

# Teachers' Conception of Assessment for Learning in ELT Classroom in an Indonesian School During Online Learning

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## ABSTRACT

The current study investigates how teachers in ELT classrooms interpret the concept of Assessment for Learning (AfL) during online learning. More specifically, the research intends to see how the concept of assessment for learning can help engaged teachers get a better understanding of AfL and optimize their own usage of AfL in the classroom. This research also contributes to a better understanding of learning assessment in the context of online learning, particularly in terms of enhancing students' English learning outcomes. It also elaborates how teachers should plan their online instruction while taking into account the AfL's existing components. Two English teachers from an Indonesian junior high school participated in this study. A case study research design was used in this study. Data was gathered through interviews and questionnaires. Then, collecting data from questionnaires distributed to teachers online. Thematic analysis with coding was utilized as the analysis technique. These findings show that teachers do not properly understand the basic concept of AfL, resulting in less-than-optimal implementation in the classroom.

*Keywords: Assessment for Learning (AfL), ELT classroom, Online Learning*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning activities have made progress towards innovative practices in online teaching (Mahapatra, 2021). Online assessment that provides feedback is important to make learning effective (Mohamadi, 2018). Assessment for learning or sometimes referred to as formative assessment gets high attention because it has feedback activities (Gikandi, et.al, 2011). The use of digital technologies in online learning allows students to more easily get teacher feedback and contribute to their own learning (Yilmaz, 2017). Teachers, particularly in Indonesia, must integrate their technology expertise with their experience in implementing assessment for learning. Hence, teachers must comprehend the concept of proper assessment for learning to enhance student learning.

The term AfL and formative assessment are used interchangeably due to the general similarities in classroom practices and practical procedures that instructors can employ to increase the quality of feedback on learning, and decisions teachers make for their students (William, 2011). Kippers, Wolterinck, Schildkamp, Poortman, & Visscher (2018) argued that using information from most qualitative assessments, the quality of the learning process during day-to-day practice may always be monitored with AfL. (eg, asking questions and observations). McLaughlin & Yan (2017) stated that online formative assessment is a blend of formative assessment and computer-assisted assessments, which led to its emergence. Personality quizzes, online forums, and e-portfolios are examples of online settings that can be used for formative assessment (Gikandi, Morrowa, & Davis, 2011). Indeed, with today's technological advancements, online formative assessment in ELT classrooms, such as formative assessment in writing, is possible (Gikandi et al., 2011; Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

Broadly, AfL has been acknowledged as effective but it is considered ineffective due to the lack of knowledge and understanding of the proper definition of the AfL notion, inconsistent teacher practice, and a lack of ongoing professional support (Bennett, 2011; Lee & Falvey, 2014; Kleij, Vermeulen, Schildkamp, & Eggen, 2015). Meanwhile, Online AfL is widely recognized as crucial to language assessment and effective learning as a result of online learning during the pandemic (Mohamadi, 2018; Neve, Leroya, Struyven, & Smits, 2020). Thus, teachers should understand the notion of AfL correctly, particularly in online learning, to avoid misunderstandings that lead to failure to meet learning objectives.

Regardless of AfL's strategic importance in improving teaching and learning, numerous studies have found that teachers lack an understanding of what AfL is and how it could be implemented. In his research in Turkey, Oz (2014) revealed that teachers don't really understand the notion of AfL in the classroom, making it difficult for them to develop AfL strategies and feedback procedures. They also require assistance from a variety of sources, not only individually and independently. According to Klenowski (2009), the implementation of AfL in the class did not relate to the notion of AfL due to the teacher's lack of knowledge. AfL has just a minor impact on students' language learning due to the teacher's lack of knowledge and abilities in implementing AfL strategies and data-driven decision-making (Heitink et.al., 2016). In ordinary offline classrooms, these unsatisfactory results on teachers' understanding and practice of AfL were all discovered.

The researcher's intention to conduct research on how teachers' knowledge of AfL is carried out in today's online learning setting emerged from the unsatisfactory results of earlier AfL studies in the context of traditional teaching and learning. This study aims to learn about teachers' conception of AfL and how they use it in their classrooms. Teachers will gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and practices of AfL as a result of this research, especially when teaching English in the context of online learning. This research focuses on teachers at a Palembang junior high school. To gather information, open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used. the research questions of this current study are:

1. What are teachers understanding the concept of assessment for learning applied in ELT?
2. How do teachers apply AfL in the context of online learning?

## **METHOD(S)**

In this section, the research method used in this study will be explained, namely a qualitative method with a case study research design. Research steps are also explained which consist of participants, the process of collecting data which is then coded and analyzed using thematic analysis.

### ***Participants***

The researcher focused on the analysis of two English teachers in grades seven, eight, and nine of junior high school, namely Mr. Andri and Mrs. Rinda (all identities are pseudonyms), in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of what teachers recognize about the notion of utilizing AfL in the classroom during online learning. Participants are chosen based on their teaching experience with AfL in junior high school classrooms, their ability to access online learning (i.e. e-learning), and their willingness in conducting assessments for learning during the 2021-2022 school year.

### ***Collecting the Data***

In this study, the researcher used several data collection techniques, namely questionnaires (distributed online using Whatsapp or Google forms) and interviews (conducted through Google Meet or WA voice calls). An open-ended questionnaire was conducted to find out the concept of assessment for learning that teachers understood so far. Then the researcher validated the results of the questionnaire through interviews. In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to interview two English teachers about their understanding of the concept of assessment for learning as well as their own views. The interviews were recorded and saved for the lessons observed.

### ***Analyzing the Data***

The researcher used exploratory research for this study since she wanted to look into existing problems that were not well acknowledged but didn't provide definitive results (Yin, 2018). The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed for the creation of concept-based groupings and data in a coding framework. To recognize and categorize the data that answered the research question as a whole, researchers began by reading and rereading the data collected from the questionnaire and listening to the findings of the interviews more than once. Interview questions functioned as coding categories during the first coding of the data.

Coding recordings with teachers, for example, yielded the category that the teacher communicated learning intentions and success criteria at the start of the learning process. It demonstrates that teachers use the AfL component, which includes sharing learning intentions and success criteria, asking questions and facilitating classroom discussions, providing feedback, and peer and self-assessment (Kippers, Wolterinck, Schildkamp, Poortman, & Visscher, 2018). With the records of teacher interviews, coding focused on the teacher's comprehension of how to conceptualize the implementation of AfL in the online

classroom such that it is effective and students receive feedback tailored to their needs in order to meet learning objectives.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, we obtain results based on an analysis of several components of AfL in an online classroom in one junior high school. In presenting the results based on the AfL activity, we examine two main themes: 1) what is the teacher's understanding of the AfL concept in the classroom. 2) how to apply AfL in the ELT class.

### ***Sharing learning intentions and success criteria***

According to the results of the teachers' questionnaires, the majority of teachers shared learning intentions and success criteria since they believe this activity is necessary for motivating students to study more and to better understand what they would obtain after studying the content. T1 (the teacher's name has been omitted) revealed this.

T1 said "implementing sharing learning intentions and success criteria so that students are enthusiastic to achieve the learning success they create"

The teacher starts by asking students to reveal the criteria for success and what targets they want to achieve then the teacher responds to students' answers. As expressed by the following T2:

"To begin learning, I ask students to discuss their success criteria in one topic, as well as the goals they wish to achieve. Aside from that, I respond to students as a resource of ideas for them."

T1 also added "this activity is very useful for teachers and students"

Sharing the success criteria with students, according to some teachers, helps teachers better understand what way they should take or what techniques they should use to reach learning goals and targets that are in line with what teachers and students want.

T1 argues that "online learning reduces students' anxiety to speak".

So according to this T1 teacher during online learning activities (e.g. Using whatsapp, google meet, etc.) Students are more confident to express their opinions. Many students do not want to do so because they are ashamed to speak in front of a big amount of people, but when they learn online, they are more confident to speak since they do not interact with others face to face.

### ***Asking questions and Classroom discussions***

From the results of the questionnaire given by the teacher, not all teachers carried out Asking questions and Classroom discussions because they thought this activity was the same as sharing learning intention activities, so they only carried out one of them. As expressed by T2:

"I think this kind of activity is the same as the first activity. I carry out sharing activities by discussing"

Actually, they are aware that this makes teachers able to elicit evidence about student learning processes during everyday practice. E.g., the teacher routinely invites pupils to question their peers' contributions to discussions. This is expressed by T1:

"I can find out the students' abilities from how actively they are actively involved in discussions and questions and answers".

To implement it in online learning they use Google Meet for discussion and also e-learning. But most of them do just that. According to them, this includes the formative assessment. One of the teachers (T2) revealed that:

"I give a theme for students to discuss, after that students learn through the discussion forum".

Because the teacher only provides a forum for students to discuss without accompanying so that the results are less effective and students are not actively involved in the forum.

### ***Feedback***

Feedback activities are the core of assessment for learning or formative assessment. However, most teachers do not understand what and how to implement it in the classroom. Indeed they provide feedback to students but it is not optimal.

T1 says "students are given feedback after doing assignments, but only some students receive it"

Most of the teachers gave assignments to activities in the form of written feedback, both positive and negative feedback. However, teachers and students are not actively involved in this activity because teachers do not understand how to provide feedback to students. Most teachers provide feedback but few take grades after students work on teacher feedback.

T2 said, "I give feedback on the student's work, then the student does it again but I only take the value of the first work".

The teacher does not understand what the role and purpose of the feedback are. After the students improve their work then the teacher gives a re-assessment of the student's revised results so that students are also more enthusiastic about doing it. Most students become lazy to do teacher feedback because they do not understand the concept of this feedback. The teacher also has not explained the concepts and procedures of this feedback. Indeed, this feedback is the core of learning but has not been implemented optimally.

### ***Peer and Self-assessment***

The results of the interview showed that most of the teachers did not carry out self-assessment and only peer-assessment because they felt it was more feasible during online learning. All activities online use the e-learning forum provided by the school. Teacher T1 says:

"Students are divided into several groups and then given the work of their friends and give an assessment"

According to the teacher, this can find out the mistakes of other friends so that other students do not make the same mistakes. The work they assess first they discuss the results

with the teacher so that communication is established between students and teachers. After that, students read the results in front of other friends. As stated by teacher T2 below:

"After assessing the work of a friend, I asked the student to consult the results with me first before reading out the results"

Indeed some students were actively involved and more enthusiastic in this assessment. Especially if the teacher gives them good grades. To involve students, teachers should use several strategies in afl so that the activities are not monotonous. This makes teachers can let students conduct peer and self-assessment as a part of classroom practice. E.g., teachers using traffic lights, thumbs up/down, two stars, and a wish.

This study explores teachers' understanding of the concept of AfL in online learning. The findings reveal that teachers are less prepared and do not understand the concept of AfL correctly especially to be implemented online which was found in this study.

In response to the first research question, this study found that the majority of teachers are unfamiliar with AfL, making it difficult to apply and satisfy the needs of students in the classroom. This finding is consistent with Oz's (2014) research, which found that teachers lack a deep understanding of AfL in the classroom, making it difficult for them to establish AfL strategies and feedback procedures. Unfortunately, the current situation, in which pupils must study online, makes it impossible for teachers to maintain control in the classroom. Students are not ready to accept assignments from teachers who provide less direct monitoring and direction.

Then, in response to the second research question, this study demonstrates that the teacher's implementation of AfL in the classroom is not effective since both the teacher and the students still do not fully understand the concept of AfL, particularly in the context of online learning. According to Kippers, Wolterinck, Schildkamp, Poortman, and Visscher (2018), several components of AfL, including sharing learning intentions and success criteria, asking questions, classroom discussions, feedback, and peer and self-assessment. in this study that components are not optimal because the teacher does not understand each component.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that both offline and online, teachers' understanding of assessment for learning is still weak. This is demonstrated by the lack of full participation of teachers and students in the assessment process. The teacher mainly focuses on student work, overlooking the critical role of class discussion and proper feedback for students in supporting their own learning goals and motivating them to take action to improve student achievement, particularly in English subjects.

This research contributes to a better understanding of learning assessment in the context of online learning, particularly in terms of enhancing students' English learning outcomes. It also elaborates how teachers should plan their online instruction while taking into account the AfL's existing components. In terms of practical implications, this study recommends that before creating online language learning, teachers should understand the notion of AfL and consider and observe students' study patterns. Mini-surveys or other pre-activities can be used to conduct the observation. Apart from his contribution to the area, the

scope of this study is confined to junior high school kids, who are not yet completely capable of using technology. Future studies should be conducted in other educational environments.

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