Writing assessment strategies for online learning during pandemic era

Jihan Khansa[1], Dyah Mukaromah[2]

Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta[1,2]
email: dyahmukaromah@uty.ac.id[2]

Abstract - Online learning is a new challenge for educators who must master the use of digital media to support learning to run smoothly. Similar to offline learning, online learning still requires various assessment activities to evaluate students' mastery of English subjects. Therefore, the English teachers at SMK BH PGRI Blora use various assessment models in online learning, especially in students' writing skills. This is done for the reason that the teacher wants to improve students' writing skills, especially in English. Teachers use several assessment models during online learning, including handwriting, completing blank space, picture description, grammatical tasks, scrambled words, and short answer question tasks. Teachers use various models of writing assessment so that the assessment given to students will have more variety. The purpose of this study was to describe the assessment strategy used by the English teacher for online learning during the pandemic era, especially in writing skills. This study also indicates the appropriateness of those assessment strategies with four principles of language assessment.

Keywords: assessment, online learning, writing skills

1. Introduction

Online learning is a topic that is quite popular in various countries today. Online learning is one of the learning methods used in various countries, one of which is Indonesia. According to Mukaromah and Mutoharoh (2019), Indonesia has entered the digital era 4.0 where technology is a tool that facilitates all fields including education. By utilizing internet media, online learning is developed rapidly to support the education system. As stated by Moore et al (2011) that online learning is learning that uses the internet network with accessibility, connectivity, flexibility, and the ability to create various types of interactions in learning. Teachers and students take advantage of several applications and internet media to support online learning. Online learning will connect students with learning resources (databases, experts/instructors, libraries) who are physically separate but can communicate, interact or collaborate with each other (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020).

Research conducted by Zhang et al (2004) shows that the internet and multimedia technologies are reshaping the way knowledge is conveyed, and are becoming an alternative to traditional classroom learning. Actually, online learning is used to innovate and change paradigms in learning. There are particular activities in online learning, such as teachers explaining the material and giving practice assignments to students, so that they can learn the material by themselves. That way, teachers have hope for each student to be able to learn independently. At this time, teachers will not be able to easily monitor each student's progress directly. The teacher will use the results of student work to determine the progress of student learning during online learning. Kearens (2012) stated that assessment of student learning is a basic aspect of instruction from the challenges involved in assessing student learning in online learning. Although many students complain about having too many assignments, assignments can be an opportunity to improve student learning. One of them is in learning the usage of the language.

In learning English, students will be taught various language skills. Sunarsih (2012) stated that there are four aspects of language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is one of the basic language skills which is as important as reading, listening, and speaking (Harmer, 2004). Writing skills require practice, accuracy, and intelligence. Therefore, a teacher must be more creative in creating effective exercises in writing, for students. Writing exercises can be implemented by giving some assessment tasks to students.

Even though assessment tasks are related to tests, which both have measurements, and evaluations, assessment is different from test. The test is an administrative procedure that is carried out at a predetermined and planned time in the learning curriculum. Usually, the test is carried out when all students or students have completed all learning. Then the test was conducted to determine the final performance of the students. Meanwhile, Brown (2003) stated that assessment is an ongoing process by which teachers unconsciously make student performance assessments that include where students respond to questions, make comments, or try new words and structures. At that time a teacher gives an assessment of the performance of students. Thus, the test is part of the assessment, and the test is not the only assessment carried out by the teacher (Brown, 2003).

Before conducting the research, the first activity carried out by the researchers was to prepare topics and various questions to be asked directly to the resource person, namely one of the English teachers at SMK BH PGRI Blora. After the researchers prepared various questions, the researchers arranged an appointment with the teacher to conduct interviews related to this research. Then the researchers conducted direct interviews with one of the English teachers at SMK BH PGRI Blora.

The purpose of this research is to find out what are the writing assessment model strategies used by teachers at SMK BH PGRI Blora during online learning. The assessment model used is some examples of the assessment model that has been described by Brown (2003). That way the researchers will identify each assessment model that has been used. In addition, this study also aims to determine the effectiveness of the assessment model used in online learning at SMK BH PGRI Blora by analyzing the suitability of the assessment model used with the assessment principles.

2. Method

The method of analysis carried out by researchers in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. Lambert (in Mukaromah & Mutoharoh, 2019) argued that a qualitative descriptive approach is used when researchers want to know about an event, who was involved, what was involved, and where the incident occurred. The data that has been collected by the researchers is the original data taken directly from the source and the researchers use the data to be analyzed through written explanation. The purpose of this descriptive research is to make a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the facts of the

phenomenon being investigated, namely writing assessment strategies for online learning during the pandemic era.

The data collection technique used by the researchers in this study was interviewed. Interviews were conducted to obtain accurate data and appropriate data sources. In this study, the researchers interviewed one of the English teachers at SMK BH PGRI Blora, afterward, researchers recorded the teacher's answer during the interview. This was done to assist researchers in displaying the data that had been obtained and some written notes were made to assist researchers in analyzing the data. That way, data in the form of recorded voice is very useful in checking the truth of the data so that it is easier for researchers to analyze the data.

To ensure the validity of the data, the researchers used the triangulation technique. Guion (2002) stated that triangulation is a method used in qualitative research to check and establish validity in a study. The triangulation technique is a technique of checking the validity of data by utilizing something from outside the data for the purpose of checking or comparing the data (Bachtiar, 2010). In the triangulation process in analyzing the data found from the interviews, the researchers conducted a cross-check using the Language Assessment Principle theory proposed by Brown (2003). The implementation of language assessment should be based on 4 principles: practicality, reliability, validity, and authenticity.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of interviews conducted by the authors, the authors can describe that there are particular assessment task models in writing skills used by English teachers in learning English during online learning at SMK BH PGRI Blora. During online learning, teachers use various communication media and video conferencing to support English language learning. A combination of technology into language learning can guarantee the successful enhancement in the communication skills of students of a different regional and intelligent level. If we give learners a particular material that they can refer to, they would be more comfortable in acquisitive what are they have already learned, therefore it creates the needed progress in their learning (Sarfraz in Budiana, 2021). The communication medium used by teachers at SMK BH PGRI Blora is WhatsApp. While the video conferencing media used is zoom. But the use of zoom is rarely done in learning English. Because many students complain due to signal problems and the use of zoom takes up quite a lot of internet quota. Hill & Hannafin (1997) explain that the remote Web-based approach makes many observational and participatory assessments difficult. Then the use of zoom will be done if several things must be done face to face, such as finding difficult material.

In addition, the supporting media for learning English at SMK BH PGRI Blora is google classroom. Google classroom media is used by teachers as a medium to share learning materials, as well as a medium for collecting assessment assignments. The teacher also uses google classroom as a medium for student attendance. So every meeting, students are asked to write their names and absent numbers in the Google Classroom.

Even though English learning is done online, the assessment is still carried out maximally. The assessment carried out by the teacher during learning is by giving quizzes and assignments, it can be in the form of video assignments, writing assignments, or working on questions given by the teacher. The teacher always gives an assessment every week based on the assessment rubric. The assessment used by the teacher is almost the same as the assessment model described by Douglas Brown. Douglas Brown (2003) mentioned that the assessment, especially on writing skills, has many models and is divided by type. Not only that, he also mentioned the principle of language assessment which consists of several principles, those are:

Practicality

The assessment is said to be practical when the assessment is not excessively expensive, stays with appropriate time constraints, is relatively easy to administer, and has a scoring/evaluation procedure that is specific and time-efficient.

1. Reliability

A reliable test is always consistent and dependable. If a certain test shows the same targeted result, even if it is tested to different types of students, or tested on two different occasions.

2. Validity

The most important test criteria are validity. The extent to which inferences made from assessment results are appropriate, meaningful, and useful in terms of the purpose of the assessment (Gronlund, 1998).

3. Authenticity

Authenticity is a concept that is a little slippery to define, especially within the art and science of evaluating and designing tests. An authentic test has a language that is natural, a test item that is related to daily context, and the topic is meaningful.

The following are several types of English writing assessment strategies for online learning during pandemic era which are similar to the assessments mentioned by Douglas Brown. The assessment strategies, completed with the explanation of assessment principles are as follows:

3.1. Hand Writing Assignment

a. Strategy

The model for assessing students' writing skills carried out by the teacher is a handwriting task. The handwriting task is one of the assessment models that ask students to write, can write text or string words. Brown, (2003) explains that handwriting is a very important skill in language assessment. This assessment model is where the teacher aims to develop students' writing skills by writing written works in the form of predetermined texts. For example, when learning about the descriptive text, teacher asks students to write descriptive text by looking at objects around them. They are allowed to describe friends, parents, pets, or things around.

b. The Language Assessment Principle Analysis

This assessment model is practical and authentic. This assessment model can be said to be practical because this test does not have to spend a lot of money, has a time limit, is easy to do or use, and has a specific assessment procedure to assess student work results. In addition, the practicality of a test can be measured from the extent to which the demands of a particular test specification can be met with the available resources. If it does not exceed the available resources at each stage of test development, then the test can be said to be practical. This assessment model can also be said to be authentic. This assessment includes assessments that form stories and exist in real life. Because the teacher asks students to make text that relates to students' surrounding. Besides that, choosing an interesting topic (according to students' point of view) is also one of the reasons why this assessment model can be said to be authentic.

3.2. Completing The Blank Space

a. Strategy

The second assessment model that the teacher uses when learning English is completing the blank space. This model is where students are asked to complete the gaps, it can be in the form of paragraphs or sentences. The assessment model of completing the blank space is also described by Douglas Brown. However, this type of assessment model falls into the category of tasks in handwriting letter, word, and punctuation which has been described by Douglas Brown. Usually, the teacher gives this assessment while still providing a random choice of words. So students just write or match words which suit best, to the sentence.

b. The Language Assessment Principle Analysis

This assessment model can be classified as a practical and reliable assessment. This assessment tends to be effective and does not require a lot of money. In addition, the instructions given are also clear and there is a time limit for the process. This assessment model also has a specific assessment procedure. This assessment in the form of blank space is also classified as a reliable assessment because this assessment if tested on the same student at different times which resulted on the relatively same answer. In addition, the content of an unambiguous test or assessment will definitely result in a definite answer. This means that if the test or assessment of this model is repeated at different times, the answer will remain the same and constant.

3.3. Picture Description

a. Strategy

The picture description model assessment is one of the writing assessments strategies used by the teacher. Usually, the teacher uses a picture description model in the descriptive text learning material. The teacher gives some pictures through google classroom, then asks students to describe the pictures. This evaluation model has also been described by Douglas Brown. According to Brown (2003), the main advantage of this technique is that in relation to reading and writing it can offer nonverbal measures to stimulate written responses.

b. The Language Assessment Principle Analysis

The assessment is in the form of a picture description, included into practical and authentic assessments. Picture description only requires a picture and then a description. This assessment is very practical and effective, especially in improving students' skills in writing descriptive texts. It doesn't required lots of

cost, as well. Furthermore, the assessment of this model includes an authentic assessment. Mueller (2005), authentic assessment is a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of important knowledge and skills. Nkhoma et al (2018), types of authentic assessment include portfolios, reflective journals and studies, presentations, discussions, and performance appraisals, and much more. This picture description assessment model is included into the category of portfolio writing. Authentic assessment is always in accordance with language assessment tasks with real communication situations or the real world.

3.4. Grammatical Task
a. Strategy
The grammatical task assessment model given by the teacher to students is very diverse. Sometimes the teacher asks students to correct the wrong structure and tenses, write sentences according to the specified tenses, complete verbs, change positive sentences to negative, and so on. The teacher uses this writing assessment model because the teacher wants to develop student's skills in writing with correct grammar.

b. The Language Assessment Principle Analysis
Grammatical tasks can be categorized as practical and valid assessments. Similar to other assessment models, the grammatical task does not require a lot of cost in its implementation. In addition, this assessment model tends to be easy to use by students. Because this assessment discusses grammar, an assessment to assess the results of this test requires a specific assessment procedure. In addition, a test is said to be valid when it has content validity if it measures the parallels between the specific learning objectives or learning indicators with the subject matter or content of the lessons given. This means that the assessment given to students is related to learning indicators and learning materials.

3.5. Scrambled Words
a. Strategy
Scrambled words are one of the writing assessment models that are often used by teachers. According to the teacher, this assessment model is enough to make students confused because students have to sort words to make a correct sentence. Sometimes many students get the wrong meaning because many words are reversed. This assessment model is the same as the assessment model described by Douglas Brown, namely the ordering task. Ordering tasks or scrambled words is a puzzle-type assessment model. This assessment is suitable to be applied as games. But during the pandemic that makes learning done online, this assessment is still used by teachers when learning English. In giving scrambled word assignments online, the teacher distributes assignments to students through Google Classroom. Assignments are given in the form of word or pdf files. Then for the method of collecting assignments, the teacher asks students to take photos of their work and collect them back in Google Classroom.

b. The Language Assessment Principle Analysis
This puzzle-shaped assessment is a practical, interesting and effective assessment model. But this task model is somewhat inauthentic as it results in writing performance and arguably makes use of grammatical word-ordering rules, this presents a challenge for test-takers whose learning styles do not lead them to logical-mathematical problem-solving (Brown, 2003). Usually, authentic assessments it is more about problem-solving, such as students being asked to make reports, writing essays, proposals, and portfolios. This assessment model also can fulfill the reliable assessment principle, because the results of the assessment have a fixed and consistent score.

3.6. Short Answer Question Task
a. Strategy
The last assessment model that teachers often use during online learning is the short answer question task. In this assessment model, the teacher uses a text and then gives several questions related to the text that has been given. Then students are asked to answer the questions correctly according to the text that has been provided. This type of assessment is actually a combination of reading and writing skills because students are asked to read first before writing down the answers to the questions that have been provided. For technical tasks in online learning, teachers usually use google form media or other quiz media such as Quizzes which contains text and short description questions. This media will also make it easier for teachers to correct and give scores because it will automatically display the score of student work.

b. The Language Assessment Principle Analysis
This assessment model is able to fulfill three principles of language assessment, those are practical, valid and authentic principle. This short answer question task assessment model can be said to be a practical assessment because it does not spend a lot of time working on it (time saving). In line with that, with this model teacher will be easier to correct student's work. Additionally, this assessment model can also be

said as valid assessment since it is in accordance with the learning objectives of the material being taught. This short question task assessment model is also related to the existing reality. Because there are texts that have interesting topics among students. Therefore, this assessment model can be said to be authentic because it can make students interested, enthusiast, and of course they are not going to get bored in taking tests.

4. Conclusion

To sum up everything that has been stated so far, this study found that there are at least six assessment models that teachers use for online learning during pandemic era. Generally, all those assessment models have fulfilled the certain language assessment principles. There are several assessment models that only cover two principles, such as the handwriting assessment, completing the blank space, grammatical task, and scrambled words model. Even though not all four principles of language assessment fulfilled, yet those models are still applicable in the teaching learning activity. Of all the four assessment models, the most suitable model to be applied in online learning is the picture description. Although the picture description assessment model only meets the 2 language assessment principles set by Brown, this assessment model is more flexible to be developed into an assessment model that is easy to apply in online learning. This assessment model is also one of the assessment models that are better applied in online learning because this assessment can increase students' creativity, especially in writing. By observing an object or image, students can develop and visualize a real object as a message or information that is clearly described. In addition, this assessment model can provide students with an overview of events in their environment during online learning.

Lastly, for teacher who concerned in applying these models, researchers would like to state suggestion. It is better for the teacher to observe the students first, before applying the models. By observing and knowing students' writing mastery level, teacher will be able to decide which model will be applied first. Teacher will be able to grade the writing activity as well, started from applying the easiest writing activity with the simplest model to the more advanced writing activity with the more complex model.

References

Bachri, Bachtiar S. (2010). Meyakinkan Validitas Data Melalui Triangulasi pada Penelitian Kualitatif. Surabaya: Universitas Negeri Surabaya.

Brown, D. (2003). Language Assessment : Principles and Classroom Practices. New York: Pearson Education

Budiana, K, M. (2021). The students' perception on the use of computer assisted language learning. Journal of Applied Studies in Language, Volume 5 Issue 1 (Jun 2021) https://dx.doi.org/10.31940/jasl.v5i1.2443

Gronlund, N. E. (1998). Assessment of Students Achievement. 6th edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. University of Florida.

Guion, A. Lisa. (2002). Triangulation: Establishing the Validity of Qualitative Studies. Florida: University of Florida, Gainesville

Harmer, J. (2004). How to Teach Writing. Harlow : Pearson Education Ltd.

Hill, J.R., & Hannafin, M.J. (1997). Cognitive Strategies and Learning from the World Wide Web. Educational Technology Research and Development.

Ilmiani, A. M., & Miolo, M. I. (2021). Digital literacy: exploration of social media-based Arabic language learning. *Journal of Applied Studies in Language*, *5*(2), 215–221. https://doi.org/10.31940/jasl.v5i2.215-221

Kearns, L. R. (2012). Student Assessment in Online Learning : Challenges and Effective Practices. University of Pittsburgh USA. https://jolt.merlot.org/vol8no3/kearns_0912.pdf

Moore, J. L., Dickson-Deane, C., & Galyen, K. (2011). E-Learning, online learning, and distance learning environments: Are they the same? Internet and Higher Education.

Mueller, J. (2005). The Authentic Assessment Toolbox: Enhancing Student Learning through Online Faculty Development. Retrieved from: https://www.uttyler.edu/aie/files/authentic%20assessment%20toolbox%20for%20higher%20ed%20faculty.pdf

Mukaromah D., & Mutoharoh A. (2019). Digital Quiz as Media to Review Material for English Education Students. Script Journal: Journal of Linguistics and English Teaching, 4(2), 88-100. https://doi.org/10.24903/sj.v4i2.319

Nkhoma, C. A, Nkhoma, M., & Tu, K.L. (2018). *Authentic Assessment Design in Accounting Course : A Literature Review*. Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology, Vol.15(1), pp.157-190; 2018. https://doi.org/10.28945/4036

Sadikin, A,. & Hamidah, A. (2020). *Pembelajaran Daring di Tengah Wabah Covid-19*. BIODIK: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Biologi. Volume 6, Nomor 02, Tahun 2020. https://doi.org/10.22437/bio.v6i2.9759

Siregar, TM. (2021). The critical discourse analysis on Joe Biden's elected president speech. *Journal Of Applied Studies In Language, 5*(1), 79-86. doi:10.31940/jasl.v5i1.2298

Tawarik, O., Ikhsanudin, I., Wajdi, M., & Latip-Yusoph, S. (2021). Effect of CALLA metacognitive strategy instruction on reading comprehension and reading awareness. *Journal of Applied Studies in Language*, *5*(2), 309–319. https://doi.org/10.31940/jasl.v5i2.309-319 (Original work published December 7, 2021)

Zhang, D., Zhao, J. L., Zhou, L., & Nunamaker, J. F. (2004). *Can e-learning replace classroom learning?* Communications of the ACM. https://userpages.umbc.edu/~zhangd/Papers/CACM1.pdf

Zulfikar, R., & Putri, AS. (2020). Web-based system for creative writing. *Journal Of Applied Studies In Language, 4*(2), 144-150. doi:10.31940/jasl.v4i2.1899