Teachers' Implementation of Authentic Speaking Assessment: A Case Study of Senior High Schools in Ambon

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates authentic assessment practices in speaking lessons at senior high schools in Ambon city, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research examined the types of authentic assessment tasks implemented by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and their perceptions regarding implementation. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis from seven experienced English teachers across three public senior high schools: SMA Negeri 2 Ambon, SMA Negeri 3 Ambon, and SMA Negeri 5 Ambon. The study employed Miles and Huberman's interactive model for data analysis, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Findings revealed that teachers utilized eight distinct authentic assessment tasks: oral interviews, picture-cued descriptions, video clips, information gaps, story/text retelling, role plays, oral reports, and debates. Role-play emerged as the most frequently implemented task, with all participating teachers incorporating it into their speaking assessments. Teachers demonstrated positive perceptions toward authentic assessment, acknowledging its benefits in enhancing student motivation, developing practical skills, and improving learning outcomes. However, implementation challenges persisted, including time constraints with large classes, resource limitations, varying student proficiency levels, and assessment complexity. Recommendations emphasize the need for targeted professional development in authentic assessment methodology, institutional support for resource allocation, and strategic approaches to overcome implementation challenges. This study contributes to the understanding of authentic assessment practices in EFL contexts and provides practical insights for educational stakeholders seeking to enhance speaking assessment methods.

Keywords: *Authentic assessment, speaking ability, EFL teachers' perceptions, assessment tasks, senior high school*

INTRODUCTION

Language proficiency encompasses four fundamental skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Among these, speaking holds particular significance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts as it serves as both a crucial medium of communication and an indicator of overall language mastery. Research has demonstrated that effective speaking abilities positively correlate with comprehensive language acquisition and facilitate meaningful communication in real-world contexts (Idayani & Rugaiyah, 2017). Speaking proficiency requires the integration of multiple linguistic components, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, comprehension, and

fluency, making it a complex skill that demands careful pedagogical attention (Jannah & Hartono, 2018).

Assessment plays a vital role in the teaching-learning process, providing essential information about students' understanding and progress (Thomas, 2012; Amua-Sekyi, 2016). Contemporary assessment approaches have evolved alongside learner-centered and communicative teaching methodologies, shifting from traditional progress-focused evaluations to more comprehensive methods that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and capabilities in authentic contexts. This evolution has been particularly pronounced in Indonesia following the 2013 curriculum reforms, which emphasize authentic assessment practices across all subjects, including EFL instruction.

Authentic assessment, as defined by O'Malley and Pierce (1996), encompasses multiple forms of evaluation that reflect students' learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes within relevant classroom activities. This approach offers a diverse assessment menu that enhances students' ability to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and strategies effectively. Furthermore, it promotes self-directed learning, increased motivation, and learner autonomy while providing teachers with valuable insights into whether learning objectives have been met or require additional attention (Widiastuti & Saukah, 2017).

However, preliminary research conducted at SMA N 2 and SMA N 3 Ambon revealed several challenges in implementing authentic assessment in speaking lessons. While teachers employed various authentic assessment methods, including oral interviews, picture-cued descriptions, and oral reports, these approaches often failed to adequately address students' needs and proficiency levels. Despite the apparent benefits of authentic assessment, teachers frequently resorted to repetitive tasks due to limited professional development opportunities and faced constraints related to time and facilities. The performance-based nature of speaking assessment further complicated the implementation of authentic evaluation methods.

This study aims to investigate the current state of authentic assessment implementation in speaking lessons at senior high schools in Ambon, addressing two primary research questions:

1. What types of authentic assessment tasks do EFL teachers use to measure students' speaking skills?
2. What perceptions do EFL teachers have about the use of authentic assessment in speaking lessons?

The findings of this study will contribute to the theoretical understanding of authentic speaking assessment and provide practical insights for educators seeking to enhance their assessment practices in EFL contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Skills in EFL Context

Speaking represents a fundamental skill in language acquisition, often serving as a primary measure of achievement in language learning. The interactive nature of speaking involves direct communication between speakers and listeners, facilitating the exchange of ideas and immediate feedback. According to Bahadorfar and Omidvar (2014), speaking encompasses the transmission of meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols across diverse contexts. The form and meaning in speaking are shaped by speakers' experiences, environment, and communicative purposes. Nunan (2003) emphasizes that speaking proficiency requires learners to understand when, why, and how to employ language across various social situations. Success in speaking is characterized by the ability to engage in meaningful conversations, effectively convey thoughts, and achieve mutual understanding with interlocutors.

Teaching speaking in EFL contexts presents unique challenges and opportunities. Many EFL teachers recognize interaction as crucial for developing speaking abilities in a foreign language. This aligns with Nunan's (2003) perspective that teaching speaking aims to enhance communicative competence, enabling students to express themselves and navigate social and cultural contexts appropriately. Febriyanti (2010) conceptualizes teaching speaking as guiding students to produce English speech sounds, utilize appropriate stress and intonation patterns, select context-appropriate vocabulary, organize thoughts logically, and develop fluency. While recreating authentic foreign language environments within EFL classrooms presents challenges, teachers can prepare students for independent functioning in English-speaking contexts through structured practice and guidance.

Several key principles govern effective speaking instruction in EFL contexts. Nunan (2003) emphasizes creating opportunities for students to develop both fluency and accuracy, with neither aspect receiving disproportionate attention. Teachers should implement pair and group activities to maximize student discussion opportunities while minimizing teacher speaking time. Additionally, meaning negotiation should be emphasized, encouraging students to clarify understanding through requests for clarification, repetition, or explanation. Speaking activities should incorporate both transactional speech, focused on completing specific tasks or exchanging goods and services, and interactional speech, aimed at establishing and maintaining social relationships.

Authentic Assessment Framework

Teaching and assessment are inherently connected in language acquisition, with assessment providing critical feedback on teaching effectiveness and student progress (Brookhart, 2001; Sethusha, 2012). Amua-Sekyi (2016) defines assessment as the evaluation of activities conducted by teachers and students to gather information for improving teaching and learning processes. This integral component of learning provides teachers with insights into student understanding and progress (Widiastuti and Saukah, 2017). Traditional assessment methods, particularly standardized tests, have faced criticism for their limited ability to evaluate diverse student outcomes and higher-order thinking skills.

Wiggins (1990) conceptualizes authentic assessment as tasks requiring students to apply knowledge in solving real-world challenges. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) and Brown (2004) identify four primary categories: performance assessment, portfolio assessment, self-assessment, and teacher observation. Performance assessment involves students generating responses observed across various situations and evaluated using specific rubrics. Portfolio assessments compile systematic collections of student work demonstrating development. Self-assessment promotes student autonomy through direct involvement in the evaluation process, while teacher observation encompasses systematic monitoring of student performance during both spontaneous and planned activities.

The characteristics of authentic assessment, as outlined by Wiggins (1998) and Ayubi, Erlina, and Desvitasari (2021), include tasks that replicate real-life scenarios, require judgment and creativity, and engage students actively with subject matter. These assessments mirror real-world activities, accommodate multiple assessment formats, present ill-structured problems, and encourage students to demonstrate knowledge to specific audiences. These elements contribute to meaningful teaching and learning activities that support both task completion and overall student development.

Authentic Assessment in Speaking Context

Authentic assessment of speaking skills requires careful consideration of students' ability to comprehend and communicate meaningful information in real-world situations. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) outline specific procedures for implementing authentic speaking assessment, including identifying purpose through learner needs analysis, planning assessment timing and instructional goals, developing appropriate rubrics and scoring procedures, establishing

performance standards, engaging students in self and peer assessment, and selecting suitable assessment activities.

The implementation of authentic assessment in speaking contexts offers several advantages. Burns (1999) notes that teachers can evaluate individual student language acquisition by observing activities that demonstrate skills in concrete, meaningful situations. This approach enables teachers to identify learning challenges and support student improvement effectively (Andrade & Cizek, 2010, as cited in Mursyida et al., 2020). Williams (as cited in Ojung & Allida, 2017) emphasizes that authentic assessment allows students to demonstrate learning outcomes by applying knowledge in real-life situations, enhancing comprehension and meaning-making from classroom content.

However, implementing authentic assessment in speaking contexts presents notable challenges. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) emphasize that successful implementation requires thorough understanding and commitment from teachers. Practical constraints include time limitations with large student populations and the complexity of creating authentic assessments, which encompasses managing classroom activities, providing instructions, scoring assignments, and offering feedback (Rukmini & Saputri, 2017). Additionally, authentic assessment often requires more resources than traditional testing methods, potentially increasing implementation costs.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research methodology to investigate teachers' perceptions and implementation of authentic assessment in speaking lessons. Following Ary (2006), this approach was selected for its effectiveness in understanding social phenomena from the perspective of human participants. The qualitative design enabled an in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences, challenges, and strategies in implementing authentic assessment practices within their specific educational contexts.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at three senior high schools in Ambon city: SMA Negeri 2 Ambon, SMA Negeri 3 Ambon, and SMA Negeri 5 Ambon. These schools were selected based on their implementation of the 2013 curriculum and their established English language programs. Seven English teachers participated in the study, distributed as follows: one teacher from SMA Negeri 2 Ambon, two teachers from SMA Negeri 3 Ambon, and four teachers from SMA Negeri 5 Ambon. All participants were experienced educators with more than ten years of teaching

experience and active involvement in professional development programs. The selection of participants was based on their experience in implementing authentic assessment practices and their willingness to participate in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed three primary data collection instruments to ensure comprehensive understanding and methodological triangulation. First, a structured questionnaire was administered to gather initial data about the types of authentic assessment tasks used by teachers. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in implementing authentic assessment. The interview protocol focused on three key areas: implementation processes, perceived benefits, and encountered challenges. Third, document analysis was performed on teachers' assessment materials, lesson plans, and scoring rubrics to validate and complement the interview data.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model (as cited in AECT, 2001), which comprises three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, the researchers systematically selected, focused, simplified, and transformed the raw data from interview transcripts, questionnaires, and documents. The data display phase involved organizing the reduced data into systematic patterns and relationships, facilitating the identification of key themes and patterns. Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification process involved developing initial conclusions about the research questions and verifying these conclusions through reference to the original data and existing literature.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed several validation strategies, including methodological triangulation through multiple data collection methods, member checking with participants to verify interview interpretations, and peer debriefing among the researchers to enhance the analysis's credibility. These procedures helped maintain the rigor and reliability of the research findings while acknowledging the inherent subjectivity in qualitative research.

FINDINGS

Types of Authentic Assessment Tasks Used by EFL Teachers

The investigation of authentic assessment tasks implementation revealed diverse practices among participating teachers. Through systematic analysis of questionnaire responses and document examination, eight distinct assessment types emerged from the nine categories proposed

by O'Malley and Pierce (1996). Table 1 presents a comprehensive distribution of these tasks across all participating teachers.

Table 1. Distribution of Authentic Assessment Tasks

No.	Types of Authentic Assesment Task in Assessing Speaking Skill	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	76	T7
1	Oral Interviews		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
2	Picture-cued Descriptions		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Radio Broadcasts							
4	Video Clips	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
5	Information Gaps							✓
6	Story/Text Retelling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
7	Role Plays	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Oral Reports	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
9	Debates	✓						

Note. √ indicates implementation; - indicates non-implementation

Role-play activities emerged as the predominant assessment method, with all seven participating teachers incorporating this approach into their speaking assessments. This unanimous adoption suggests teachers' recognition of role-play's effectiveness in simulating authentic communication scenarios. The prevalence of role-play activities aligns with communicative language teaching principles, particularly in facilitating meaningful interaction and contextual language use.

Picture-cued descriptions, video clips, story/text retelling, and oral reports demonstrated substantial implementation rates, with six teachers utilizing each of these methods. This high adoption rate indicates teachers' preference for assessment tasks that combine visual stimuli with verbal expression, enabling students to demonstrate both comprehension and production skills. The integration of multimedia elements, particularly through video clips, reflects teachers' adaptation to modern pedagogical approaches.

Oral interviews, despite their potential for authentic one-on-one assessment, showed moderate adoption with five teachers implementing this method. This pattern might reflect the practical constraints of conducting individual interviews in large classroom settings. The limited implementation of information gaps and debates, each used by only one teacher, suggests potential challenges in orchestrating these more complex interactive tasks.

Analysis of individual teacher practices revealed varying degrees of assessment diversification. The data presented in Table 2 demonstrates that while some teachers, particularly T7, implemented a broad range of assessment tasks (77.8% of possible tasks), others maintained a more focused approach. This variation might reflect differences in teaching experience, professional development exposure, or institutional resources.

Table 2. Implementation Frequency of Authentic Assessment Tasks

Teacher	Number of Tasks Implemented	Percentage of Total Tasks
T1	5	55.6
T2	6	66.7
T3	6	66.7
T4	5	55.6
T5	4	44.4
T6	5	55.6
T7	7	77.8

Teachers' Perceptions of Authentic Assessment Implementation

Teachers' perceptions regarding authentic assessment implementation encompassed three primary dimensions: procedural considerations, perceived benefits, and implementation challenges. These findings, systematically categorized in Table 3, emerged from detailed analysis of semi-structured interview data and document examination.

Table 3. Teachers' Perceptions on Implementation of Authentic Assessment

Category	Key Findings
Implementation Process	• Systematic integration with learning objectives
	• Development of comprehensive assessment criteria
	• Regular student engagement and feedback mechanisms
	• Structured planning and preparation procedures
	• Continuous evaluation and modification of methods
Benefits	• Enhanced student motivation and participation
	• Development of practical communication skills
	• Improved learning outcomes and assessment accuracy

Category	Key Findings
	• Professional development opportunities for teachers
	• Strengthened classroom engagement
	• Time constraints in large class settings
	• Limited availability of resources and facilities
Challenges	• Varying levels of student readiness and proficiency
	• Complexity in assessment administration
	• Balancing individual and group assessment needs

The implementation process revealed a structured approach among participating teachers. Most participants emphasized the importance of systematic planning and preparation, particularly in aligning assessment tasks with curriculum objectives. Teachers demonstrated awareness of the need for clear assessment criteria and rubric development, though their approaches varied based on institutional contexts and student needs.

Regarding pedagogical benefits, teachers consistently reported positive impacts on student engagement and learning outcomes. The authentic nature of assessments was perceived to enhance student motivation by establishing clear connections between classroom activities and real-world communication needs. Teachers particularly valued the opportunity to observe and evaluate students' practical language application skills.

Professional benefits extended beyond immediate classroom outcomes. Teachers reported that implementing authentic assessment enhanced their own professional development by necessitating continuous refinement of assessment strategies and deeper engagement with pedagogical principles. This professional growth aspect emerged as an unexpected but significant benefit of authentic assessment implementation.

The challenges identified through this investigation centered on practical and pedagogical constraints. Time management emerged as a primary concern, particularly in large classes where individual assessment requirements posed significant logistical challenges. Resource limitations and varying student proficiency levels further complicated implementation efforts, requiring teachers to develop adaptive strategies and modified assessment approaches.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of findings from this study reveals several significant insights into the implementation of authentic assessment for speaking skills in EFL contexts at senior high schools

in Ambon. The analysis aligns with the research objectives and provides meaningful implications for pedagogical practice and assessment methodology.

The investigation into authentic assessment task implementation revealed that teachers utilized eight out of nine tasks proposed by O'Malley and Pierce (1996), demonstrating substantial adoption of authentic assessment principles. Role-play emerged as the predominant assessment method, implemented by all participating teachers. This finding aligns with previous research by Hidayah (2017) and Sahyoni and Zaim (2017), who identified role-play as an effective tool for authentic speaking assessment. The preference for role-play activities suggests teachers' recognition of its efficacy in simulating real-world communication scenarios while allowing for controlled assessment conditions.

The varied implementation patterns across different assessment tasks warrant careful consideration. While tasks such as picture-cued descriptions, video clips, and oral reports showed high adoption rates, information gaps and debates were minimally utilized. This disparity might reflect both practical constraints and pedagogical preferences, echoing findings from Idayani and Rugaiyah's (2017) study on assessment strategies. The complete absence of radio broadcast tasks, despite their potential for authentic listening-speaking integration, suggests a possible gap in assessment diversity that merits further investigation.

Teachers' implementation processes demonstrated both strengths and areas for development. The findings indicate systematic approaches to assessment planning and execution, particularly in establishing clear learning objectives and assessment criteria. However, variations in rubric development and scoring procedures suggest potential inconsistencies in assessment standardization. This observation aligns with Jannah and Hartono's (2018) findings regarding the challenges of maintaining assessment consistency in speaking evaluation. The emphasis on regular student feedback and engagement reflects adherence to O'Malley and Pierce's (1996) recommendations for authentic assessment implementation, though the depth of student involvement in self-assessment varied across participants.

The perceived benefits of authentic assessment implementation encompassed multiple dimensions of the teaching-learning process. Teachers reported enhanced student motivation and improved practical language skills, supporting Andrade and Cizek's (2010) assertions regarding the positive impact of authentic assessment on learning outcomes. The development of both hard and soft skills through authentic assessment tasks suggests broader educational benefits beyond language proficiency, consistent with Williams' (cited in Ojung & Allida, 2017) findings on the comprehensive impact of authentic assessment practices.

Implementation challenges identified in this study reflect both systemic and pedagogical concerns. Time constraints and large class sizes emerged as primary obstacles, supporting Rukmini and Saputri's (2017) findings on practical challenges in authentic assessment implementation. The complexity of assessment administration and resource limitations further complicated implementation efforts. However, teachers demonstrated adaptability in developing strategies to address these challenges, including modified assessment approaches and group evaluation methods. This adaptive response indicates professional resilience and commitment to authentic assessment principles despite practical constraints.

The findings suggest implications for both practice and policy in EFL assessment. The need for enhanced professional development opportunities, particularly in assessment design and rubric development, emerges as a critical consideration. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of institutional support in providing necessary resources and facilitating appropriate class sizes for effective authentic assessment implementation. These implications align with broader discussions in the literature regarding the conditions necessary for successful authentic assessment practices in language education.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the implementation of authentic assessment in speaking lessons at senior high schools in Ambon, examining both the types of assessment tasks employed and teachers' perceptions of their implementation. The findings revealed that teachers utilized eight distinct authentic assessment tasks, with role-play emerging as the predominantly implemented method across all participants. Picture-cued descriptions, video clips, story/text retelling, and oral reports demonstrated substantial adoption rates, while information gaps and debates showed limited implementation. Teachers' perceptions indicated positive attitudes toward authentic assessment, acknowledging its benefits in enhancing student motivation, developing practical skills, and improving learning outcomes. However, implementation challenges persisted, particularly concerning time constraints, large class sizes, resource limitations, and assessment complexity. The systematic analysis of these findings contributes to the broader understanding of authentic assessment practices in EFL contexts and provides valuable insights for educational stakeholders.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations emerge for enhancing authentic assessment implementation in EFL contexts. First, educational institutions should prioritize professional development programs focused on authentic assessment methodology, particularly in areas of task design, rubric development, and student engagement strategies. Second,

administrators should consider practical constraints such as class size and resource availability when developing assessment policies. Third, teachers should be encouraged to diversify their assessment tasks, particularly in implementing currently underutilized methods such as information gaps and debates. Future research could explore the effectiveness of specific authentic assessment tasks in different educational contexts and investigate strategies for overcoming identified implementation challenges. These efforts would contribute to the continued development of effective authentic assessment practices in EFL education, ultimately enhancing students' speaking proficiency and overall language competence.

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