

EFL Teachers' Perceptions towards the Implementation of Performance-Based Assessment in Assessing Students' Speaking Ability

Yeni Latipah*, Pupung Purnawarman

English Education Study Program
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
Bandung, Indonesia

*yenilatifah@upi.edu, Purnawarman@upi.edu

Abstract—In implementing Performance-Based Assessment (PBA), teachers should have sufficient knowledge and skills to avoid potential bias of scoring which can lead to less objective and unreliable results of assessment. Yet, how teachers conduct and administer this method of assessment might be conditional in the real implementation. Hence, this study aims to find out the EFL teachers' beliefs and experiences in implementing PBA as well as their perception towards the concept of how to plan and execute effective PBA. To investigate the issue, this study used qualitative research method specifically case study research design which employed questionnaires, in-depth interviews and classroom observations to collect the data. Twenty secondary-school teachers responded to the questionnaires, three teachers were selected into interviews and classroom observations were conducted in two secondary schools in Bandung and Cimahi. The results revealed that teachers believe PBA has positive impact on students because it can create valuable learning experience, represent the students' speaking ability, and contribute to the betterment of students' speaking skills. In the implementation, some teachers were able to design scaling criteria and assess students' performance based on the criteria. However, they pointed out that the criteria are inadequate to diminish subjectivity particularly toward students' group performance. They also still encountered difficulties in managing individual feedback for students.

Keywords—*assessing speaking; EFL teachers' perceptions; performance-based assessment*

I. INTRODUCTION

Assessment as a part of teaching and learning process involves the process of gathering, interpreting and recording information related to student progress in learning and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies [1]. It is believed that assessment has a vital role in teaching and learning. It aims at bringing about improvement for both the teacher who is assessing and the students who are being assessed [2]. Through assessment, teachers are able to collect the information related to what students have achieved and further decide the more appropriate instructional methods or techniques. Thus, teachers can improve their teaching strategies as well as generate the betterment of their instructions. Moreover, assessment also accommodates the students to notice their strengths and

weaknesses in the areas which have been assessed. So that, they can figure out what aspect they should maintain and what aspect they should improve in order to be able to achieve the desirable learning outcomes.

Moreover, some scholars argue that assessments should be reformed from only traditional testing which is mostly in the format of paper and pen tests such as multiple-choice, true false and matching type tests to more authentic and realistic assessment approach which can represent students' ability and facilitate possible improvement by providing sufficient feedback for students [3-5]. They claimed that assessment should not only focus on teacher-led recitation, where students working alone and expected to remember and reproduce a wide range of specific facts [6]. The fact encourages the emergence of alternative assessments which considered more effective in assessing students' ability particularly on productive ability such as speaking and writing. Additionally, Lynch distinguished the term 'alternative assessment' from 'traditional assessment' [7]. He mentioned that traditional testing emphasizes the rank ordering of students, privileged quantifiable data for isolated and individual test performances. On the other hand, the alternative assessment is based on an investigation of developmental sequences in student learning, a sampling of genuine performances that reveal the underlying thinking processes, and the provision of an opportunity for further learning.

One of the types of alternative assessment is performance-based assessment. According to Baska, performance-based assessment provides an alternative way of looking at student ability via contextual performance [8]. It is vitally needed in the assessment field so that teachers have access to more complete information on student performance. Through students' performance, the teacher can determine of what particular competences that students need to have and whether or not they have acquired them with respect to the purpose of the assessment [9,10].

Furthermore, performance assessments can take on many different forms, which include written and oral demonstrations and activities that can be completed by either a group or an individual. To this extent, speaking skill as one of the focuses

in general EFL classroom and seems to be a fundamental learning outcome recommend the progressively more challenging problems, projects and performance as the assessment method [11]. In the practical assessment, speaking ability is frequently associated with scale levels and represented by level descriptors which include quantitative summarizing of several components of speaking. According to Ghinter, “such descriptors are typically associated with, but are not limited to, descriptions of the following components of a speaking performance at different levels of the scale: pronunciation, phonological control, grammar/accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, coherence and organization. If the assessment involves evaluation of interaction, the following may also be included; turn-taking strategies, cooperative strategies, and asking for or providing clarification when needed” [12].

However, some arguments appear that the steps of performance-based assessment in assessing speaking are more complex and more involved. Constructing good performance-based assessments requires attention to important details in the design process. These steps include the development of the assessment framework, creation of the assessment plan, determination of assessment resources, and production of the assessment blueprint [9]. Brualdi argue that some teachers are probably hesitant to implement performance-based assessment in their classrooms because commonly the teachers feel they do not have knowledge and skills about how to fairly assess a student's performance [13]. Thus, it emerges an issue that teachers should have sufficient knowledge and skills to avoid potential bias of scoring which can lead to less objective and unreliable results of assessment.

The desire to know the real practice of performance-based assessment in teaching and learning process has led to a growing interest to investigate teachers' perceptions on assessing students' speaking skills through performance-based assessment including their assessment practices and skills. Perception is one's interpretation or understanding of a particular phenomenon [14]. Studying teachers' perceptions of performance-based assessment is important due to the fact that perceptions can affect behavior [15]. Teachers' values, beliefs, and attitudes about their own practical teaching administrations and designs with regards to their abilities in designing materials and assessments are likely as strong indicators of their instructional performances in the classroom. Thus, this study intends to find out the EFL teachers' beliefs and experiences in implementing performance-based assessment as well as to investigate the EFL teachers' perceptions towards the concept of how to plan and execute effective performance-based assessment. The results of the study are expected to reveal the practical implementation of performance-based assessment which hopefully could be generated to enhance the quality of EFL teaching and learning particularly in implementing ideal performance-based assessment.

II. METHOD

This research was conducted by employing case study research design to achieve the objectives of the research. Based on Tavakoli, case study is a research method, which aims to understand social phenomena within a single or small number

of naturally occurring setting [16]. This study attempts to investigate the target issues through collecting information based on the teachers' original contexts or situations of teaching.

In collecting the data, the research used triangulation method which involves three kinds of instruments; questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observation. The questionnaire which used was adapted from questionnaires of a research conducted by Chinda entitled *Teachers' Reaction Towards Performance-Based Language Assessment* [7]. The questionnaire draft which was previously validated by an expert was consisted of two parts. They are five point likert-scale indicating the levels of agreement with statements in such a way that 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) items which concerning the teachers' perception on assessment as general as well as towards performance-based assessment. As an extent to gain more information, an open ended question which asked respondent of what could be done to improve the quality of performance-based assessment was also included in the questionnaires. After spreading out, twenty English teachers responded to the questionnaires. The twenty English teachers who replied to questionnaires are teachers who teach English in secondary schools in West Java and Jakarta.

Secondly, to obtain more detail information related to the research issues, the researcher applied interviews which consist of open-ended questions in order to allow the respondents to give totally free answers. Three English teachers of three secondary schools in West Bandung and Cimahi were participated into interviews. The interview session used Indonesian language in order to address the clarity of the data given by the participants. The conversations were further audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

As the last resource of collecting empirical data, classroom observations were conducted as justifications from the statements delivered by participants of the interviews. Since the first respondent of interview was not available to be observed, the classroom observations were only done in two junior high schools in West Bandung and Cimahi where the two others respondents teach. The attitudes and strategies of the respondents in assessing their students' performance were observed and validated with the other instruments results.

The collected data from the three instruments were further qualitatively analyzed. The researcher analyzed the data with concerning some emerging findings relevant to the investigated issues which are EFL teachers' beliefs, experiences, and perception towards implementing performance-based assessment.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Considering the purposes of this study, the discussions of the findings are divided into three subsections. Each of them is supported by the data gathered from the instruments of the study.

A. *EFL Teachers' Beliefs on Performance-Based Assessment*

EFL teachers' beliefs on performance-based assessment were measured based on the respondents' responses towards

questionnaires. The percentages of their responses on each of the statements are presented in Table 1. Each of the statements was measured by likert scale with 5 = Strongly Agree (SA) 4 = Agree (A) 3 = Uncertain (U) 2 = Disagree (D) 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD).

TABLE I. EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS ON PERFORMANCE BASED ASSESSMENT

Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA
Performance-based assessment (i.e. oral tasks/projects) can represent speaking ability of students	-	10%	5%	35%	50%
The oral projects are interesting for students.	-	5%	35%	35%	25%
The oral projects can provide students with valuable learning experience	-	5%	10%	50%	35%
The oral project contributes to the betterment of students' speaking ability	-	5%	0%	55%	40%
Oral performances consumes a lot of time	10%	10%	20%	30%	30%

Table I shows that the first until fourth statements were strongly agreed or agreed by a total of 85%, 60%, 85% and 95 % of the respondents respectively. It shows that most of the teachers believe that the performance-based assessment has positive impact on students. However, 60 % of the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that oral performance consumes a lot of time. It means that although teachers perceived performance-based assessment positively in relation to students' improvement, they consider it as a burden in terms of time consuming.

Concerning this result, it appears to support the findings of previous studies Chinda [7] and Sumardi [4] stated that performance based assessments could give positive contribution on students' learning in ELT classroom but it requires teachers to give a great deal of time to provide detailed feedback for each student performance.

B. EFL Teachers' Experiences in Implementing Performance Based Assessment

Related to the second research question, the discussions will be elaborated by providing evidence from three instruments of this study. The data from questionnaires are presented in table 2.

TABLE II. EFL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN IMPLEMENTING PERFORMANCE BASED ASSESSMENT

Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA
There are clear performance criteria for the oral performances assessment.	5%	10%	10%	50%	25%
I am scoring students' oral performances based on the performance criteria.	-	5%	10%	60%	25%
The scoring for the oral performances is balanced, objective and fair.	-	25%	15%	35%	25%
I always concern on the consistency in scoring student's performance	-	15%	45%	30%	10%
I often discuss the issue of consistency in scoring students 'oral performances with other teachers.	-	25%	50%	15%	10%

1) *The use of performance criteria in assessing performance-based assessment:* The first and second statements of table 2, shows that 75% and 85% of respondents are strongly agreed or agreed towards the statements. It implies that most of the participants have used criteria in assessing students' performance. It supported by the statements coming from the first participants of the interview who said that they usually use scaling criteria in assessing students' performance. As mentioned below,

Participant 1

Interviewee: *Biasanya kan kalau dari kriteria ada rubriknya, biasanya kita lihat aspek speaking itu kan ada kaya grammar, pronunciation, terus intonationnya,*

(Commonly, the criteria are presented in the rubric criteria which considering the aspects of speaking such as grammar, pronunciations and intonations)

However, the table 2 also shows that the remains 25% and 15% of respondents are uncertain or disagree with the statements which indicate that they probably do not use rubric or criteria in assessing speaking performance. It is in line with the statements from the third participant of interview who said that she did not used criteria and only guess some aspect which considered important in assessing students' performance.

Participant 3

Interviewer: *Apakah dalam penilaian performance itu ada kriteria misalnya scaling criteria atau rubric khusus dalam menilai speaking anak-anak?*

(Is there any criteria such as scaling criteria or specific rubric in assessing students' speaking ability?)

Interviewee: *Ideally, harusnya begitu ya, tapi untuk sekarang belum, iya tidak memakai.*

(Ideally yes, we should have criteria, but for now, there is no rubric or specific criteria)

Furthermore, it is also confirmed by the classroom observation which revealed that the third teacher participants do not use any criteria or rubric as her standard of assessment. She scored the students' performance directly without any scale of what appropriate score she should give to students. To this extent, the above finding seems to neglect the notion of performance-based assessment stated by scholars [5,17], who strictly emphasized the importance of using assessment rubric in measuring the performance-based assessment.

2) *The balance, fairness and objectivity in implementing performance-based assessment:* The third statement stated on the table 2 replied 55% strongly agreed or agreed by the respondent, indicating that the remain 45 % of the respondents did not consider that their criteria have addressed the objectiveness and fairness of assessments. It is in line with the statements from the second participant of interview, who said:

Participant 2

Interviewer: *Rubric yang biasa dipakai itu, menurut anda sudah fair, objective, dan balance atau belum? apakah sudah bisa mencapai itu atau belum?*

(Do you think the rubric you used to has been able to address fairness, objectivity and balance? Have you achieved those aspects?)

Interviewee: *Belum sepertinya, karena tadi ya, kita sudah mengkriterikan, criteria performance nya dan skalanya dari sekian sampai sekian, tapi kadang bingung sendiri juga yahh, jadi performance ini the udah masuk ke criteria mana, jadi belum jelas sih kriterianya.*

(I think it has not. Because of the reason I stated previously. We have designed the performance criteria including the scaling criteria. However, I still find it confusing to decide what criteria that a certain performance includes, so the criteria are still unclear.

The statements from the participants of the interview reflected that even though there are criteria in assessing students' performance, but the criteria is consider inadequate to address the objectiveness and fairness of performance assessment. The participants still have problems to assess students using the existing criteria. The statements also strengthen the argument of Brualdi, who argue that some teachers are probably hesitant to implement performance-based assessment in their classrooms because commonly the teachers feel they do not have knowledge and skills about how to fairly and objectively assess a student's performance [13].

3) *The consistency of scoring students' performance:* Regarding the fourth and fifth statements of table 2, 55% and 75% replies are neutral or disagreed toward the statements. It portrays the idea that most of respondent are not sure or even do not consider with the issue of consistency in assessing students' performance. It reflects that in the real implementation, teachers still encountered difficulties in addressing consistency of performance assessment. Within the

statements, it implied by the replies from participant of interview who said:

Participant 2:

Interviewee: *Biasanya yang paling sulit adalah mempertahankan konsistensi dalam penilaian ya, antara satu siswa dengan siswa lain, antara satu aspek penilaian dengan penilaian lainnya, terlebih ketika menilai performance dalam group, itu susah sekali untuk konsisten, jadinya subjektif.*

(Usually, the most difficult one is related to maintain our consistency in assessment, between a student and another student, between an assessment aspect and another, especially when we should assess group performance, it is actually really hard to be consistent. It becomes subjective (assessment)).

The findings show that in the real implementation, teachers may not perfectly able to execute the ideal performance-based assessment. It is somehow difficult for them to implement the recommendation from experts such as Moskal who mentioned that teacher should be able to acquire consistent scores using the categories described in the scoring rubric, then if the categories of the scoring rubric are written clearly and concisely, he adds that teachers should also be able to score the same set of papers and acquire similar results [10].

Moreover, concerning the consistency of doing performance assessment, Brualdi suggests that teacher may have groups of discussions with other teachers to think through the important behaviors included in a task [13]. However, it seems that most of the teachers of interviews are rarely discuss the issue of consistency with other teachers. It supported by the statements from the second participants of the interview, as mentioned below,

Participant 2

Interviewee : *(Saya) jarang bertukar pikiran dengan guru lain apalagi yang se-mata pelajaran, tapi dalam beberapa kesempatan terkadang suka sharing. Makanya mungkin harus diperbanyak lagi sharing sesama guru mata pelajaran.*

(I rarely discuss with the other teachers especially with those who teach the same subject, yet in some occasions, we sometime share each other (related to students' performance). So it is probably necessary for me to discuss more frequently with those who teach the same subject.

4) *Feedback for students:* The participants of the interview pointed out that they find it hard to manage individual feedback for students because of the insufficient of time. As stated in the statement below,

Participant 1

Interviewee: *Feedback kadang mungkin diberikan diakhir saja, jadi tidak per-individu karena kita juga kesulitan mengatur waktunya.*

(Feedbacks are often given in the last of overall students' performances, so it is not given individually because we are difficult to manage the time).

The problems of giving individual feedback for students was also proved by classroom observation in which two teachers who observed did not give any individual feedback on students' performance. They only tried to give language correction if students produce wrong pronunciations or grammatical error.

The finding is likely in line with the previous study conducted by Ndalichako who found that even though teachers reported favorable perceptions of assessment, they seem to be facing a conflict in implementing effective assessment in their classrooms because it becomes additional load to their works [2]. Such perceptions may be influenced the fact that some teachers have heavy teaching loads making it difficult for them to conduct meaningful assessment and offer individual feedback to the students.

C. EFL Teachers' Perceptions Towards Implementing Effective Performance-Based Assessment

Considering the third research question which aims to find out the EFL teachers' perceptions towards implementing effective or ideal performance based assessment, the findings were gathered from the data of open-ended question in the questionnaires which asked respondent of what could be done to improve the quality of oral performance assessment.

In responding the question, the respondents expressed varieties of ideas such as improving the quality of assessment rubric. As stated below,

R9: We should improve criteria of the rubric assessment

R10: Clear and specific instrument

The respondents emphasized that in achieving the good quality of performance-based assessment, teacher should improve the quality of instrument or rubric assessment they used. They emphasize that teachers should have clear and specific criteria in determining the score of the students. This response is in line with the theory of Moskal which stated that the criteria set forth within a scoring rubric should be clearly aligned with the requirements of the task and the stated goals and objectives, written in specific and clear language and expressed in terms of observable behaviors or product characteristics [10].

Moreover, the findings also implied that teachers should not only improve the clarity of their criteria, but also should understand how to assess every single aspect stated in the criteria in order to be able to give objective score for students' performance.

R1: We have to understand the aspect of speaking assessment like grammar, intonation, pronunciation etc. So it will help the teacher to determine the score of students

Such consideration is in line with the statements from Brualdi which stated that performance-based assessments do not have clear-cut right or wrong answers just like most traditional forms of testing, rather, there are degrees to which a person is successful or unsuccessful [13]. Thus, teachers need to evaluate the performance in a way that will allow them to take those varying degrees into consideration.

Additionally, the respondents argued that formal trainings related to how to conduct performance assessments will help them to improve their quality in implementing performance-based assessment. Such training would likely give them precious insight and knowledge that they can reflect to the real implementation of scoring students' performance. As mentioned below,

R5: maybe by attending a lot of training to add insight and knowledge from experts who are more experienced in the assessment of oral performance

R7: Personally, I want to get a formal training about this assessment, so If I know more about this assessment, I can improve the quality of oral performance assessment.

Relevant to the findings, Roeber stated that a major key to the success of the entire performance assessment project is the quality of the individuals who are chosen to conduct the assessment [9]. Hence, it becomes necessary for teachers to acquire more knowledge and skills of how to conduct performance assessment through various ways such as formal training. Trainings are essential to be administered after the selection process for new teachers has taken place.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, there are three conclusions which can be inferred. First, most of the teachers believe that the performance-based assessment has positive impact on students because it can create valuable learning experience, represent the students' speaking ability, and contribute to the betterment of students' speaking skills. On the other hand, they value performance-based assessment negatively in term of time consuming. Second, in the real implementation, some teachers have used performance criteria to assess the students' performance. However their criteria are still consider insufficient to address the balance, fairness and objectivity of the performance assessment. They also encountered difficulties on upholding consistency in the process of assessment and on managing individual feedback to students because of insufficient of time. Thirdly, teachers pointed out that in order to conduct effective performance assessment, they should have specific and observable criteria which can be understood by both teachers and students. They further acknowledge the need of formal trainings to develop their knowledge and skills on how to administer performance assessments.

Therefore, it is recommended for further study to more concern on how to develop clear and specific scaling criteria

which can help teachers to conduct more objective and reliable performance-based assessment. It is also suggested that schools or educational departments can provide more training related to assessments particularly performance-based assessment in order to enhance the capability of teachers in implementing ideal performance assessment.

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