

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The Emancipated Curriculum is part of the Merdeka Belajar policy in the Indonesian education system, which requires teachers to use a new learning paradigm to improve the quality of the learning process as a kind of student-centered learning commitment (Apandi, 2023). In the Emancipated Curriculum, assessment plays an essential role in supporting the learning process, which focuses on improving student competencies. Assessment is a key component of curriculum systems that evaluate and assess the level of student's competency (Shadri et al., 2023). Assessments in the Emancipated Curriculum are designed to provide constructive feedback, also it helps students and teachers to monitor the student's learning progress comprehensively. Assessment activities are not only for reports and assessing student performance but also for collecting and processing information to identify students' learning progress and help the students in achieving learning objectives (Ardiansyah, et al., 2023). Implementation of assessment strategy involves many aspects such as well-planning, consistent implementation, in-depth analysis of results, and transparent reporting to ensure that each student gets the guidance needed to reach their maximum potential in learning process.

Assessment plays an important role in the teaching and learning process (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Gipps, 1994; Dashti, 2019). In the process of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), assessment has a very important role in

evaluating student learning progress and the effectiveness of the teaching methods applied by the teacher. Assessment has function as a tool to provide information about students' strengths and weaknesses, and to help students understand their own learning progress (McMillan, 2013; Smith, 2003; Dashti, 2019). Conceptually, assessment is defined as a systematic and continuous process or activity to collect information about student learning processes and outcomes in order to make decisions (Matondang et al., 2019; Ardiansyah, et al., 2023). It helps teachers evaluate students' learning progress in various aspects of English, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar comprehension skills. Through assessments, teachers can evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used by teachers. This allows teachers to make improvements and innovations in English language teaching in the future.

In this situation, teachers use various concepts or strategies in the form of assessment as learning (AaL), assessment for learning (AfL), and assessment of learning (AoL). Assessment as learning (AaL) is a type of assessment where students are actively involved in the assessment process to deepen their understanding of the learning material. It is not just a complement to teaching and learning, but offers a process where student involvement in assessment can become part of learning (Dann, 2014). It refers to students' active involvement in their assessments, treating assessment as a learning process (Zeng et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2022). With this, students are taught to monitor and evaluate their own progress, set learning goals, and develop strategies to achieve those goals. In addition, students learn to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and take steps to improve their learning outcomes. In this case, the teacher acts as a facilitator

who helps them to set learning goals, provides reflection tools, provides constructive feedback, and creates a classroom environment that supports collaborative learning. Assessment as learning typically uses methods such as reflective journals, portfolios, self-assessments, peer-assessments, and assessment rubrics to help students understand assessment criteria and improve the quality of their work. Therefore, it is very valuable for students because it requires students to take responsibility for their learning (Andrade, 2010; Hall and Goetz, 2013; Yin et al., 2022).

Then assessment for learning (AfL) is an assessment carried out at each stage of the learning process, with effective feedback used to improve student performance (Johnson, 2024). It is used as a tool to provide feedback to students during the learning process. It can support and improve students' learning process during learning in the classroom. In assessment for learning, students play an active role by using feedback to improve understanding, carry out self-reflection, and participate in the class discussions. Through this assessment, the learning process is more responsive and adaptive to student needs, so that the learning goals can be achieved. Teachers act as facilitators who provide constructive feedback, ask leading questions, and use various assessment strategies such as classroom observations and formative quizzes. From a teacher's perspective, this can be as simple as observing class discussions, asking questions, and reviewing student work (Steele, 2019). In this case, teachers use methods such as formative feedback, classroom observations, and open-ended questions to measure student understanding and adjust teaching strategies. Assessment for learning is important

because it supports the development of students' metacognitive strategies and helps them to take a more active role in their learning process (Johnson, 2024).

Additionally, learning assessments are carried out at the end of the learning period to evaluate the extent to which students have achieved the set learning objectives. Learning assessment is intended to determine student achievement of learning outcomes at a certain time after students have completed the learning process and summative assessment that emphasizes grades (Atmanegara, 2024). Learning assessment is also known as summative assessment, which summarizes and reports student achievement at a certain point in time (Mutch, 2012; Wijaya 2023). So, assessments are used to determine final grades of the students. These assessments provide important information to the teachers, students, and parent about a student's level of achievement. In learning assessment, students considered to take a test or examination to demonstrate their understanding, while the teacher acts as an evaluator who designs assessment tools, corrects them, gives grades, and reports the results. In this case, teachers use methods such as standard tests, final exams, projects, and final assignments. So, the aim is to measure what students have learned and achieved during the learning process (Salam, 2024). Learning assessments can determine student achievement, make educational decisions, and provide accountability. Assessment of Learning is a learning assessment that shows general reporting outcomes (Stiggins, 2002). It is used as evidence of what students know and can perform, to see if they have met curriculum objectives, and, in some situations, to indicate how they compare to others (Earl, 2006). Assessment of Learning is the process of determining whether or not learning occurred (Stiggins, 2004, p. 31). Teachers use assessments

in this evaluation to determine the quantity and quality of students' work. This type of assessment determines which students are performing well and which are not. It is sometimes referred to as summative examination. (AoL) is a longstanding educational method. According to Ecclestone (2004) and Ecclestone (2002) revealed they have received overwhelming support from parents and the general public.

Implementing an English Language Teaching (ELT) assessment strategy is certainly not easy. Challenges faced include limited resources, not all schools have adequate resources, such as technology or a lack of teachers in schools to provide individual assessments. Then, time constraints often become an obstacle in providing a comprehensive and detailed assessment. Sometimes teachers do not have enough time to evaluate various aspects of students' abilities even though this is very important to do. Furthermore, according to individual needs, students have different needs and learning styles. It is not easy for teachers to adapt assessment strategies to suit individual needs, especially in large classes with varying levels of student ability. The next challenge is responding to student anxiety and pressure, usually some students experience anxiety or pressure when facing assessments. This can affect their performance and make the assessment results not reflect the student's true potential. Then, the quality of the questions and assessment tasks, composing questions and assessment tasks that are adequate, relevant and challenging is not an easy thing. Questions that are too easy or too difficult can produce inaccurate assessment results. Lastly, there is a deep understanding of assessment standards. Teachers must have a deep understanding of the applicable assessment standards, both in terms of language

skills and other skills that want to be evaluated. Lack of understanding can lead to inconsistent or invalid assessments.

Diversified instruction has gained recognition in English language teaching (ELT) due to its capacity to adapt to students' diverse needs and skill levels. Differentiated assessment is an important component of this paradigm, allowing teachers to measure student learning and development based on individual preferences, styles, and skill levels (Tomlinson, 2014). Differentiated assessment has various implications in Indonesian EFL classes. Differentiated assessment aligns with learner-centered pedagogy, which prioritizes personalized and inclusive education over a universal approach (Tomlinson, 2001). Differentiated assessment promotes equality and accessibility by providing many opportunities for students to demonstrate their language competency. This allows students from diverse backgrounds to achieve academically (McTighe and Brown, 2005). It fosters a positive learning environment where teachers acknowledge each student's unique strengths and contributions, while also emphasizing mutual respect, cooperation, and student agency (Tomlinson, 2017).

Implementing differentiated assessment can be challenging, especially in Indonesia's EFL context. Traditional evaluation systems are deeply embedded in institutional structures and cultural norms, despite rising recognition of the importance of student diversity and inclusion in education (Guskey, 2003). Standardized testing remains a significant effect on evaluation techniques in Indonesia, as it is in many other educational systems worldwide. According to Rea-Dickins and Germaine (2017) found language testing prioritizes rote memorization and accuracy above meaningful conversation and language usage.

Implementing diverse assessment approaches might be challenging due to time, lack of resources, and limited opportunities for professional development (Kostka & Johnson, 2019).

According to preliminary data obtained by the researcher, teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Negara have already implemented an overview of the types of assessment that the Emancipated Curriculum emphasizes in the learning process. Also, the English teacher applies more than one kind of assessment namely diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment. In addition, the English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Negara have diverse understandings of differentiated assessment in teaching-learning process. Teachers consider this strategy important to meet the students' needs in learning English in the classroom, especially in the context of the emancipated curriculum which emphasizes inclusive and flexible learning in the classroom. One of the differentiated assessment strategies that teacher has implemented in the classroom is assignment, where the assignment was given to students based on their abilities, interests, and learning styles. For example, in the assignment of writing descriptive texts, teacher give students the flexibility to innovate according to their creativity. However, in its implementation, teacher face various challenges, such as time constraints in designing varied assignments and difficulties in adjusting assessment strategies for each student. Nevertheless, teachers continue to strive to optimize differentiated assessment strategies so that the learning process is more inclusive and effective for the students.

There are several studies surrounding the teacher's assessment strategies. The study that was conducted by Saputri, et al (2021) shows that teachers'

perception of authentic assessment is assessment that can assess students' knowledge, skill, and attitude during the teaching and learning process, and the implementation of authentic assessment in English language teaching conducted in one of the state senior high schools in Surakarta includes types of authentic assessment, the steps of developing authentic assessment, documents used in implementing authentic assessment, teachers' and students' roles, and teach It can increase pupils' motivation, enthusiasm, self-confidence, activity level, and desire to learn English. Authentic evaluation can help students improve their English abilities and learning outcomes.

Next, based on the research conducted by Noning, et al (2022) stated that Learning assessment is an important component of the Emancipated Curriculum Implementation. This is because assessment is beneficial for stimulating learning, gathering comprehensive data about students, monitoring students' learning progress, and providing feedback on the learning process from both the teacher's and students' perspectives. Conducting an assessment supports teachers in choosing the next steps to take to improve the quality of learning. Teachers should understand the assessment ideas provided in the Emancipated Curriculum before implementing learning assessments. The study's findings indicate that the implementation of learning assessment has been successful because English teachers can incorporate the majority of the assessment principles into classroom learning activities. However, as the majority of the assessment principles have been properly implemented, a small number of assessment principles, such as self-assessments, peer assessment, self-reflection, and providing peer feedback, have not been implemented optimally.

In addition, the study that was conducted by Astari, et al (2023) stated that teachers have used formative assessment optimally. Teachers used presentations and role-playing to carry out the formative assessments. Further, problems were identified during the assessment process, such as the teacher's inability to apply the assessment criteria and provide feedback on student assessment results.

According to the findings of those researches that have been conducted about teacher's assessment strategy. There are numerous researches on using authentic assessment methodologies in the learning process, including problems encountered by teachers during implementation. However, these studies only examined one authentic assessment approach for a specific goal and its impact on classroom learning. The curriculum states that teachers must be able to differentiate not only in the learning process but also in the assessment process. There is a need for differentiation in assessment, but there are challenges in its implementation, so in implementing assessment strategies, teachers must be aware of whether there is differentiation in the learning process or not. These points have not been discussed in the empirical studies above. As a result, this study is urgently needed to investigate how differentiated assessment strategies are implemented in the classroom. By doing this research, we will broaden and increase English teachers' knowledge of implementing assessment strategies in the classroom, allowing them to choose the most appropriate assessment strategy to improve their students' teaching and learning experiences at school. So, implementing differentiated assessment strategies in the classroom learning process is very important to support the existing knowledge of the theoretical framework regarding assessment practices.

So, based on the explanation above, this study is intended to fulfill the gaps regarding the differentiated assessment strategies implemented by the English teachers in the classroom. This study also explores the challenges encountered by the English teachers in implementing the differentiated assessment strategies in ELT classroom at SMP Negeri 1 Negara.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the background above, the EFL teachers are invited to conduct the differentiated assessment that can improve students' learning outcomes as well as the learning process itself. It implies that the teacher should allow students with the opportunity to participate in the process of learning about the purpose of assessment by giving them a chance to evaluate themselves using differentiated assessment strategy. Based on the pre-observation that researcher conducted on August 13rd, 2024, one of the English teachers has implemented diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment during the learning process. The example of assessment that being implemented such as pre-test and interview with the students and this is part of the diagnostic assessment. Second, question and answer question that pointed a random student in the classroom, homework, weekly quizzes, and discussion to help the teacher to find out about the students' understanding toward the material. It also helps the teacher think about what kind of learning strategies or method used for the next meeting. Additionally, for the summative assessment the teacher implements final examination or make an individual project. It also helps the teacher to know the whole understanding of the students during the lesson start from the beginning until the end of the session.

Thus, this study aims to describe the differentiated assessment strategies used by the English teacher in teaching process and the challenges of the teachers' when implementing the differentiated assessment strategies in teaching English at SMP Negeri 1 Negara.

1.3 Limitation of Study

Based on the problems above, this research will focus to describe the teachers' differentiated assessment strategies employed in teaching English and describe the challenges of teacher in employing the differentiated assessment strategies in teaching English especially in the Emancipated Curriculum Implementation at SMP Negeri 1 Negara. This research will use observation and interview technique with a qualitative approach. The school that will be observed is limited to junior high schools located in Jembrana Regency, especially for the English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Negara where the school has implemented the Emancipated Curriculum and the teacher has already implemented the differentiated assessment strategy in teaching English.

1.4 Research Questions

The research formulates two questions based on the problem identifications as follows:

1. How do the English teachers' differentiated assessment strategies employed in teaching and learning process in the Emancipated Curriculum?
2. What are the challenges of teachers in employing the differentiated assessment strategies in the Emancipated Curriculum?

1.5 Research Objectives

There are two objectives in this research as follows:

1. To describe the English teachers' differentiated assessment strategy at SMPN 1 Negara in teaching and learning process in the Emancipated Curriculum.
2. To describe the challenges faced by the English teachers at SMPN 1 Negara in employing the differentiated assessment strategies in the Emancipated Curriculum.

1.6 Research Significances

1. Theoretical Significance

According to the researcher, the goal of the study is to expand and improve the knowledge of teachers' differentiated assessment strategies for their teaching and learning process in the classroom by providing theory, information, and data about teachers' differentiated assessment strategies and challenges in teaching and learning process. This study also to support the empiricism of the previous study of the researchers.

2. Practical Significance

a. For English Teacher

This study is hope to give the English teacher a perspective of many differentiated assessments strategies that are conducted by the English teacher in teaching and learning process in the school. So, they can select the appropriate assessment strategy to enhance their teaching and learning process of the students at school.

b. For Educational Institutions

This study provides a broad and in-depth understanding of English teachers' differentiated assessment strategies by considering the role of assessment in the learning process, which supports a curriculum vision of using a variety of approaches in teaching and learning and involving students in the assessment process. Understanding English teachers' assessment strategies in teaching and learning, as well as the challenges in implementing those strategies, allows educational institutions to design appropriate assessment strategies that involve students in each assessment process in accordance with the Emancipated Curriculum.

c. For Other Researchers

The researcher expects that this study will be utilized as a reference in their research on the topic of teachers' differentiated assessment strategy in ELT classroom. Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used to support other studies on themes related to this study.

