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A STUDY ON LEVELS AND VIEWS OF CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT LITERACY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

LIM EE YIE



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SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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**A STUDY ON LEVELS AND VIEWS OF CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT
LITERACY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS**

LIM EE YIE



**DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO QUALIFY FOR A
MASTER'S DEGREE IN EDUCATION
(TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE)
(RESEARCH AND COURSEWORK MODE)**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION
SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY**

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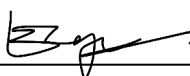
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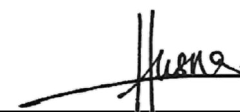
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ABSTRACT

Classroom Assessment is slowly replacing standardized examinations in Malaysia primary schools. In year 2020, it is announced by the Ministry of Education that the examination for primary pupils is abolished, and pupils will be assessed through Classroom Assessment. Therefore, teachers' assessment knowledge and competence has become a concern for many. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the level of assessment literacy of primary school English Language teachers and their views on assessment literacy and classroom assessment in primary schools. For this study, survey and interviews is used to gain insights regarding the research questions outlined. Data is collected through survey and interview sessions. The data gained from inventory survey is analyzed using descriptive analysis through IBM SPSS 23. The data gained from interview sessions is analyzed using thematic analysis where the data was tabulated and grouped according to its themes. The research shows that most teachers (80%) have fair assessment literacy. Most of the respondents also suggested that more workshop should be held and more training should be provided.



KAJIAN MENGENAI TAHAP LITERASI DAN PANDANGAN PENTAKSIRAN BILIK DARJAH DALAM KALANGAN GURU SEKOLAH RENDAH

ABSTRAK

Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah telah menggantikan peperiksaan standard di sekolah rendah Malaysia secara perlahan-lahan. Pada tahun 2020, adalah diumumkan oleh Kementerian Pelajaran bahawa peperiksaan standard dihapuskan untuk semua murid sekolah rendah, dan mereka akan dinilai melalui Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah. Ekoran itu, tujuan utama kajian ini dilakukan adalah untuk mengkaji tahap literasi pentaksiran guru Bahasa Inggeris sekolah rendah. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti pandangan guru Bahasa Inggeris mengenai Literasi Pentaksiran dan Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah. Untuk kajian ini, tinjauan dan wawancara digunakan untuk mendapatkan pandangan mengenai soalan penyelidikan yang dinyatakan. Data dikumpulkan melalui sesi tinjauan dan sesi temu bual. Data yang diperolehi daripada tinjauan inventori dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis deskriptif melalui IBM SPSS 23. Data yang diperolehi daripada sesi temuduga dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis tematik di mana data telah ditabulasi dan dikumpulkan mengikut temanya. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan guru (80%) memiliki tahap literasi pentaksiran yang sederhana. Kebanyakan responden juga mencadangkan bahawa lebih banyak bengkel perlu dijalankan dan lebih banyak latihan perlu diberikan kepada para guru.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The first chapter will introduce and discuss details of the research, including the research background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions and the significance of the research.

The study seeks to find out the assessment literacy of primary school English Language teachers in a district in Malaysia. Classroom Assessment (Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah), previously known as school-based assessment is first introduced to Malaysia's education system in year 2011. The study starts by introducing the idea



behind assessment literacy, the framework of the study and then follows with research questions.

Chapter two provides a literature review of the Classroom Assessment system in Malaysia and issues related to assessment literacy. Chapter three then provides the methodology of the study. Chapter four presents the analyses and results of the study in answering the research questions proposed. Finally, chapter five illustrates the findings of the study, discussions of findings, implications of the results, limitation of the study and list out the suggestions for future work.

1.2 Background of the Study



In recent years, education systems around the world are going through reforms in pupils' performance which is aimed at raising the bar for all pupils and closing the gap for lower performing group (Fullan, 2011) and also to provide pupils with the competencies and higher order thinking skills to prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century (Branden, 2012). Traditional methods of teaching and assessing pupils may not work as effectively or as relevantly today. In today's fast moving world, pupils need to be equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills and values to face the challenges in the 21st century. Hence, reforms in education are inevitable.

Malaysia also had several notable reforms rolled out by the Ministry of Education (MoE). In October 2011, the Ministry of Education launched a comprehensive review



of the education system in Malaysia in order to develop a new National Education Blueprint. The blueprint states: “The curriculum will still stress on pupil-centred and differentiated teaching, but it will have a greater emphasis on problem-based and project-based work, a streamlined set of subjects or themes and formative assessments.” In this year, a type of formative assessment known as School-based Assessment was introduced as a holistic assessment system carried out in schools by teachers to assess pupils’ cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects, which is also in line with Malaysia’s National Philosophy of Education.

Being a nation that upholds English as a second language, Malaysia also does not lose out in consolidating the quality of English Language. In Year 2015, the Ministry of Education (MoE) launched the Roadmap for English Language Education in Malaysia, which spans from year 2015 to 2025 to align the standard of English taught in schools and institutions of higher learning with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

CEFR is a benchmark for an international standard that focuses on producing learners who can communicate and interact in any language, in this instance, English. The roadmap takes a cohesive approach where the English language curriculum, teaching and learning process and materials, and teacher training are integrated. With an emphasis on the ability to communicate, CEFR spells out the learning outcomes or skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing that pupils should attain at every stage of learning.

This move indicates that the Malaysian government is constantly monitoring the English proficiency levels of Malaysians, and is constantly bringing up the status of English in Malaysia. Besides the curriculum aspect, with the rising standards of education as a consequence of globalization, Malaysia has also made changes to the existing way of assessing pupils.

Previously, assessment in Malaysia has always focused on national exams and standardized exams. Pupils are required to take a test on the same questions, in the same way and are scored in the same manner. This allows pupils to compare their individual performance with each other. In recent years, new form of assessment is introduced to schools all over the nation and it is called “Classroom Assessment” (Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah).

According to Anuar Ahmad, a lecturer at the Centre of Community Education and Wellbeing, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Malaysia must move to a better, newer form of assessment that is more appropriate with time and the future. ”Through the current examination system, it is possible for a student to get A, B or C, but how far does a student knows on the subject that is taught, his/her ability to master or practise it,” he said.

For example, he said, there are students who can memorise and obtain A in a particular subject, but whether the student is able to give arguments or think outside of what he/she memorised is questionable.

“Therefore, how are we to build an innovative, creative group of students if they still practice the existing examination system. This evaluation system must be raised to a new form if we want to produce a creative and innovative generation,” he said.

In these recent years, we can see a shift in assessment methods in Malaysia’s education system. The dependence on examinations and emphasis on academic achievement, which is deemed as “exam-oriented”, is slowly decreasing. Classroom Assessment is rolled up to replace the traditional pen-and-paper summative examination method.

Different from standardized examination that comes with comparison and competition between schools, states and even pupils individually, Classroom Assessment is an assessment that is authentic and holistic, which focused more on the development and learning process of pupils. Apart from lowering the pressure of pupils and teachers to achieve excellent academic performance, Classroom Assessment can also create more fun and meaningful learning culture. Starting in Year 2019, schools will practice reinforced Classroom Assessment with guidance from the State Education Department and the District Education Office.

PBD was created with a variety of objectives in mind, including lessening the stress of tests in the early years, fostering a culture of joyful learning, assisting instructors in measuring students' learning progress holistically, and providing equal learning opportunities for all pupils (Ministry of Education, 2019). PBD is also said to

be able to provide an equal learning space to all students since the assessment process will be carried out throughout the learning process and students have ample opportunities to improve on their weaknesses (Sidhu, Kaur & Chi, 2018).

Quoting Dr Amin Senin, the Education director-general in a newspaper report, when implementing classroom assessment, pupils will be “evaluated continuously with various types of assessments involving knowledge, skills, and values that enable parents to recognise their children's development and identify their strengths and weaknesses” (Rajaendram, Lee, & Menon, 2018). Classroom assessment enables each pupil to be assessed based on their individual learning capabilities, and not comparatively.

On 19 December 2018, it is announced by the Ministry of Education (MOE) that the mid-year examination and final year examination for pupils in Lower Primary (Year 1, 2 and 3) will be abolished. The abolition of mid-year and end-of-year examination practice at Lower Primary is aimed to enable teachers to give more focus to the teaching and learning process that can help build the character of the pupils. The examination will be fully replaced by Classroom Assessment starting from year 2019.

In Year 2020, due to the pandemic, Year 6 pupils were not able to go to school for a long period of time since March. It was then announced later that the Ministry of Education has decided to abolish the Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR), a national examination taken by all pupils in Malaysia at the end of their sixth year in

primary school. Classroom Assessment is fully implemented since then to replace examinations.

Due to the implementation of Classroom Assessment, there has been a growth of expectations regarding school teachers' assessment knowledge and skills. School teachers are required to continuously carry out Classroom Assessment professionally that align with the learning outcomes in the curriculum standards as a way of improving pupils' learning ability and performances.

However, one very important question arises – do the Malaysian teachers, who are very familiarized by the traditional pen-and-paper exams, have the adequate knowledge to conduct Classroom Assessment? Do they possess high assessment literacy which will help them to assess pupils validly and reliably? This study is carried out to investigate this matter.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Malaysian school teachers have always been familiar with summative exams. The summative exams, which take place up to 4 times a year, has always been the only way to assess pupils in Malaysia then, due to the exam-orientated learning culture in the country that was adapted from the British system during colonial period (Tong, 2014). It was easy then – the teachers in charge only need to set question papers, and after the pupils answer the questions in the time given, the class' English teacher just have to



mark them according to the rubrics given. The marks given will determine the pupils' learning achievement.

Now that the abolishment of half year and year end school examination for pupils in Lower Primary as well as the abolishment of the Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) has been made by the Ministry of Education, the only way for Malaysian teachers to assess the pupils will be via Classroom Assessment.

There have been a lot of voices from the parents and teachers since the announcement, some are supportive and some are sceptical about it. On an online newspaper report, Melaka Action Group for Parents in Education chairman Mak Chee Kin was supportive of the announcement but said that the assessment should also be conducted objectively. "Will the teachers be properly trained? Will they be burdened with extra paperwork? All these need to be looked into before implementation" (Priya & Menon, 2018).

There have also been concerns from parents on whether teachers are competent or skilled enough to assess their children without the black and white exam papers. For example, Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE) chairman Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim has rightly asked whether teachers in Malaysia are prepared for a system with no examinations in primary and lower secondary schools like in Finland (Teng, 2018).

"There is what I call a "crisis of confidence" in Malaysia. Why? Because parents are not confident that teachers will do their work properly if there are no examinations.



Teachers prefer the approach of “teaching to the test” because it is simpler and not as demanding as teaching to develop skills” (Teng, 2018).

Melaka Action Group for Parents (Magpie) chairman Mak Chee Kin also asked if teachers were fully prepared to implement Classroom Assessment. “Pupils have been taught using the old methods, which are reading and memorising the subjects. Are teachers ready for it? Can the teachers assess pupils objectively? Will this assessment be consistent?” (Ho, 2018).

From these reports, we can see that many are concern if Malaysian teachers are really prepared to carry out Classroom Assessment. Some even questioned the competency of teachers in assessing the pupils.

This statement is also supported by a study conducted by Siti Hauzimah (2018) who found that there is confusion among teachers that makes them not ready to implement PBD in schools.

This can be worrying as the success of any educational transformation that is set in place, according to Norazilawati, Noraini, Rosnidar, Abdul Talib and Wong (2015), rests on the individuals that execute - teachers in the school. If there are still teachers who are hesitant to accept change, a paradigm cannot be achieved (Norazilawati, 2012). According to Norazilawati, Noraini, Rosnidar, Abdul Talib and Wong (2015), the result of any educational transformation that is implemented depends on the factors that implement the assessment, namely the teachers in the school. A paradigm cannot



be obtained if there are still teachers who are not confident about accepting change (Norazilawati, 2012).

Malaysian school teachers are familiar with formal assessment, which are standardized testing and have always followed the same practices when preparing these tests. It is found that a majority of the teachers conducted formal assessments mainly due to the requirements of the school and ministry while following pre-determined steps in preparing a test (Looi & Rethinasamy, 2013). The same study also revealed Malaysian teachers' high reliance on commercial books in helping them to prepare the content for tests. Thus, this revelation also prompts questions on whether teachers are able to validly assess the pupils using other methods or materials specifically for classroom assessment.



Teachers in Malaysia are trained to assess pupils based on the exam papers. Hence, they may not be familiar with formative assessment like the newly-introduced Classroom Assessment. As a result, it is important to find out teachers' assessment literacy, especially lately when concerns on teachers' competence to assess pupils correctly are voiced out after the abolishment of examination for all the primary school pupils.

Assessment is inherently a process of professional judgment (McMillan, 2000). In order to be an effective educator, it is crucial to have the knowledge and assessment skills in order to assess a pupil correctly. It is also important for teachers to have high assessment literacy so that the parents can put their trust on the Classroom Assessment results that are replacing the traditional pen-and-paper general examination results.





1.4 Purpose of the Study

Based on the researcher's personal experience when attending Classroom Assessment courses provided by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the researcher noticed that the master trainers of Classroom Assessment courses mostly gave ideas to teachers on creative ways to assess the pupils, giving less focus on the process and how-to. There have been various reports of school teachers complaining about its implementation, ever since Classroom Assessment was first introduced back then in year 2011 when it was known as School Assessment (Pentaksiran Sekolah). Quoting from a letter published in a newspaper report, "The abolition of examinations is one thing but the bigger problem is the workload has been greatly increased due to inadequate training, vague instructions and burdensome paperwork." (Wong, 2013) The terms "inadequate training" and "vague instruction" here also project that school teachers may lack sufficient training and clear instruction on how to implement Classroom Assessment, which suggest that teachers may not have sound and solid educational knowledge and skills in assessing pupils learning in the classroom.

Fully reinforced in year 2019 for lower primary school pupils focusing on pupil learning and full implementation in primary schools after the UPSR was abolished, Classroom Assessment is quite a relatively new thing to the Malaysian primary teachers. Hence, the assessment literacy of English teachers is of prior importance as teachers will be the one to assess pupils' content knowledge and skills. Since there is a shift in education in terms of assessment, it is important to find out if the teachers are ready for the change and if they have the literacy to correctly implement Classroom Assessment.



Thus, the issue surfaced here is – do English teachers have enough knowledge to assess pupils' English proficiency and language achievement when conducting Classroom Assessment? The problem statement which correlates to this question is explored in this research. The researcher wishes to find out the levels of assessment literacy amongst primary school English teachers.

Hence, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the assessment literacy of primary school English Language teachers in a district in Malaysia. It also aims to examine English teachers' views on assessment literacy and Classroom Assessment in primary schools.

1.5 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

- i.) to investigate the level of assessment literacy of primary school English Language teachers.
- ii.) to examine English teachers' views on assessment literacy and Classroom Assessment in primary schools.



1.6 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

- i.) What is the assessment literacy level of primary school English Language teachers?
- ii.) What are the English teachers' views on assessment literacy and Classroom Assessment in primary schools?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research allows in-service English teachers to view and reflect on their assessment literacy. It is important for ESL teachers to realize their assessment literacy levels as the mastery of assessment literacy could assist them to make important decisions regarding pupils' learning outcome. Assessment literacy can serve as a guideline for ESL teachers to teach English simultaneously into their teaching to bring about effective pupils learning.

The researcher also expects that the results of the study are able to significantly contribute to the stakeholders, such as the State Education Department and the District Education Office. Through this research, we are also able to gain insights into whether the primary English Language teachers have the assessment literacy to assess pupils and have the readiness to implement Classroom Assessment.



Moreover, it is able to show the educational policy makers what are the challenges faced by the English teachers when conducting Classroom Assessment and what are some of the teachers' thoughts on Classroom Assessment, so that relevant training programs can be conducted to help ESL teachers to implement Classroom Assessment more effectively.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

One of the main limitations of this study is that this research is conducted via inventory and interviews, thus the honesty of the respondents is heavily relied on. Dishonesty of respondents when answering the inventory may bring inaccuracy to the research.

Moreover, the population for this research is limited to English teachers in Muallim District in Perak state. Hence, there may be generalisation issue. The sample size is insufficient to generalize the assessment literacy of all ESL teachers in Malaysian primary schools.

Furthermore, the researcher could only interview 5 teachers due to time constraints as the duration of the research is not long. There is also administrative constraint as the researcher is a full time school teacher and is not allowed to go to other schools during working hour. This research is a small scale study.

In addition, this study is carried out on primary school English teachers, regardless of whether they are English optionists or non-English optionists. There may be a

difference of assessment literacy amongst English optionists and non—English optionists. Future research on this difference can be explored.

1.9 Definitions of Key Terms

In order to avoid the possibility of having missed interpretation, it is important to define the key terms used in this study. The following terms are defined in the context in which they are utilized in this research:

1.9.1 Assessment Literacy

“Assessment Literacy” is central to this study. It is hence a terminology that should be defined or described clearly. “Assessment Literacy” is defined as the ability to gather dependable and quality information about pupil achievement and the ability to use information effectively to maximize pupils’ achievement (Stiggins, 2001). A teacher who possesses a high level of assessment literacy indicates that he or she knows how to assess pupils, by gathering information and using the information to help the pupils to achieve better results.

There are seven standards to determine a teacher’s assessment literacy, which is named Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Pupils, developed by the National Council on Measurement in Education, American

Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association (NEA). These seven standards will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

In this research, the assessment literacy of English teachers when carrying out Classroom Assessment in primary schools is examined. It is conducted to find out if English teachers have the sound knowledge and competency to assess pupils correctly when implementing Classroom Assessment.

1.9.2 Classroom Assessment

Classroom Assessment is assessment done in class to better understand pupils' learning. It is aimed to improve the learning process, rather than just assigning grades.

In Malaysia, Classroom Assessment is a component under School-based Assessment. Under School-based Assessment, there are Classroom Assessment, Physical Activity, Sports and Co-curriculum Assessment (Pentaksiran Aktiviti Jasmani, Sukan dan Ko-kurikulum), Psychometric Assessment (Pentaksiran Psikometrik) and Central Assessment (Pentaksiran Pusat).

According to Malaysian Examination Board, Classroom Assessment is a form of formative assessment carried out in school and is planned, administered, scored and reported in a mannered way based on the procedures from the Malaysian Examination Syndicate. It is a continuous assessment done during the teaching and learning session to help obtain information on pupil development, progress, abilities and achievement.

It is done as learning, for learning and about learning. Classroom Assessment is done not to compare a pupil's level of achievement to another pupil's, but solely to see an individual's progress in learning, besides helping teachers to reflect on their own teaching.

Classroom Assessment was known as School Assessment (Pentaksiran Sekolah) back in year 2011 when it was first introduced. The term was then changed to Classroom Assessment (Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah) in year 2016.

In this research, the researcher looks into the views of English teachers on Classroom Assessment, which is a type of formative assessment carried out by the end of a lesson to find out if pupils are able to achieve the learning objectives. Common Classroom Assessment methods include observation, project works, presentation, written tasks and quizzes.

1.10 Summary

In brief, this chapter aims to provide an outline of the research by pinpointing the problem statement, the research objectives and the research questions. By highlighting the aforementioned areas, the research is equipped with a definite direction as to what the researcher intends to investigate.

Moreover, the clarification of the key terms also avoids the possibility of having misinterpretation.