English language assessment in Indonesian senior high schools: perceived challenges and prospective solutions

Muhammad Nur Akbar Rasyid*, Alfian2, Jumharia Djamereng1, Nurwahida3

1English and Literature Department, Adab and Humanities Faculty, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia
2Study Program of English Language Education, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia
3English Education Department, Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty, Institut Parahikma Indonesia Gowa, Gowa, Indonesia
*Email: akbar.rasyid@uin-alauddin.ac.id (corresponding author)

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Abstract

Numerous scholarly investigations have been conducted on English language assessment practices. Nevertheless, there is a lack of knowledge regarding the challenges and potential solutions related to implementing effective language assessment practices, particularly within Indonesian senior high schools. This study aims to investigate the perceived constraints and aspired prospective solutions associated with language assessment practices in Indonesian EFL classrooms. The data for this qualitative case study were collected by conducting in-depth interviews with fifteen EFL teachers from different senior high schools across South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Based on the thematic analysis of the data, this study revealed the perceived challenges to implementing English language assessment practices in three general categories: national policy-related issues, institution-related issues, and student-teacher-related issues. This study also revealed the need for leadership support to foster school culture support for innovative language assessment practices as the main aspired solution to implementing language assessment practices. These findings help improve understanding of the numerous factors that must be considered when putting English language assessment into practice, theoretically and practically.
Keywords: aspired solutions; EFL teachers; language assessment; leadership support; perceived challenges

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Introduction

Assessment is essential to the learning and teaching processes in any area of education. It is beneficial to enhance teaching and support the learning of individual students. Many previous studies (Fitriyah et al., 2022; Stiggins, 2002) found that assessment had the greatest impact on students and their learning. Assessment is vital to the entire instructional process (Rea-Dickins, 2000). It improves learning through feedback, which fosters strong student-teacher relationships (Islam, 2019), leads to self-improvement and rectification (Shepard, 2000), and serves a variety of purposes such as diagnostic, achievement, and progress, among others (Djoub, 2017). These interactions encourage students to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and also assist them in choosing the best learning strategies (Islam, 2019).

English language assessment is used in its broadest sense to refer to the full range of elicitation techniques teachers employ in their classrooms to learn about the development and proficiency of their language learners so that teachers can respond to their needs and the curriculum (Rea-Dickins, 2000). In this sense, assessment, teaching, and curriculum are closely related to support student learning. Assessment is a crucial part of the curriculum because it gives information and proof of learning (Alfian et al., 2022). Tunaz (2023) indicates a close connection between instructional methods and assessment procedures. Furthermore, Stiggins (2002) warns that assessment development must receive far more attention if individuals want to maximize student achievement. Without assessment, it would be hard to show how well the program works, how well students are doing, or how much progress has been made (Öz & Atay, 2017). Thus, assessment helps EFL students learn language more effectively and helps EFL teachers determine whether language instructional practices have succeeded.
in meeting expected outcomes.

Global research on language teacher assessment is expanding. In Sach (2015), teachers discussed the facilitators and restrictions of ‘good’ formative assessment practices in classrooms. Öz and Atay (2017) studied Turkish EFL teachers’ views on in-class language assessment literacy and how they are mirrored in their teaching practices. Islam (2021) examined the English proficiency assessment in Bangladesh, particularly in the context of curricular reform and educational policy. More recently, the challenges teachers face when conducting learning-oriented assessments in EFL programs at state universities in Tehran were also the subject of a study by Jalilzadeh and Coombe (2023).

Despite numerous global studies, there is a scarcity of published research on English language assessment practices within the context of Indonesian senior high schools. Several studies of English language assessment focus on EFL conceptions of assessment and their practices, EFL teachers’ assessment literacy (Hutami & Putro, 2023; Luthfiyyah et al., 2020), and teachers’ training needs for assessment literacy (Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020). One study concerns the qualitative analysis of challenges and prospects of assessing higher-order thinking skills in EFL classes after joining professional development (Sumardi & Guci, 2023). Dewi et al. (2023) conducted a descriptive qualitative study to explore online writing assessment strategies and teachers’ difficulties when administering the assessment. In addition, in their mixed method approach, Pambudi and Ciptaningrum (2023) analyzed challenges English teachers face when completing online assessments during COVID-19 and how to solve them.

From the reviewed previous studies, no study has comprehensively explored teachers’ perceived challenges and aspired solutions for effective English language assessment in normal school conditions. The studies of language assessment in the Indonesian senior high school setting to date tend to focus on investigating teachers’ conceptions and practices, for example, the study conducted by Luthfiyyah et al. (2020), or investigating EFL teachers’ assessment literacy as conducted by Hutami and Putro (2023). This is also the case with the latter study investigating teachers’ challenges in conducting online assessments during COVID-19, as conducted by Pambudi and Ciptaningrum (2023). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct the study as one of the attempts to portray the teachers’ perceived challenges and aspired solutions in implementing English language assessment to fill the gap left by the earlier studies. Due to this, the present study addresses the following research questions, which are consistent with the study’s goal:

1. What are the perceived challenges by the senior high school EFL teachers when assessing students’ English language skills?
What are the prospective solutions the senior high school EFL teachers aspired to when encountering difficulties in assessing students' English language skills?

**Literature review**

**Language assessment and its significance roles**

Assessment has a strategic role in determining the quality of EFL learning and teaching. High-expected learning outcomes, good-quality content, and advanced instructional design will be useless when the assessment focuses on what is easiest to measure rather than important (Reeves, 2006). When used properly, assessment may be a very effective tool for student learning (Popham, 2011). Assessment procedures that promote student learning are considered to be of high quality. The design of effective assessment procedures should facilitate effective learning and pave the way for them to learn more. This is where giving feedback is a key component of quality assessment practices, which aim to promote student learning (Jalilzadeh & Coombe, 2023).

The primary goals of assessment are to gauge and assess students’ knowledge. Assessment can, however, also be utilized in the classroom to engage students and keep them interested in the material being covered (Davidson, 2018). This is where Earl (2013) makes the useful distinctions of assessment: assessment of, for, and as learning. Learning assessment is done after a course for summative purposes. Assessment for learning, formative assessment, is conducted throughout the course. Assessment for learning is expanded upon by assessment as learning. Teachers’ comprehension of the three valuable differentiations of assessment will aid them in formulating instructional and educational endeavors that foster a superior standard of student learning.

**Aligning EFL teaching, learning, and assessment**

Angelo (2012) defines the term "alignment" as the explicit linkage of learning and teaching activities with student assessment tasks to encourage achieving the desired learning objectives. All these aspects – goals or objectives, the content of the subject matter, learning resources, teaching and learning activities, feedback, and assessment – should be aligned (Biggs, 2012) within a curriculum to promote high-quality EFL learning and teaching. Hunt and Chalmers (2012) assert that a high-quality curriculum should align what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is assessed to ensure students have a consistent learning experience. For
instance, the desirable institutional goals for teaching and learning should be reflected in the intended learning outcomes for a specific subject curriculum (Stefani, 2009).

We claim that the alignment of assessment with curriculum, teaching, and learning is paramount, as assessment is a central component within a course. The student assessment process conveys to learners the significance of certain aspects and the areas in which they should prioritize their time and efforts. Teaching and assessment should match the intended learning outcomes in relation to what students learn and can do (Brookhart, 2010). Learning outcomes and instructional strategies need to be aligned with assessment. If the EFL learning outcomes are to assist students in developing analytical skills, the learning and teaching activities should encourage them to be analytical (Daud, 2017).

**Inhibitors of quality assessment practices**

After comprehensively analyzing the existing literature on language assessment, its crucial functions, and its interconnections with curriculum, teaching, and learning activities, we elucidate the variables that impede the implementation of effective language assessment practices. The impeding factors of quality language assessment could be seen from three levels, following the frameworks proposed by Kozma (2003). He proposed three major levels that influence teachers’ understanding and practices in classroom settings: micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level. With regard to quality language assessment practices, Jalilzadeh and Coombe (2023) identified several constraints of quality assessment that inhibit student learning, which could be categorized into three groups. They are teacher-related constraints, learner-related constraints, and institute-related constraints.

Teacher-related challenges include teachers’ lack of knowledge and skills in designing and implementing quality assessment practices, inability to create tasks that promote learning, opposition to change, and lack of interpretive expertise (Jalilzadeh & Coombe, 2023). In addition, many studies have also identified the major constraints of effective EFL assessment practices as a lack of adequate knowledge of language assessment concerns and procedures among English language teachers (Farhady & Tavassoli, 2018; Giraldo, 2018).

Moreover, learner-related constraints are mainly about their reluctance to learn, assess, and give feedback to their peers (Jalilzadeh & Coombe, 2023). Institute-related factors include the existence of top-down assessment policies and the emphasis on summative assessment as opposed to formative assessment (Jalilzadeh & Coombe, 2023). It is clear that context-related aspects are important in shaping teachers’ literacy and practices in classroom assessments. These
context-related aspects include institutional expectations, workload, the prevalent assessment culture, limited resources for professional development (Abrar-ul-Hassan & Douglas, 2020), and class size (Khan & Iqbal, 2012). Institutional support for teachers to innovate in EFL assessment is essential. When teachers do not receive adequate support from policymakers and administrators at the school or institution level, there is an increased probability of their underperformance and subsequent attrition from the teaching profession (Salkovsky et al., 2015).

**Supporting elements for quality assessment practices**

Similar to the framework used to describe impediments to quality language assessment, the strategies for its enhancement could also be described in these three major categories. Overall, there is a widespread recognition of instructors' significant role in successfully implementing this initiative. Therefore, EFL teachers must possess the knowledge and skills to put it into practice. As a result, professional learning includes, for instance, more comprehensive training, including training on high cognitive abilities and classroom management based on a student-centered approach (Rotherham & Willingham, 2009). Teachers would also need to be knowledgeable about quality assessment and how it fits into the curriculum and evaluation methods in addition to their subject-matter expertise (Daud, 2017).

Additionally, there is a need to change the EFL assessment paradigm from tests that just measure the recollection of material through multiple-choice and short-answer questions to those that evaluate higher cognitive skills through performance-based assessment (Doğanay & Pinar, 2010). Rubrics, checklists, portfolios, and reflections are examples of performance-based assessments that encourage students to present their best work (Abosalem, 2016). Moreover, meaningful learning should be prioritized in student-centered settings as opposed to rote learning (FitzPatrick & Schulz, 2015). The aforementioned frameworks about the factors that hinder or facilitate the successful implementation of quality language assessment will serve as the foundation for assessing English language assessment practices in the context of Indonesian senior high schools.
Method

Research design

A qualitative approach was used in the present research. Of the many available research designs with a qualitative approach, we adopted a case study design. Yin (2003) defines a case study as a form of empirical research that examines a current phenomenon within its authentic contextual setting. The case study was used because the individuals investigated in the present study were involved in English language assessment within the specific setting of Indonesian senior high schools. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe that the case study design is a commonly employed research methodology across various disciplines. It involves the meticulous investigation and analysis of a specific case, which may pertain to a program, event, activity, process, or even one or more individuals.

Participants

We employed purposive sampling (Yin, 2016) as the method for participant selection. In this case, the participants were selected based on the following criteria: teaching English, having English language teaching credentials, having at least three years of teaching experience, and being willing to participate in this study voluntarily. The study comprised a sample of fifteen senior high school EFL teachers recruited from fifteen schools in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. We consider various ethical considerations about participant recruitment. Firstly, involvement in this present study is entirely optional, granting individuals the autonomy to decide whether or not to take part. Secondly, the participants were provided with complete information, encompassing both the potential dangers and benefits associated with their involvement and their entitlement to withdraw from the research at any point. Furthermore, we employed a unique coding system to represent each participant. For instance, the first participant was assigned the code T-1, the second was assigned the code T-2, and so forth (T-1 to T-15). The demographic information of the participants is shown in Table 1.

Data collection

Interviews, the most widely used methods for obtaining qualitative data (Ary et al., 2014), were used in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted because they enabled us to ensure a certain level of uniformity in the themes addressed throughout each interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The detailed procedures were started with face-to-face interviews. Each interview was recorded with the consent of the participants. Before beginning each interview, we informed the participants of their rights to answer or not answer the
questions, including withdrawing the given information. An interview protocol with two key open-ended questions was used during the interviews. The questions were about the challenges the EFL teachers faced while administering assessments and potential solutions to these perceived issues. We did a pilot study of the initial interview protocol to ensure validity (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Each interview session lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. During the interviews, we made an effort to keep the conversation moving as naturally as possible, including Indonesian.

**Table 1**

*The participants’ demographic information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants/variables</th>
<th>Total (N=15)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
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<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Experience:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>3 – 5 Years</td>
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<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 10 Years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 Years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data analysis**

We applied a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun et al., 2017) to examine the responses from participants using the following procedures: Firstly, the data obtained from the interviews was transcribed by carefully listening to the recorded audio. Subsequently, we thoroughly reviewed each transcript and field notes on multiple occasions to develop a comprehensive familiarity with the data. Subsequently, a coding process was conducted on the data, wherein important concepts or themes were found. Deductive analysis was used to do these things. First, themes and categories from the literature were used to come up with initial coding topics, and then the data was fit to them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The subsequent step was the establishment of categories. In this context, we consolidated the codes that exhibited interrelatedness. The texts and themes were then repeatedly reviewed, organized, and compared until a cohesive set of themes emerged that captured perceived challenges and aspired solutions to the implementation of English language assessment. The emergent themes can be classified into three broad categories: institution-related, student-related, and teacher-related issues. The final phase involved interpreting the
data, during which we endeavored to derive meaning from the data and formulate conclusions.

**Trustworthiness**

Member check (Merriam, 1998) or respondent validation (Silverman, 2006) was used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue member checks are the most important method for determining the validity of research findings and interpretations in a qualitative study. We ensured the trustworthiness of the data by sending the transcriptions and the results of the data analysis to the participants for verification (Scott & Morrison, 2006). Following multiple iterations of analysis, the participants unanimously confirmed that the ultimate depiction remained congruent with their perspectives and experiences about the subject of investigation.

**Findings**

*Perceived challenges of English language assessment*

This section discusses the findings from the interviews in relation to the perceived difficulties EFL teachers encounter when conducting English language assessments. Several challenges were reported during in-depth interviews. These challenges could be categorized as institution, student, and teacher-related issues.

The major perceived challenge in implementing quality language assessment related to institutional issues is learning resources and facilities. Almost all the participants raised this issue during the interviews. As shown in the following excerpt:

> The learning facilities are limited to provide students and teachers with better learning and teaching opportunities, including conducting good assessment practices. (T-2)

The above excerpt shows the participants’ awareness of the real condition of the English language assessment. In this case, the limited learning resources in an EFL classroom hinder teachers from implementing quality assessments for all students. Furthermore, language laboratories are reported to have limited learning facilities for students and teachers to use in EFL assessment. This is reported as essential for assessing students' listening skills.
The language laboratory facilities for testing students’ listening skills are also inadequate. As a result, there are many students whose listening skills are very lacking. (T-3)

The above excerpt indicates that a language laboratory is an example of a facility considered essential for EFL learning and teaching. This facility was considered particularly important to test students’ listening skills. The poor students’ performance in listening skills was assumed to be partly due to the poor quality of the language laboratory.

Another perceived constraint in implementing quality language assessment is the large class size, as the statement below exemplifies.

Too many students in a class. One class often consists of more than 30 students, making it hard to give quality feedback, particularly on speaking and writing skills. (T-14)

The excerpt above indicates participants’ concerns about a large number of students in one class impeding teachers from providing quality feedback to all students. This issue, as indicated above, is particularly essential when assessing speaking and writing skills.

Another major issue raised by the participants is the learners’ diverse language proficiency and skills in one class. This is indicated in the following statement:

The main challenge in conducting the assessment is students have diverse English language skills and abilities in one class. (T-13)

The above data shows participants’ awareness of how difficult it is to conduct effective language assessments when students have diverse language abilities. Different language abilities and skills in a class make EFL teachers confused when designing their language assessments.

In addition, participants also reported that they found quite often that most students have very poor English compared to the expected skills based on their current grades. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

One of the major challenges is measuring students’ writing, listening, speaking, and reading skills, as they lack the required knowledge and skills, including vocabulary. These are serious concerns when it comes to both verbal and written assessments. (T-7)

The excerpt above illustrates the participants’ cognizance regarding the challenges associated with students’ low language proficiency. As a result, EFL learners often have to take the tests several times to pass the required minimum passing grade.

Another reported challenge is low motivation to learn English. The statement
below exemplifies this theme.

When doing interviews, the biggest challenge I face as a language teacher is dealing with the students’ skepticism about English. Many of them learn English because of the curricula they follow rather than because they are motivated to do so. (T-10)

The excerpt above shows participants are aware of the importance of students’ motivation to learn English. Students who are not interested in learning English tend to show less engagement in learning English, including doing their required tasks and assignments.

It is interesting to note that there are also issues related to EFL teachers’ lack of knowledge and skills in conducting effective assessments. As can be seen in the following excerpt:

Another problem related to assessment is that some EFL teachers have insufficient knowledge and skills in English language assessment. (T-8)

The excerpt above also suggests that the participants understand teachers’ challenges in effectively conducting language assessments when they lack the necessary knowledge and skills. The proficiency and competencies of teachers in assessment are crucial in developing impactful assessments that promote student learning. Furthermore, this lack of necessary assessment knowledge and skills has been claimed by one participant (T-13) partly because of the limited professional training and development available for EFL teachers. Thus, they do not have enough opportunities to widen their knowledge, horizons, and skills in assessing student learning.

Another teacher-related problem brought up by one participant (T-15) was the honesty and objectivity of teachers while assessing students’ learning. The participant reported:

The difficulty we teachers face in administering tests is related to the problem of our integrity in administering tests. We are common folk just like you. Sometimes, our preferences for Student A or Student B lead us to make biased judgments. (T-15)

The extract above highlights the challenges associated with upholding the integrity and objectivity of teachers, particularly in assigning grades for their work. Teachers may encounter conflicts while providing grades to students. This issue becomes more difficult when determining grades for students with whom the teacher has a personal acquaintance. Thus, teachers should make maximum effort to uphold their objectivity and honesty.

Another interesting perceived challenge is the limited teaching hours available within the national curriculum. As indicated in the following statement,
The bigger problem is that English instruction has been reduced from a minimum of 4 hours per week to barely 2 hours since the 2013 curriculum was implemented. There is not much time. Thus, this is a very important factor. This includes the time the teacher needs to give each student feedback on their test results. Although the youngsters are provided time for private consultations, they cannot do so because there are multiple subjects to cover. No matter how talented a person is, the results will not be the best if there is not enough time to study English. (T-8)

The excerpt above shows the perceived difficulties related to limited hours for teaching English in the current national curriculum. This means that students have a limited opportunity to learn and practice their English and to interact with one another during the classroom teaching and learning processes. This also means that teachers have limited time to respond and provide quality feedback when assessing their students’ learning.

**Aspired solutions to the implementation of English language assessment**

The participants' remarks on enhancing the quality of EFL assessment are quite noteworthy. Better learning and teaching facilities for students and teachers are one of the key components of their answers.

Involving the school in providing the resources and infrastructure students require is crucial to the assessment’s success. Of course, the presence of suitable facilities and infrastructure, as well as high-quality facilities and infrastructure, are required for the assessment to be successful. (T-7)

The data above show teachers’ awareness of the necessity of learning facilities that are of high quality and sufficient to support the implementation of effective language assessment practices. Therefore, the significant role of school leaders in facilitating the required learning facilities and resources is also realized.

The existence of professional learning and training for EFL teachers on assessment-related concerns is the second major reported theme. The following quote serves as an example of this concept.

The government should hold workshops often, in particular. It intends to train English teachers in Indonesia, particularly those who work in rural regions and are not familiar with technology. For them to make a good assessment. (T-4)

The excerpts above indicate the necessity of providing teachers with training and workshops to enhance assessment knowledge and skills. These professional development activities must be planned systematically and carried out regularly. EFL teachers would learn how to design, administer, and write assessment reports. Therefore, it is the role of institutions to collaborate with the government to realize such programs.
Leadership support is another potential solution that the participant hopes to achieve. The participants reported the importance of leadership support for implementing good English language assessment practices. The expected support from leaders mentioned by the participants could include the provision of professional learning, learning resources and facilities, and the opportunity for teachers to make improvisations in designing and implementing student assessments. The following excerpts show this theme.

In my opinion, the support from the leadership cannot be undervalued when it comes to putting quality assessments into practice. This support may take the form of giving teachers development training, providing suitable facilities, and fostering a climate in the classroom that encourages teacher innovation. (T-14)

The above excerpt indicates that participants are aware of the strategic roles of institution leaders they could exercise to support the implementation of quality language assessment practices. They could determine the required policies at the macro level that could have a potential impact on the micro and meso levels.

In their descriptions of potential solutions for better assessment, participants also mentioned several themes relating to teachers and students. The majority of participants talked about how crucial it is to create assessment rubrics that can serve as a guide for assessing students' learning. The statement below exemplifies this theme.

Because we do not always immediately assign students’ grades when assessing, an assessment rubric is a necessary component of a quality assessment. But as teachers, we need to follow rules and guidelines, such as the assessment rubric. (T-4)

It is indicated in the excerpt above that teachers expect the provision of assessment rubrics for more effective assessment practices. The availability of rubrics will increase the validity, objectivity, and transparency of the assessment, which are crucial for high-quality language assessment practices.

The majority of participants also stressed the significance of creating assessment tools that take into account students’ varied knowledge and skills, as well as their needs and learning preferences. This can be seen in the excerpt below.

The assessment method should always be tailored to the needs of the students. So, for example, the teacher can pose questions like “analyze” if the students have a reasonably high skill level. The questions provided, however, are also quite simple for students with relatively modest abilities. (T-4)

The above excerpt shows that participants aspire to tailor the assessment tasks to the student's needs and abilities. Students will likely receive a better and more
accurate description of their current knowledge and abilities when the design and implementation of student assessments align with their needs and circumstances. The collected data will serve as the foundation for developing better instructional strategies.

Participants also reported the requirement for teachers’ strong dedication to implementing high-quality EFL assessments. To improve their students’ learning, EFL teachers must put in their best effort in designing and implementing the English language assessment. The excerpt below shows this aspect.

A teacher is required to approach the assessment with a high level of devotion to their profession, of course. They will conduct the assessment appropriately if they are serious about doing it correctly. (T-7)

The data above indicates the importance of teachers’ strong commitment to performing their teaching and assessment duties. It is realized that assessment procedures and outcomes will be more objective and thus advantageous for student learning when teachers are devoted to their work and carry out their obligations professionally.

Table 2 summarizes the emergent themes and subthemes of the participants’ perceived challenges and aspired solutions to implementing effective English language assessment practices.

Table 2

*Summary of the emergent themes and subthemes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to the implementation of quality language assessment practices</td>
<td>Student-related challenges</td>
<td>• Diverse language proficiency and abilities of students in one class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Low English language proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher-related challenges</td>
<td>• Low motivation to learn English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institution related challenges</td>
<td>• Inadequate assessment literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Integrity and fairness in judging students’ works and performances</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Limited professional training and development for EFL teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Restricted learning resources</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Limited facilities available</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Large class size</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Existing curriculum in which English teaching hours are limited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prospective solutions to the implementation of quality language assessment practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution-related solutions</th>
<th>Teacher-related solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Institutional leadership support</td>
<td>• Literate in assessment procedures and knowledgeable in their use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Better learning and teaching facilities</td>
<td>• Developing criteria or rubrics for language assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The existence of well-planned and systematic professional training and development for EFL teachers</td>
<td>• The use of various methods of student learning assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers’ commitment to implement high-quality EFL assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Perceived challenges in implementing English language assessment

Among the reported challenges, the main concern was learning resource and facility issues. These include access to classroom and learning resources, learning and teaching facilities, technology, and teaching aids. This resource and facility issue was also reported in another study in the Indonesian context as the major constraint to effective EFL learning and teaching (Rasyid, 2012) and to innovative assessment (Arrafii, 2021). The most frequently reported facilities that hinder teachers from implementing effective language assessment practices are the limited access to language laboratories. This is particularly a concern for teachers when assessing students’ listening skills.

The present study also reveals that teachers’ knowledge and skills in designing and implementing effective assessments are serious concerns. Teachers’ inadequate knowledge and competencies to properly assess their students’ learning has been indicated an issue of concern in several earlier studies. Abkary and Purnawarman (2020) indicated that some EFL teachers lack the knowledge necessary to create higher-order thinking skill questions and still rely solely on what is available in the handbook or textbook. EFL teachers’ assessment literacy is still at a fair level, where they tend to use traditional assessment with multiple-choice, fill-in-the-gap, matching, and short essay
questions (Hutami & Putro, 2023). This issue of EFL teachers’ inadequate knowledge and skills in assessment is not only the case in Indonesia but many other Asian countries. The quality of language teachers is also a serious concern in implementing language testing in Thailand (Prapphal, 2008). In Bangladesh, it has been observed that teachers face challenges in selecting suitable assessment methods that effectively fit the goals and objectives of the English curriculum. This difficulty arises due to their insufficient comprehension of the English curriculum. They typically think of a curriculum as a document that contains only the lessons to be taken (Islam et al., 2021).

The necessary knowledge and skills of EFL teachers to exercise quality assessment are reported to be low, partly due to the limited professional development available for EFL teachers. Therefore, providing EFL teachers with abundant opportunities to join professional development in assessment to meet their needs is crucial. Systematic and measurable training programs are recommended by Sumardi and Guci (2023) to better equip English language teachers with both theoretical knowledge and the practical application of that knowledge and information. Davies (2008) claims that the training materials on assessment should cover three major dimensions: knowledge, skills, and principles of assessment. Knowledge provides teachers pertinent background information for measurement, language description, and context setting. Skills offer instruction in necessary and suitable methodology, including test item writing, delivery, analysis, and reporting, and principles cover how language tests should be used, their fairness, and their effects, as well as issues with ethics and professionalism. Teachers are likelier to create and implement high-quality EFL assessments when they have a solid grasp of assessment methods and formats, knowledge of test item development, and awareness of classroom assessment concepts (Giraldo, 2018).

It is interesting to note that large class sizes are also an issue when conducting effective language assessments. When there are many students in a class, teachers will probably not be able to provide each student with useful feedback and comments on their assessments. This issue of limited time to test students' language skills is especially apparent when measuring writing skills (Dewi et al., 2023). This is also an issue in other developing countries in Asia. Ali’s research in Bangladesh (2016) revealed that large class sizes are a major issue in language assessments. It prohibits teachers from engaging students in a variety of assessment techniques. Evaluating and commenting on many students is challenging, given the short class period. The teachers have acknowledged that the short class time hinders the implementation of efficient assessment.

Learners’ diverse abilities in an EFL classroom also become a serious
challenge in the language assessment of senior high schools. When students in a class have various skills and abilities, teachers find it challenging to plan and carry out effective classroom assessments. This similar issue was indicated in several previous studies. For example, Abkary and Purnawarman (2020) revealed that students’ aspects become an issue in language assessment due to the teacher’s responsibility for managing the various backgrounds, learning styles, and personalities in the classroom.

The reported challenges in the present study could be categorized as micro, meso, and macro levels as suggested in Kozsma’s frameworks (Kozma, 2003). It is interesting to note that the reported concerns from EFL teachers cover these three levels. These include teachers’ assessment knowledge, the number of students, learning resources, and students’ abilities and skills. It is interesting to note that the issues of classroom culture (Webb & Jones, 2009) and the pressure of the accountability system on teachers’ work (Sach, 2015) seem to be ignored in the present research. Despite mentioning issues related to school and national issues, participants’ perceived challenges tend to focus on the traits of particular teachers and students and their classrooms. This is reasonable as their daily practices are at the micro-level (Fulmer et al., 2015).

**Aspired solutions to the implementation of English language assessment**

This study also found various ways to address concerns about designing and implementing English language assessments. The findings indicate the need to provide clear criteria in language learning assessment, which becomes the guide for EFL teachers in conducting effective language assessments. Without clear rules for assessment, teachers will inevitably choose whichever methods are most convenient for them at the expense of the student’s ability to learn effectively. Thus, language assessment should meet the criteria of adaptability, inclusivity, transparency, and objectivity (Rasyid, 2022). Shepard (2000) argues that students should be clear about how their work will be assessed. Thus, EFL teachers must give their students access to assessment rubrics that they can use as a guide when completing their assignments and as a reference when grading their work. This could be realized when EFL teachers are committed to doing their job professionally.

This study also made a number of significant discoveries regarding the need for policies and support from school leadership. Most participants anticipated school leadership’s help in the form of policies that would make it possible to use innovative and cutting-edge assessment methods. Troudi et al. (2009) identified that many EFL teachers felt irritated at being ignored and wished they had a more useful role. It is considered essential to acknowledge and sustain local expertise.
One approach to achieving this is by giving EFL teachers’ knowledge and opinions more respect on a professional level. Therefore, according to Lam (2019), school leaders should allow teachers to try out different alternative assessments, such as offering feedback, engaging in self-reflection in a portfolio, and completing peer review, to help them improve their assessment practices. School policies and conditions may influence teachers’ practices and classroom atmosphere (Scheerens, 1990). Studies acknowledge the important role of school leaders in facilitating the implementation of better assessment (Heitink et al., 2016) and creating a school culture that fosters teacher autonomy while facilitating collaboration (Fulmer et al., 2015).

In addition, this study also reveals the importance of school leadership support in providing learning resources and facilities supportive of quality language assessment practices. Better learning resources and facilities are essential to implement English language assessment practices, such as providing language laboratories to assess students’ listening and speaking skills. Therefore, educational administrators must comprehensively understand the most effective strategies for facilitating effective English language assessment. This includes determining how to best spend resources to ensure an accurate and efficient implementation of formative and summative assessments (Stiggins, 2002).

The majority of EFL teachers are ignorant about language assessment. Very few senior high school EFL teachers can access professional learning and development. Due to a lack of training opportunities, not many teachers are ready to handle the challenges of classroom assessments (Stiggins, 2002). Therefore, one prospective solution is enhancing Indonesian EFL teachers’ language assessment literacy through professional learning. Professional training and development is commonly considered essential for teachers (Heitink et al., 2016), particularly to equip EFL teachers with assessment knowledge and skills to encounter unexpected conditions like the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, they are able to exercise online assessment to suit unexpected conditions (Pambudi & Ciptaningrum, 2023). Teachers who feel individually equipped to conduct assessments in the classroom still ask for a collective investment in professional development at the system level (Fulmer et al., 2019). Therefore, it is essential that preservice teacher education includes instruction in assessment literacy (Hutami & Putro, 2023) and that training for ongoing professional development for in-service teachers should follow this up. This emphasizes the significance of continual, sustainable professional development for teachers that is carried out with sufficient time (Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020), with required materials (Sumardi & Guci, 2023), and with the specific subject matter, such as developing questions to trigger higher order thinking skills and
utilizing technology to support classroom assessment practices (Luthfiyyah et al., 2020).

Overall, EFL teachers tend to see a wide range of difficulties with regard to English language assessment in the Indonesian senior high school context. This includes challenges at the micro level, concerns involving students and teachers, such as a lack of assessment literacy, and the students' diverse capacities and skills. Meso- and macro-level challenges include issues with schools and national policies, such as a large student body, inadequate professional learning and development facilities, and a national curriculum with few English teaching hours. However, when describing the desired solutions for implementing a quality language assessment, most EFL teachers frequently focus on the aspects at the meso and macro levels. This includes offering leadership support to allow EFL teachers to experiment with new and innovative language assessment methods and to give them regular, adequate, and focused opportunities for professional learning and development. Creating an assessment rubric available to students as a guide in putting together their assessment assignments and for teachers to use as a reference in assessing and grading students' works is among the aspired solutions related to teachers at the micro level.

Conclusion

This study examines the perceived challenges and aspired solutions to implementing English language assessment practices in the Indonesian senior high school context. The thematic analysis showed that participants in this study had reported quite comprehensive views of challenges in conducting English language assessment as well as aspiring prospective solutions to better implementation of language assessment practices. The main issues with the perceived challenges of English language assessment range from issues at the lower micro level to the higher macro level. Furthermore, the aspired solutions to quality English language assessment practices highlight the importance of leadership support. These indicate the participants' awareness of the many elements hindering and supporting the successful implementation of English language assessment practices.

The results imply that several strategic policies should be enacted to support school leaders and EFL teachers. School leaders should equitably provide learning resources and facilities to ensure the accuracy and efficient utilization of English language tests. They should provide EFL teachers with access to thorough, long-term professional development programs that promote literacy.
in English language assessment, with adequate funding to allow them to study and advance in conducting assessments professionally. Furthermore, EFL teachers must enhance their understanding of assessment practices, specifically in terms of proficiently designing, administering, and documenting as well as reporting language assessments for students. This can be achieved through active participation in professional development opportunities.

We acknowledged that the present study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, the data collection location was only in several schools in South Sulawesi. Secondly, the number of EFL teachers involved was limited. As a result, it is impossible to generalize the results to all Indonesian EFL teachers, given that other variables may impact their perceived challenges and the aspired solutions. Hence, future research endeavors are recommended to encompass a wider range of Indonesian senior high schools, incorporate a larger number of participants, and employ diverse data collection methods. Thirdly, given that this study did not utilize classroom observations as a means of data collection, the researchers highly recommend the utilization of classroom observations in future research endeavors aimed at analyzing similar topics. This approach can potentially enhance the overall understanding of language assessment practices, contributing to a more comprehensive depiction of the subject matter.

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ORCID

Muhammad Nur Akbar Rasyid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2951-9183
Alfian https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1344-8192
Jumharia Djamere https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3079-8452
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