



Adapting Language Tests to Hybrid Learning: EFL Teachers' Challenges And Their Practices

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore teachers' challenges in conducting test in hybrid setting as well as their practices in the context of ELT classroom. The teachers also provide the solutions to overcome the problems. This is qualitative research that employs a case study as the approach. The data are obtained through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 8 English teachers of senior high school. The results highlight a number of major issues emerged in conducting tests with the combination of face-to-face and online classroom (hybrid setting) such as: (1) constructing level of thinking test; (2) integrating technology; (3) monitoring students; (4) assessing students fairly; (5) and inadequate facilities. Therefore, this study is a reflection on assessment in hybrid learning which suggests the administrators and authorities of education policy evaluate the guidelines to enhance quality of sustained assessment for students in hybrid learning model.

Keywords: Assessment; Hybrid learning; Teachers' challenges; Teachers' practices

Introduction

The development of modern technology has been rapidly increasing human's life. In the field of education, technology has participated in new trends in language teaching and language evaluation [1]. The existence of technology has changed and provided interesting and easy ways in teaching and learning processes. The use of technology support students' English skill by adjusting their own learning process, for example, through mobile learning, online games, YouTube, video, etc. [2]. Indonesian students learn English writing since junior high school to senior high school. Students have to master how to compose sentences into a proper paragraph and develop their paragraphs to become a story or text in proper form, organization, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and so on. However, several

problems in writing such as grammatical ability, vocabulary usage, spelling and punctuations make learning writing as difficult subject to learn. Although students have ideas or arguments to write, their writing will have no meaning and the essence of the passage cannot be expressed effectively. The students choose another way to respond some problems by imitating the kinds of writing of other sources rather than deliver their own ideas. After conducted the preliminary study, the researchers found that the teacher used inappropriate methods and monotonous teaching media in teaching writing.

However, a number of issues from schools have existed since the occurrence of the Covid-19. Teachers face a challenging problem while transitioning to online teaching practices due to the existing circumstances. This unexpected change in teaching-learning method not only affects the English Language Teaching (ELT) context but also demands teachers to teach while frequently assessing students' progress. Concerning to unfold of the ongoing global pandemic, new normal policies have been established in a number of lines, including education by reopening school activities. The new normal education requires us to adapt learning methods to the current digital-based conditions, which demands schools to integrate classroom learning with e-learning or hybrid learning. "Hybrid" refers to a combination of direct meeting and technological integration which must be implemented in direct proportion to the teaching and learning strategies that employed by both educators and students. Hybrid learning emphasizes the demands of traditional learning processes as well as the significance of redesigning learning models by incorporating technology (Hubbard, 2013). Although the combination of face-to-face and online learning (hybrid) is regarded as an alternate learning method in the new normal phase, its implementation does not always go as smoothly as expected. There have been various limitations to the many issues around the language testing, including hybrid test formats (Yulianto & Mujtahin, 2021; Nashir & Laili, 2021). Numerous questions also have been raised about how teachers can undertake assessment practice that are fair, accurate, and effective to support students learning in hybrid settings.

Some previous studies have been conducted by scientists and scholars related to the language testing. The result of a study conducted by Yulianto & Mujtahin (2021) revealed that teachers had negative perceptions towards online testing during the Covid-19. They encountered some challenges while conducting the assessment test, including the internet connectivity, the validity of the test, and the students'

disinterest. However, the implementation of online assessment is useful for teachers both to deliver material and evaluate students' achievement. Another study also carried out by Arifuddin et al. (2021) revealed that numerous benefits can be gained from using online learning testing, including the flexibility to take tests at any time, immediate feedback for students, and quick access to test the results for students. However, there are also downsides of using online testing systems, such as the possibility that students with limited proficiency in information technology (IT) will put them at disadvantage. On the other hand, a study by Sutisna & Vonti (2020) have confirmed that the application of hybrid learning was perceived positively by teachers and students. However, the teachers still struggled to determine the appropriateness methods and strategies for hybrid setting assessment.

Having highlighted the key issues in the literature related to language testing, the issue is that most of the findings are designed for language testing during online learning, but there are very few research that link language testing in the context of hybrid learning. To avoid this gap, the issues need to be discussed. Thus, this study addressed the issues of language testing, particularly tests in the setting of hybrid learning. This study aims to explore and describe teachers' challenges and their practices in administering language test in the context of hybrid learning with the research questions as follow: (1) How do the teachers administer test to measure students' language performance in hybrid learning? 2. What are the challenges encountered by teachers in the process of testing in the context of hybrid learning? 3. How do the teachers deal with the challenges in the process of testing in the context of hybrid learning?

Method

The Study Design

This study employed a qualitative method with a case study as a research design. The case study is used to analyse a current phenomenon in a real-life environment, and the research should be specific, complex, and functional. (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2019). The case study is considered relevant to the study as it will expose teachers' issues in conducting language testing, the ways teachers overcome the issues, and their practices in carrying out the test based on their experience in a hybrid setting.

Population and Sample

Furthermore, the subjects in this study are 8 English teachers from senior high schools in Jakarta and South Tangerang. Six English teachers are younger in their career and they were within the age range of 23-27 years and the two English teachers are 42-45 years. The researcher uses purpose sampling in selecting the research subject to assess those who having in-depth knowledge of a specific issue through their experience. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which the samples are selected with a purpose to represent the type in relation to the criterion (Creswell, 2012). Thus, the participants are intentionally chosen to fulfil the criteria

as the target of the research study.

Data collection procedures

For data collection, both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews are employed in this study. The questionnaire and interview questions are adapted from Prapphal (2008), Bachman (2014) and elaborated with other kinds of scientific papers related to the study's issue. The closed-ended questionnaire in the shape of 4 points Likertscale questions aim to gather data regarding teachers' practices in implementing test in the hybrid context. Meanwhile, the interview section intends to gather information regarding teachers' issues and their ways to solve the problems in conducting language test in hybrid setting. Besides, the interview becomes supplementary data which aims to gain better and qualified information comprehensively and meaningfully.

Data analysis technique

The procedure begins by collecting the data from the questionnaire which is taken through Google form and distributed to the participants. Then, the researcher begins continuing to gather data from the interview which is conducted through Zoom meeting around 25 to 30 minutes for each participant. After gathering the data, the researchers divided the data analysis into two steps. First, data from the questionnaires are analyzed and calculated to find out the percentage of each indicator which then the data displayed on the table statistically. Second, data from the interview questions are analyzed and described.

In the process of analyzing data, the researcher needs to reduce irrelevant data and choose the relevant data that occurs when reading the data to represent the objectives of research questions (Creswell, 2012). The collected data is analyzed using the framework proposed by Miles et al. (2014). First, the data reduction was done to reduce the unessential data since the researcher sometimes obtained abundantly available the gathered data. Second, the researcher displays the data in the form of tables and description explanation. Third, drawing conclusion is the final step of data analysis which the researcher interprets deeply and meaningfully the meaning of the data submitted.

In addition, to explore the trustworthiness of this qualitative research, the researcher employs member checking as a technique which involves participants' validation in order to obtain the credibility of the results. Data analysis or results are returned to the actual participants involved in the research to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences based on the topic. The researcher confirms the participants by interviewing them again whether the description is complete and

realistic, if the themes are accurate to include, and if the interpretations are fair and representative (Candela, 2019). Additionally, to establish content validity of data, three expert judgments/professionals are asked to evaluate the instruments both questionnaires and interviews questions. In this case, the expert judgments are language program lecturers that know the research situation well. Therefore, data validity can be acceptable.

Results

This section presents the results of the analysis data collected from both data questionnaire and interview concerning the teachers' practices in conducting the test, teachers' challenges and their way to overcome the problems in the context of hybrid learning, together with the discussion with the answers to the research questions are presented after results.

Table 1: Teachers' Practices in Applying Test in Hybrid Context

List of language practices	Often/ Always	Never/ Rarely
I give tests using multiple-choice questions instead open-ended questions (short or long answers)	75%	25%
I use several platforms to assess students, including Google Forms, WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Quizzes, and Zoom	100%	-
I use the same question for the tests both in distance learning and conventional learning	62.5%	37.5%
I create types of critical thinking questions for tests to mitigate opportunities for cheating	25%	75%
I use remote proctoring software or tool to support monitoring/deterring cheating	12.5%	87.5%
I restrict the amount of time to complete the test (making duration shorter)	37.5%	62.5%

As presented in table 1, utilizing plenty of great platforms to assess students' performance in a combination of tests – some online, some offline is the highest choice with complete participants. Using the multiple-choice questions are teachers' preference with 75%. Compared to open-ended questions, the teachers

confirm that they often and almost always use MCQ (multiple-choice questions) to assess students' competences in terms of understanding materials. For both distance and conventional learning, the finding shows that teachers always use the same questions for the test with 62.5%. Then, it also confirms that very few teachers (25%) or two teachers create or involve types of critical thinking questions for tests in the hybrid setting and the rest of teachers rarely and even never use critical thinking questions in the test. Meanwhile, a minority of the teachers with 12.5% indicate that they employed remote proctoring software or tool to monitor/deter potential cheating. It also shows that only 37.5% (3 teachers) restricted the amount of time and made duration shorter to complete the test. While the rest of teachers tend to use normal duration as in face-to-face test in classroom.

Table 2: Teachers' Constraints in Testing in Hybrid Context

List of Challenges	Teachers' Solutions
1. Constructing various and appropriate level of thinking test	1. Comparing test to other similar tests from different sources
2. Integrating computer and technology in language testing for hybrid setting	2. Getting help and instruction from the experts
3. Monitoring/controlling students' while administering tests	3. Asking students' camera on while completing the test and use a two-camera set up
4. Finding way to fairly assess a combination of both in class and online	4. Designing different questions and set the questions randomly and restricting time
5. Inadequate facilities (proctoring software to secure test)	5. Asking students to project their screen and use a two-camera set-up

Discussion

This unexpected change in teaching-learning method not only affects the English Language Teaching (ELT) context but also demands teachers to teach while frequently assessing students' progress. Teachers' strategies for conducting tests may benefit from modest or substantial adaptations to deal with the issues that arise when taking language tests in hybrid format. Nguyen (2022) & Koç et al., (2015) also confirm that one of the most difficult aspects of administering tests in

the context of hybrid setting is coordinating the tests such as adhering to students' diverse learning environments, and fostering academic integrity. Moreover, Cramp et al., (2019) the consistent result that tests administered in hybrid and remote modes have added more issues, such as how tests are formatted, how technology is used, how academic integrity is maintained, and how teachers and students can be accommodated.

Numerous studies have proven that hybrid learning or blended learning are effective, efficient, and attractive to be applied, but it is ineffective to authentically and fairly assess distance students. As has been shown the result of teachers' practices in conducting test in the hybrid context, finding strategies to consistently and fairly assess remote learners is paramount in the new classroom environments, whether in class, online or combination of both. For example, teachers' preference in using the multiple-choice questions compare to higher-order thinking questions. According to Gray (2020), she revealed that emphasizing higher order thinking questions, like analyzing, evaluating or creating allows for more student engagement and authentic assessment in hybrid format. Better choices for higher order thinking questions push learners to use order thinking skills and allow teachers' assessments to be multidimensional (Weiss, 2003; Ozdemir, 2017). On the other hand, higher-level thinking questions may offer creative, cheating-proof in a remote learning. Thus, answer of the questions which can be easily found in internet, such as multiple choice and fill in the blank stuff are not necessarily higher-level thinking that should not be in final assessment.

In addition, the persistence of hybrid learning concerns regarding academic dishonesty emerged and continued to trouble educators in higher education (Nguyen, 2022). Many schools are trying to tighten exam procedures to control the students. In fact, learners still find ways to "game the system". As pointed by Vici (2020), cheating may be more likely when students are assessed in hybrid model. Teachers do not just simply post the test for students to be completed, assessed, and done, but it is required for administrators and teachers to take into consideration: to innovate and facilitate the effective assessment in hybrid format. The most successful assessment in hybrid setting should ensure that hybrid setting facilities are fully supported. As suggested by Meyer (2020) in her study that the emphasizing on the use of remote proctoring software or other tools to prevent unethical behaviour. Assessment in hybrid format is not going to stop the issue, but choosing to use proctoring tools clearly can discourage cheating or something worse which is the technology biggest benefit (Basgall, 2020). While the artificial intelligence does not guarantee students to end the cheating, it can cause students the "fear of being caught".

It is critical to take into consideration the possibilities of assessing students learning in different modes where the instruction and engagement take place both virtually and physically. A number of major issues encountered by teachers are rising during the implementation of assessment in the context of hybrid setting because the test system used in hybrid setting is distinct from that used in the

conventional test. Sutisna & Vonti (2020) have confirmed that the application of hybrid learning was perceived positively by teachers and students. However, the teachers still struggled to determine the appropriateness of methods and strategies for hybrid setting assessment. Developing the right assessment strategies, methods, and technologies are the important key to consistently and fairly assess both physical and virtual learners, so the challenges do not continue going forward (Raes et al., 2019; Sutisna & Vonti, 2020).

Conclusion

In summary, this study has highlighted a number of practices and major issues encountered by teachers in adapting language tests in hybrid format, such as supporting facilities, adhering to students' diverse learning environments, and fostering academic integrity. Besides, this study also found solutions to cope those problems teachers faced during the implementation of assessment in hybrid setting. Nevertheless, the teachers do not neglect that delivering material and giving assessment are very useful during the hybrid setting. From the results of the study, the need for developing and innovating the techniques, methods, technology, and facilities that provide a continuous assessment which can be implemented in the context of different learning combination (hybrid learning).

As does all researcher, this study has inherent limitation which further studies could be suggested on his topic. This study was conducted with a limited representation of English teachers who employed assessment in hybrid setting in the two provinces only, the challenges may not be generalizable to general assessment system. The future research can explore the guidelines, methods, and facilities to improve the quality of the different assessment combination, both in virtual and physical classroom.

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