DOES AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING? EXPERIENCE OF TWO EFL TEACHERS IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of authentic assessment on students' critical thinking in English classes. The study targeted two English teachers who had experience using authentic assessment in their classrooms. Data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and documentation. The findings of the study showed that authentic assessment had a positive impact on students' critical thinking. Students who participated in authentic assessments were more motivated to learn, were better able to apply their English skills in a real-world context and were more likely to engage in critical thinking. The study also identified several opportunities/dispositions that promoted students' critical thinking in authentic assessments. These included teamwork and monitoring, which helped students identify other people's ideas, evaluate the evidence for a particular issue, reflect on an issue by bringing in logical opinions, draw conclusions about an issue, and present their points of view. The findings of this study suggest that authentic assessment is a valuable tool for promoting critical thinking in English classes. Authentic assessments can help students develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in college and the workplace.

Keywords: Authentic assessment, Critical thinking, English education

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking is a skill emphasized in policy, particularly the newest curriculum known as "Kurikulum Merdeka," which is required of graduates in Indonesia. However, a number of factors influence the growth and promotion of critical thinking in Indonesia. A survey of high school students in Bengkulu, Indonesia showed that their average scores on providing simple explanations, presenting advanced delineation, and making assumptions and integration were in the low category (Fitriani, Zubaidah & Hidayati, 2022). This indicates that many schools in Indonesia have not optimally trained their students' critical thinking skills. Lack of relevant practices on critical thinking in Indonesian education systems leads to the feeling of less confidence in articulating ideas among Indonesian students studying public health in Australia (Pertiwi, Kurniawan & Ariwinanti, 2021)

There are some challenges to teaching critical thinking in Indonesia. The teacher-centered teaching approach in Indonesian classrooms may hinder the

growth of critical thinking (Indah & Kusuma, 2016). A shift towards more student-centered and interactive teaching methods could help foster critical thinking skills. A study from Indah and Kusuma (2016) found that expressing critical thinking in English writing courses in the Indonesian context can be challenging for students. This highlights the need for support and guidance in developing critical thinking skills in the English language.

By having critical thinking, students will be able to measure the points out and analyze something or a situation according to their dimensions and understandings. According to Wechsler *et al.*, (2018), critical thinking is a complex process that implicates a high-level reasoning process in achieving the desired results, involving questioning the source of knowledge, testing the validity of the information obtained, analyzing its reliability, and drawing an explanation according to a particular task or situation. Moreover, critical thinking is conceptualized as the ability to be responsible for the thoughts that are made in making decisions, students tend to learn better by actively communicating with each other in certain academic content if students are encouraged to apply critical thinking when comparing views and ideas (Vdovina and Gaibisso, 2013). Both definitions of the concepts of critical thinking highlight that critical thinking is the ability to analyze the source of information, not taking direct understanding without looking for the related things, from where the source is obtained and what are the impacts and consequences of the points. If students have critical thinking, they will be more active because unconsciously they share each other thoughts about the point they are in.

According to Fook and Sidhu (2010) assessment is the information process of students' learning abilities referring to the evaluation of overall student performance in producing assumptions about learning which include the quality and achievement of students. The assessment is given to see students' outcomes of learning and purposes to notice whether the strategy or the methods of the learning must have concern or increase its improvement to achieve effective learning. One of the assessments that is believed to promote critical thinking is authentic assessment. Madeline et.al (2022) have found that authentic assessment improves

the outcome among graduate students in their study. This study tries to shed light on the application of authentic assessment in promoting critical thinking in the Indonesian context by investigating EFL teachers. This study is guided by the following research questions:

a. What are the roles of authentic assessment in English classroom?
b. To what extent does authentic materials promote critical thinking?

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment is a kind of assessment that is resemblance to the professional real-world and its educational goals that stresses to the competency development professionals, also with the situations that students have to deal on their real work placement (Gulikers, Bastiaens and Kirschner, 2006). According to Syafrizal, Paharnzah and Nuraeni (2020) authentic assessment is multiple forms of assessment that requires students to use their competencies such as; knowledge, skills and attitudes to prepare and solve their real-world problem. Specifically, according to the regulation of the minister of Education and Culture No. 81, 2013 about the implementation of authentic assessment, figures out that authentic assessment is forms of assessment that are dealing with students' behavior, knowledge and skill. The purpose of authentic assessment is to enhance the learning process to develop students' relevant competencies that would be useful in their real-world experiences (Naidu and Karunanayaka, 2021). The use of authentic assessment tends to encourage students to learn by in depth., as study conducted by (Raymond *et al.*, 2013) authentic assessment generally aims to stimulate students to learn more deeply, enable students to develop professionally and increase learning motivation with students' perceptions that are relevant to where they are studying. The implementation of authentic assessment provides some other benefits; (1) identifying the level and expected competences of the students, (2) encouraging students to perform in real and meaningful situation, (3) Providing students with the opportunity to construct their learning outcomes based on their knowledge and relevant to their situation, and (4) integrating the process of teaching, learning and assessment activity (Galih Susani, 2018).

There are several types of authentic assessment that can be conducted in learning practices, those are; performance assessment, project assessment and

portfolio assessment (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996 cited in Rukmini and Saputri, 2017).

Performance Assessment

Marzano, Pickering and McTighe (1993) mention that "performance assessment is included as an authentic assessment that refers to variety of tasks and situations in which students are given the opportunities to demonstrate their understanding to apply the knowledge, skills, habits of mind in a variety of contexts." Performance assessment can be implemented in a classroom as an engagement in developing students' comprehension through the practice that combines with knowledge (knowledge, skills and attitudes). Performance assessment contains response tasks and items that aimed at measuring the students' individual performance on a certain skill such as their critical thinking and their perspective taking, performance assessment stimulate students' real-world decisions and interpretation-situations in their daily (Shavelson *et al.*, 2019) as well as the study by Munif, Fauziati and Marmanto (2019) performance assessment offers learning that demonstrate students' content and sets of additional skills such as; creativity and teamwork and behavior that are needed in the classroom and real-world.

Project Assessment

Project is an assessment require students to do several tasks that will result a specific product or data (Rukmini and Saputri, 2017). According to Junaedi (2019) project Assessment is an assessment that assesses students in the form of investigation includes some activities of planning, data collecting, organizing, analyses and presenting within period of time. According to Brown (2019) project assessment includes three phases; beginning, middle and final. In the beginning, the teacher directs the students with the materials and competences to be developed, in order students can understand and decide the topic of their project. Then in the middle activity the students work for the accomplishment of the project includes; collecting materials and data, analysing, exercising, that reporting the project (the students work with teacher's assistance or independently), then in the final, the students perform the project, an example of project assessment in English language learning is drama performance. According to the other study of (Guo *et al.*, 2020)

referred by (Brundiers & Wiek, 2013; krajic & Shin, 2014) focuses project as technique of learning well known as (PJBL) that refers to some instructional methods that engage students to construct the knowledge through the meaningful projects in order to develop the products according to students' real world. According to Parwati (2019) PJBL is a sustainable model which compatible between authentic assessment and conventional learning that involves activities of investigation, decision making, problem discovery, problem solving of its implementation. This project activity takes a role as a tool to engage students in real world task in terms of necessary skills (Bell, 2010). According to Rini, Adisyahputra and Sigit (2020) that project-based learning can improve students' critical thinking by taking into factors of students' motivation and its learning style.

Portfolio Assessment

According to Lund (1997), "portfolios are collections of students work gathered over time." The purpose of collecting students' work in intended to see the progress of students' learning. Other study conducted by Virgin and Bharati, Dwi Anggani (2020) also argue that portfolio is an assessment where the teacher collects students' works in purpose to see students' progress in a certain period, it consists of students' writings that are based on the curricular goals, this assessment may need self-assessment as the key element. In this process, whether the teacher and students will reflect their performance for the certain of time. Due to portfolio assessment application, the act of writing plays a significant role in language learning as EFL and ESL, because it technically involves students to write about their learning activity in English in period of time, particularly students also can evaluate their performance during learning process.

Critical Thinking

Cottrell (2005) proposes that "critical thinking is a complex process of deliberation which involves a wide range of skills and attitudes that includes:

1 Identifying the other people's position, arguments and conclusion

2 Evaluating the evidence for alternative points of view

3 Weighing up opposing arguments and evidence fairly

4 Being able to read between the lines, seeing behind surfaces and identifying false or unfair assumption

5   Recognising techniques used to make certain positions more appealing that others, such as; false, logic and persuasive devices

6   Reflecting on issues in structured way, bringing logic and insight to bear

7   Drawing conclusion about whether arguments are valid and justifiable based on good evidence and sensible assumptions

8   Presenting a point of view in structures, clear, well-reasoned way that convinces others.

According to (Wechsler *et al.*, 2018) Critical thinking is a complex process that implicate a high-level reasoning process in achieving the desired results, involving questioning the source of knowledge, testing the validity of the information obtained, analyzing its reliability, and drawing an explanation according to a particular task or situation. According to (Shavelson *et al.*, 2019) critical thinking is considered as a cognitive skill to analyze arguments respectively. Critical thinking is a thoughtful and reasonable process that has a purpose to make sensible decisions about what to believe and what to do. Therefore, critical thinker is aware of their recognitions. Haberlin (2018) states several theories of critical thinking as the ability of gathering information, analysing the information accuracy, organising the thoughts so they can distinguish the information between logical and illogical inferences. Also, some other theorists define critical thinking as the same concepts as the ability in engaging and regulating self to interpret, analyse and evaluate of the particular evidence, or any contextual considerations upon which that judgement is based (Lorencová *et al.*, 2019). According to Hitchcock (2017) critical thinking involves problem identification and analyses, clarification of meaning, gathering the proof, assessing the proof, inferring conclusion, considering other relevant insights, and making an overall judgement. Moreover, critical thinking focuses on the activity of problem solving through the performance/practice which can be driven by such strategic managements that is used by the teacher (Samaras, Adkins and White, 2021).

According to Thonney and Montgomery (2019) mentions five dimensions of critical thinking based on the perspectives of Lai & Crotts as; (1) Evaluating evidence, (2) Analyzing and evaluating arguments, (3) Understanding implications and consequences, (4) producing original arguments and (5) Understanding

causation. According to (Shaw *et al.*, 2020) critical thinkers are able to search, comprehend and evaluate some relevant statements rationally and logically and input problem solving and decision making into particular topic, critical thinkers will have a mindset to be engaged in exploratory and reflective thinking activities. The activity of reflective activities will dispose students to develop their performance. Furthermore, critical thinking is dynamic which can be developed overtime (Minott, Ferguson and Minott, 2019).

A critical thinker does not take and believe such raw statements, but will analyse, comprehend and evaluate so some relevant statement to prove whether the topic is logic or unlogic. A critical thinker is both open-minded and fair-minded, tend to searches the evidence, tries to be well-informed, attentive to other's point of views and their reason, proportions belief to the evidence, and willing to consider alternatives or revise the beliefs (Hitchcock, 2017). Critical thinking acquired through a process of education. The purpose why do people have to be critical is to reach the sustainable development, critical thinking becomes a tool in education which brings the individual to the fullest extent and to the maximum development of society in such prosperity, cultivating the ability to ensure the well being of the future and respond to the various developmental issues (Minott, Ferguson and Minott, 2019). Critical thinking helps people to be aware of the nature of human thinking when left unchecked, because it includes the activity to be self-managed, self-guided to be disciplined that attempts to think at high level quality in a fair-minded way. So, critical thinkers will consistently attempt to live rationally, reasonably and emphatically (Vdovina and Gaibisso, 2013).

METHOD

This research design uses narrative inquiry to investigate the certain participants' experiences and stories about a particular topic by analysing a single individual or two (Creswell, 2012).

This narrative inquiry allows researchers to explore homogeneous and diverse views of perspectives from one particular person or more and tends to explore participants' experiences or story according to the specific criteria or chosen phenomenon.

This research setting took place in two schools in Bogor and focuses on the study of the use of authentic assessment in English classroom of high-level students where this research set was in public schools. The researchers targeted on two respondents who become the English teachers. The first respondent is a novice teacher in a public school in Bogor who become an English teacher of senior high school for about 5 months when the study was conducted. She graduated from one of private universities in Bogor and studied English language education major. The second respondent is an English teacher of junior high school for the last 3 years in a public school in Bogor.

In the data collection, the researcher conducts several ways as the instrument to gain the information through the respondent's stories and experiences in educational field, such as; observation, in-depth interview, FGD and documentations that relates into the chronological experiences of the respondent in English classroom.

In data analysis, the researchers make a transcription of the respondents' story about the use of authentic assessment and their perspectives through particular issue. In the middle of re-storying step, the researcher describes the problem under this research through respondents' story and the experiences that will be portrayed by using a theme. There are two themes in the analysis that is classified as authentic assessment and critical thinking. The themes correspond with the types of authentic assessment by using theory of O' Malley & pierce (1996) in the study of Rukmini and Saputri (2017) and its potential as a way in promoting students' critical thinking skill by using the theory of Cottrell, (2005) that categorized critical thinking into a complex process of deliberation which involves a wide range among skills and attitudes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Authentic Assessment in English Class

It motivates students to be active in the learning process

From the activity of FGD, the researchers find out that respondent A and B tried to relate the materials to the students' situation so they can adjust and reflect to their comprehension during the materials explanation to build "Two-way

learning" in order to create an active classroom. This is depicted from the following excerpt.

> *"To create an active learning atmosphere, as teacher we must lead into two-way learning, it's not just about conveying material, but give space and let students imagine what they think and understand about the given materials, so they will be able to adjust what they can reflect (so as a teacher, we have to be up to date with today's information, so we can connect with them, because if they don't, they will be confused about our teaching method)."*
> (Excerpt 1)

Two-way learning engages the activity of class discussion which lets them have more interactions to correspond or reflect into some current condition/examples through the particular materials that are given, respondent B also states her ways to build active classroom as the excerpt below:

> *"Usually, I invite students to interact every time I explained the materials, the interactions have to be relaxed for the students, discussing the examples that relate to them through the materials comprehension so that they are more likely to engage in class discussions or any other class activities."*
> (Excerpt 2)

So, for this case, as the students are likely engaged to their situation, they are also engaged to be active contribute giving their statements/feedbacks through the discussion of the materials (the students are engaged to discuss as the form of performance assessment).

It stimulates students' English language use in a real situation.

According to the interview results, the respondent A has applied project assessment about "Procedure Text" which students can practice English in the context of cooking.

> *"At that time, I gave a project assignment on 9th grade of junior high school to make a procedure text about food and they had to present making it. The option of food was simple so the equipment would not burden students, because basically the purpose was to encourage students practice simple English speaking while presenting something in the context of cooking."*
> (Excerpt 3)

This project assessment needed two weeks in its application. The purpose of this assessment is that students know the basic vocabularies about the equipment in cooking and they can practice speaking English through the activity of cooking as the stimulus of their speaking skill when they are presenting it. So, the project

also contains the performance of the students when they perform the acting of making the food they want.

It Promotes students' critical thinking

Authentic assessment engages students' critical thinking when students are involved in the learning itself where they are able to explore their comprehension through the materials, the students are also engaged if teacher involves their real-world situation. As the result from FGD session, one of the assessments that was used by respondent B is project assessment about "Explanation Text" where students are given task to find out the phenomena they can re-draw/re-explain (they can choose whatever issue they want except issue that out of context of "Nature Phenomena & Social Phenomena" in a form of writing text in order to train them to write in English.

> *"In Class 11, once I asked them (students) to make "Explanation text" (right after the materials are given). I asked them to choose a topic for their text, what they wanted to write about "natural phenomena/social phenomena" (which they had to do research first) and the next week they had to collect it. At the time the tasks are collected, I chose one to discuss together."*
> (Excerpt 4)

This project assessment encouraged students to practice writing English in a context of phenomena they can tell. This assessment also made students do the research about the phenomena, decide and sort the appropriate information according to the topic they brought. The teacher also did "follow up" about the writing to be discussed together as review and evaluation about what students have written. Moreover, respondents were discussed about the activity of follow up in every assessment that was applied.

> *"The activity of Follow up is be done by providing feedback that will encourage student to try better than before. The feedback consist of teacher's comments (contains what needs to be improved and appreciated regarding the students' effort), the comments from other friends are also needed in the form of responses which there is something wrong, the teacher can re-view/re-explain it."* (Excerpt 5)

Another respondent responds to the activity of "follow up" as a post assessment to be done as the stimulation for critical thinking skill.

> *"The follow-up activity lets students know where their mistakes were. During follow-up activities, students are asked to give each other feedback (comment each other or discussion activities) also hone their critical thinking."* (Excerpt 6)

Follow up activity contains materials review/evaluation where students give their feedback through the discussion about the materials or assessment from which they are expected to get the appropriate understanding about the materials. Having students performed peer-assessment requires the students to apply higher cognitive skills. As a result, the students' critical thinking skills, to some extent, were trained.

Critical Thinking Promoted by Authentic Assessment

Identifying People's position, argument or conclusion

Authentic assessment promotes students in identifying the arguments, position or conclusion in the form of performance and project assessment, the performance assessment was applied on 8th grade in the form of "group work" (in arranging the unstructured words of present continuous) as the stimulus for students to have a group discussion. The students might have different answers of their comprehension through the ideas of the task, so the teacher purposedly gave this group work in order they can discuss together about the task, as the teacher said that:

> *"The students can better try to understand the context of the materials if it is accompanied by simple practice, especially if the practice is in groups which those who do not understand yet will be encouraged by the others."*
> (Excerpt 7)

This assessment encourages students to work together, identify their peers' perspectives, and engage in group discussions. It promotes understanding as students lead discussions and others respond, leading to better comprehension. Additionally, students share ideas during reviews led by the teacher to reinforce learning.

Another project assessment also applied on 11th grade about "Explanation text" that promoted students to identify other's argument, position or conclusion on the issue of social phenomena/nature phenomena, on this assessment is highly seen from the activity where they were tasked to do the research that encouraged them in identifying the problem, people's argument about the phenomena and people's conclusion about the issue to write the "explanation text" as re-telling the information they got by their own words, so it was like the review of the phenomena's issue.

> *"On the 11th grade, I have given them a task of "Explanation text" where this task encouraged them to do the research first about the topic, the topic*

itself they could choose between natural phenomena/social phenomena." (Excerpt 8)

Conducting research on a specific phenomenon encourages students to discover various perspectives on the issue, often found in websites or articles. This research aims to deepen their understanding, preparing them for writing reviews or re-explanations of the topic.

Evaluating the proof, reflecting/bringing insights on issues and drawing conclusion based on good evidence/sensible assumptions.

Authentic assessment in the form of project assessment in the context of "explanation text" on 11th grade promote students to evaluate the proof to know the point of view of the particular issue. This activity was recognised when they had to do the research first through the issue before they explain it by their own words. It can be seen from the statement of the teacher below.

"On 11th I have given them the project to make an explanation text where they had to do the research first, a topic was about natural phenomena or social phenomena to be bear". (Excerpt 9)

This assessment assigned students to do the research first as the effort to gain some information about particular phenomena to be understood. They re-explain it by their own words with the information as the reference/proof to strengthen their chosen topic. From this activity, they search and sort out the proof through the particular issue on the internet according to the given topic after they identify the topic to comprehend the context of the topic/issue. In this case, the students are stimulated to evaluate or sort out between false or true information according to that issue, evaluate some people's argument whether valid or not.

This assessment also promoted students to reflect the problem/issue to their perspectives logically. It can be seen on the task where they had to explain the issue by their own words and give their perspectives towards the issue as reflecting the issue according their assumption accompanied by the proof they gain.

Presenting a point of view in structures, clear, well-reasoned way that convinces others.

Authentic assessment promoted students in presenting a point of view that convinces others in the form of performance and project assessment. The performance assessment was applied on 8th grade in the form of "group work" as

the stimulus of group discussion, a group discussion encouraged students to have interactions to fulfil the task, they are promoted to share ideas through the task that will create the opportunity of giving opinions that convince other friends to respond.

> *"The students can better try to understand the context of the materials if it is accompanied by simple practice, especially if the practice is in groups which those who do not understand yet will be encouraged by the others."* (Excerpt 10)

This "group work" stimulates students to present their overview/perspectives about the topic of the assessments, the activity of presenting their ideas is one of the keys to begin a discussion in that "group work" which involves the interaction between one student to other students to share their ideas to fulfil their assessment. Even, after that group work has accomplished due to their assessment was done, the teacher did the review to check each groups' answer. This review also contains the activity of discussion that is led directly by the teacher, on this activity of review (the students were provided to give any thoughts of each group's answer before the teacher gave the proper answer).

CONCLUSION

Authentic assessment, as revealed in the research findings, offers numerous benefits in the English classroom. Firstly, it motivates students to actively engage in the learning process by encouraging their participation in discussions and feedback sessions. This approach fosters two-way learning, with teachers acting as facilitators. Secondly, authentic assessment enhances students' English proficiency through real-world exploration, aligning with the concept of assessments resembling professional scenarios. It enables students to apply knowledge and skills in practical contexts, preparing them for professional challenges. Lastly, authentic assessment promotes critical thinking, especially during discussions and individual tasks, enabling students to evaluate information critically and develop self-efficacy.

Moreover, the adoption of authentic assessment shifts the classroom dynamic from teacher-centered to student-centered, fostering a more engaging and contextual learning experience. It aligns with real-life contexts and encourages students to adjust their comprehension through their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. While previous research indicates the positive impact of authentic assessment on students' critical thinking skills, this study suggests that the extent of critical thinking can be maximized by modifying assessment instructions to include

more advanced cognitive processes, such as weighing opposing arguments and identifying false assumptions. Overall, authentic assessment is a valuable tool for enhancing students' performance, critical thinking, and preparation for professional practice in the English classroom.

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