

NEED ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS' ASSESSMENT

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Abstract: This study examines the assessment needs of English for Young Learners (EYL) in Indonesian primary schools using a qualitative research design. The research aims to identify current assessment practices, challenges faced by teachers, and what is needed to improve assessment quality for young learners. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with three EYL teachers, and analysis of lesson plans, worksheets, and assessment reports from three different schools. The findings indicate that assessment practices are still dominated by traditional written tasks, such as worksheets and quizzes, which account for most classroom assessments. These methods are not fully appropriate for young learners, who require interactive, play-based, and performance-based activities. Observations also show limited use of speaking tasks, games, and authentic assessments. Teachers provide minimal feedback, and none use rubrics or checklists to guide scoring. Interviews reveal that teachers have limited assessment literacy due to a lack of training in child language evaluation. Time limitations, class size, and curriculum demands also hinder the implementation of developmentally appropriate assessment. The study concludes that teachers need practical, child-friendly assessment tools—such as simple rubrics, checklists, and performance task templates—and professional development in authentic and age-appropriate assessment strategies.

A. Introduction

The teaching of English for Young Learners (EYL) has increasingly become a priority in many national education systems, including Indonesia. As young learners are at the early stages of cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development, they require assessment approaches that are developmentally appropriate, engaging, and aligned with their unique learning characteristics. Cameron (2001) emphasizes that assessment for young learners should not only evaluate linguistic knowledge but also support learning processes that are playful, meaningful, and integrated with classroom activities. Similarly, McKay (2006) states that young learners benefit most from assessment practices that emphasize performance, creativity, and communicative use rather than memorization of isolated vocabulary items or grammar rules.

In theory, assessment in EYL contexts should utilize authentic, continuous, and formative approaches. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) argue that assessment for children should avoid high-stakes testing and instead employ checklists, portfolios, observation notes, oral tasks, games, and project-based evaluations. These forms of assessment allow teachers to capture children's interaction, imagination, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and overall communicative competence.

However, evidence from real classroom settings in Indonesia indicates a significant mismatch between theoretical recommendations and actual practices. Field observations in multiple elementary schools show that English assessment continues to rely heavily on written worksheets, vocabulary memorization, and summative tests. Teachers frequently stated that they used "LKS" and periodic quizzes because they lacked training in formative assessment or tools for performance-based evaluation. In one public school in Riau Province, teachers

admitted they rarely assessed speaking skills formally due to large class sizes and limited time allocation for English lessons.

In several private schools, teachers attempted to incorporate storytelling or simple oral tasks but lacked scoring rubrics, measurable criteria, and consistent procedures. Meanwhile, in rural schools, many English teachers are non-English majors and express uncertainty about how to assess listening and speaking effectively. Classroom observations further reveal that young learners show higher engagement during activities such as games, songs, and picture-based speaking prompts, yet these performances often go unrecorded because teachers lack structured documentation methods.

These challenges point to an urgent need to conduct a comprehensive needs analysis focusing on assessment practices in EYL classrooms. A qualitative research approach is appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore teachers' challenges, learners' needs, classroom realities, and institutional expectations in depth (Creswell, 2014). Through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, the study can identify what teachers need in terms of training, assessment tools, guidelines, and support systems to implement more meaningful evaluations for young learners.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the needs, challenges, and contextual factors related to assessment for English for Young Learners. The results are expected to provide valuable recommendations for improving assessment design and implementation to better support children's language development.

B. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the purpose of the study is to explore teachers' assessment practices, challenges, and needs in English for Young Learners (EYL) classrooms in depth and in their natural settings. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research aims to understand human experiences and social phenomena from the participants' perspectives. The descriptive design allows the researcher to portray real classroom conditions, behaviours, and assessment processes without manipulating variables.

This diversity ensures that the data represent various conditions such as class size, availability of resources, teacher qualifications, and teaching environments. The setting provides real classroom situations where assessment practices naturally occur during routine English lessons.

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with English teachers and school leaders to obtain detailed insights into assessment practices, challenges, needs, and school policies. Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into emerging issues (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

C. Findings and Discussion

Limited Speaking and Listening Assessment

Teachers rarely conducted formal speaking assessments due to time constraints and large class sizes. Speaking opportunities occurred in short question-answer routines, Listening assessments were limited to simple repetition activities, No structured rubrics were used for oral skills.

Minimal Use of Performance-Based Assessment

Activities such as storytelling, role-play, projects, or games were conducted occasionally but not assessed formally. Many teachers allowed these activities only for motivation, not evaluation. Example from observation: During a storytelling activity, students performed enthusiastically, yet the teacher recorded no assessment results.

Limited Professional Knowledge

Teachers expressed difficulty in designing appropriate assessment instruments. Common statements include: *"I don't know how to make a rubric for children."* and *"We were never taught assessment for young learners in training."*

The findings show a gap between recommended EYL assessment practices (Cameron, 2001; McKay, 2006) and actual classroom implementation. Literature emphasizes authentic, ongoing, and performance-based assessment, yet schools rely on written tests. Challenges found in this study—large classes, limited training, time constraints—align with Astuti (2019) and Sari & Anggraini (2020), confirming that difficulties are widespread in Indonesia. This study reinforces Richards' (2001) and Hutchinson & Waters' (1987) theory that needs arise from contextual constraints, not only teacher knowledge. Institutional policy, materials, workload, and teacher qualifications strongly influence assessment practices. presented comprehensive findings from multiple data sources. The results show that EYL assessment practices in the observed schools are still traditional, unstructured, and not aligned with the principles of young learner development. There is a clear need for practical, easy-to-use assessment tools and teacher training to improve assessment quality.

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