies. The teacher only knew a few of the available strategies of all.

"I was only made aware of the strategy recently".

Indeed the teachers have basic knowledge of AFL but lack practical experience using it in the English classroom. Since it is constrained to comprehending fundamental theories and concepts without having direct practice, It cannot implement effectively. Likewise, in this study, teachers have sufficient knowledge of AFL but little practice.

1. AFL strategies are considered helpful and frequently used

Despite the teacher's knowledge of all AFL concepts, several factors prevent their use in the classroom. Teachers cannot completely comprehend the idea and use of AFL since it is a new assessment in schools. Additionally, there is no specific training or discussion forum for AFL. Additionally, there aren't enough training partners at work.

"Since no one is available to educate teachers about AFL, the majority of teachers are unaware of it as well. Few people desire to implement AFL because they believe that its implementation will be challenging in their schools".

Additionally, it is considered that students' knowledge is insufficient for AFL. The tedious assessment provided by the school is still used for student assessment. The national assessment is generally taken more seriously by students, which is thought to be advantageous for them. Nevertheless, not all students disregard the daily assessment. Some confident and active students considered can engage with AFL. However, because students are needed to be involved in AFL, this has not been able to optimize its application. In other words, the efficacy of AFL can be impacted by student engagement and knowledge gaps.

In addition to lacking student knowledge, AFL also lacks support from many stakeholders (e.g., principals, fellow teachers, and others). It occurs due to the standardization of lesson plans and assessments in schools. While before deciding how to incorporate AFL into the classroom, the teacher should first obtain the school's curriculum's clearance. Some usual strategies are asking questions, having class discussions, communicating learning objectives, and providing feedback. Based on several considerations, teachers frequently share their learning intents and goals because it is crucial to clearly define what needs to be accomplished

"Students must have objectives and intents when they study. As a result, this activity must be undertaken".

Indeed, students who have goals and success criteria will be more driven to learn and complete assessment tasks. The teacher also engages students in class discussions and asks questions throughout the learning process. Questioning is used to ensure that the students grasp particular material. Teachers will be able to choose what action to offer their students using the evidence gathered throughout this activity.

The teacher also encourages group discussions in one group by designating a few of the students as group leaders. It is anticipated that this activity would assess students' interpersonal abilities and give teachers the information they can use to personalize feedback to their requirements for ongoing learning. However, the teacher provides feedback that is not fully utilized. Teachers face several challenges when giving comments. So that not all students' work receives in-depth feedback. Additionally, most students are unaware that feedback is given to fix the errors they make in their work.

"The majority of the students improved upon their earlier work by simply reassembling it. Feedback is frequently disregarded".

Even though it is not frequently used, at least the teacher still wants to use feedback. On the other hand, self- and peer assessments are not used during the learning process since students do not regard their friends' assessments and results. Students are happy when the teacher makes corrections to their work. Therefore, the entire assessment procedure falls under the teacher's responsibility. In summary, several of the AFL strategies utilized are strategies that appear doable and straightforward to implement. Given that applying to AFL is thought to be challenging for students. Meanwhile, students struggle to understand feedback, self-evaluation, and peer assessment. However, the teacher does take into account the usage of feedback that is thought to have very little chance of being followed by feedback. Peer and self-assessment are AFL strategies, but they aren't commonly utilized when students study English in a formal setting. In addition, students' comprehension of self-and peer assessment is insufficient due to the lack of confidence in their own and their peers' assessments.

DISCUSSION

This study explores teachers' knowledge and experience in implementing AFL in the classroom and describes AFL strategies that are often used and considered valuable. The findings indicate that AFL cannot be adequately implemented due to several factors and a lack of students' knowledge about AFL.

Regarding the first research question, this study has proven that teacher has sufficient knowledge about AFL in schools. The study results indicate that understanding AFL is essential so that AFL can be carried out correctly and optimally. This result is in line with the finding of DeLuca et al., (2018), who argued that students need to be taught the concept and use of AFL since AFL is a new concept for them. In addition, support from the principal, fellow teachers, and students is also needed - meaning need other stakeholders. This study found that teachers saw the AFL implementation as the same as before, throughout, and after the pandemic. It's just different in the learning duration, which is shorter and limited by space and distance. The teacher, as the facilitator, should continuously monitor how AFL performs in the classroom.

Indeed, teacher knowledge is considered sufficient to implement AFL. However, knowledge without practice will be less than optimal. Thus, this lack of experience in AFL causes teachers to lack creativity and innovation in developing AFL. This finding is confirmed by So & Lee (2011), who revealed that teachers' results in applying AFL were limited by their limited perspective, which only considered rubrics as a tool for classroom practice. Hawe & Parr (2014) stated that, in developing AFL, all elements of AFL must be united (for example, encouraging quality learning & making students student-centered. While the findings in this study stated that teachers have not entirely made students play an active role in learning. Furthermore, Munoz and Mackay (2019) argue that evaluation is particularly problematic during a pandemic due to a lack of control over pupils. The majority of teachers struggle with practical work, student monitoring, and offering appropriate feedback (Saha et al., 2022). Specifically, support from principals, other teachers, and other school agents (such as the curriculum department) is crucial to successfully use AFL in the classroom since teachers can be more creative and innovative in realizing their ideas. Mak & Lee (2014) argued that teachers could be given greater latitude and time to integrate AFL into the curriculum, experiment with new things, and gain experience to become well-trained teachers. Contradiction with this research found a lack

of support from the principal, teachers, and other school agents. It prevents teachers from being free to innovate in developing AFL strategies.

The teacher disclosed that the AFL technique could not be executed ideally in response to the second study question. The following AFL tactics are based on Kippers et al. (2018):

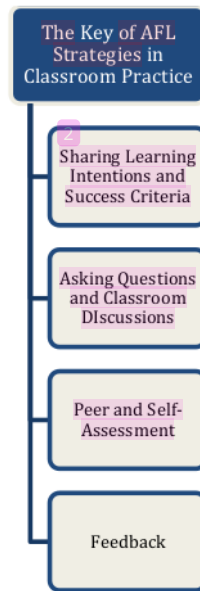


Figure 1, AFL strategies based on Kippers et al., (2018)

Concerning the second research question, this study discovered that AFL tactics like as communicating learning aims and success criteria with students, asking questions, and engaging in classroom discussion are regarded to be useful and commonly employed. Sharing students' learning aims and achievement criteria ensures that teachers and students are on the same page. This technique gathers evidence to ensure that pupils comprehend the goals they must meet (Xie & Cui, 2021). This result is consistent with the findings of Loughran (2010), who claims that instructors and students have a similar concept of assessment's objective as aiding student learning. Meanwhile, Kippers et al. (2018) argued that the respondents had two competing opinions. According to the first instructor, they write on the boards to convey students' learning intents or success criteria. Simultaneously, another viewpoint claimed that they did not reveal learning objectives or success criteria, but instead merely educated on the issue, what they did, and why they did it. They do not want to make kids feel uncomfortable.

In addition, class discussion activities can assist teachers in gathering extra and enriching information that reveals students' strengths and shortcomings in the topic being delivered. This exercise can also aid in the consolidation of evidence obtained in prior activities. Based on the outcomes of this assessment exercise, the instructor can choose

what form of feedback is suitable for the pupils. AFL may be viewed as assessing student progress in this technique, which begins with defining learning objectives, acquiring information on student learning, analyzing student performance, and preserving data. (Krishnan et al., 2020). Moreover, the teacher clarified that feedback would be very beneficial if the students understood and were aware of it - in order to implement it, both the teacher and the student must be involved. Teachers and students are actively engaged in correcting learning and providing feedback, according to Chen et al., (2014). Teachers and students can use feedback to take appropriate actions after providing and receiving it. Kippers et al., (2018)

2 The findings also indicated that, among the several AFL methodologies stated above, peer and self-assessment did not play a part in the learning activity due to students' poor understanding of AFL. This conclusion is congruent with Kippers et al., (2018), who claim that some teachers feel students lack the knowledge and abilities to perform peer and self-assessments. According to another study, self-assessment and peer evaluation are the two AFL processes that are least used or appreciated by all students (MacLellan, 2001). Furthermore, the findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Deluca et al. (2018), who discovered that peer feedback was the least valued AFL technique across all students. When pupils are satisfied with the teacher's comments, they will reject input from their peers (Chen et al., 2014).

In this research, teachers gain more understanding based on their experiences. Teachers can use AFL more creatively and innovatively so that the techniques employed are not repetitive. This study can be referenced or taken into consideration by other teachers before they implement AFL in their classes. Regarding the researchers themselves, this research can provide knowledge related to AFL and its implementation in the field based on a number based on previously known facts.

CONCLUSION

This case study of teachers' knowledge of the assessment experience for English revealed that implementing the AFL strategy should follow by sufficient knowledge from both teachers and students. Its application is almost identical in the pre and post-pandemic periods since the teacher had little experience and needed practice. It was necessary to strengthen not only teachers' expertise, but also students' understanding of AFL in order for students to follow the evaluation procedure correctly. This research pursued retrospective studies by O'Rand (1998), which means maintaining memories through current perspectives and retrospective data allows representatives of events, experiences, and more rich meaning for individuals. The researchers discovered that the teacher's knowledge of all grew over time as the teacher's experiences and knowledge of all grew. This information was gained via a range of previous experiences and is now being utilized in the present and future. As a result, instructors frequently use earlier AFL experiences to practice current AFL implementations and better educate future AFL implementations.

Aside from instructors knowing what AFL is, support from administrators, teachers, and other school agents is critical (such as the curriculum department). Few teachers, in fact, employ AFL in the classroom. It was clear from the researcher's experience in searching for appropriate subjects for the AFL topic. According to some of

our findings, future research will need to focus on how instructors can fully adopt AFL and incorporate all activities into school curriculum.

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