

Aligning Assessment Practices with Learning Objectives: A Case of EFL Classes in Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: alignment, assessment practice, classroom assessment, constructive alignment, learning objective DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v10i1.1973 How to cite: Lestari, S. & Yusuf, F.N. (2025). Aligning Assessment Practices with Learning Objectives: A Case of EFL Classes in Indonesia. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 10(1), 145-163	The alignment between learning objectives and assessment practices is critical to effective language teaching and learning. This study explores the alignment between learning objectives and assessment practices in English classes at a public senior high school in Jakarta, Indonesia. Grounded in a qualitative case study using Bigg's constructive alignment framework, the study emphasizes the essential connection among learning objectives, teaching methods, and assessment practices. Involving three selected English teachers, documents comprising lesson plans and assessment instruments, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data. Findings indicate that the assessment tasks mostly align with the learning objectives. The assessments focus on the higher level of understanding: extended abstract and relational. However, misalignment between assessment and learning objective is found in this study, based on the missing assessment tasks and incomplete learning objectives stated in the lesson plans. Time constraints, lesson planning issues, and difficulties in designing assessment tasks and rubrics hinder the alignment. It implies that teachers require professional development programs on language assessment literacy and lesson planning, collaborative work with colleagues, and technology integration to maintain alignment, particularly in the context of education reforms. This study contributes to the existing research on constructive alignment in English classroom assessments. It provides insights into how alignment can improve student learning in English classrooms.

1. Introduction

The alignment between assessment practice and learning objectives plays an essential role in every classroom instruction. Proper alignment between learning objectives and assessment shapes meaningful learning and helps students understand what they are expected to learn

and how they will be assessed (Sewagegn, 2020). This alignment also impacts student's academic progression and achievement (Jaiswal, 2019; Kabouha & Elyas, 2015). Furthermore, it helps teachers track student progress and identify students who need additional support (Genon & Torres, 2020). The alignment also improves content delivery and learning activities by providing clear achievement standards (Lee, 2019). Valid and reliable assessment practice is believed to provide feedback to improve learning (Giraldo, 2019). In addition, aligned assessment can help teachers improve their instruction by providing feedback on how well their students learn.

However, some issues with misalignment happen. It is found that the assessed curriculum in a provincial test is partially aligned with the intended curriculum of English language skills (Wallace & Ke, 2023). More coverage of the content is needed. There still needs to be a disparity between the curriculum, the expected outcome, and the national English language teacher education standards (Nguyen and Vu, 2020). Meanwhile, it was identified that there was a moderate alignment between the pairs of intended, enacted, and assessed curricula with the gaps in the cognitive level of the content in EFL (Tekir, 2021). It was found that English teachers faced challenges aligning assessment with learning objectives, such as lack of time and resources, training and support, and misalignment between curriculum and assessment (Genon & Torres, 2020). Teachers' misconception of language learning focusing on assessing grammar and vocabulary also contributes to a need for more alignment (Rouffet et al., 2023). This misalignment can have negative consequences, such as disengagement, confusion, and frustration among students, ultimately hindering successful English language learning.

The issue of misalignment between curriculum and assessment in English language teaching is also present in Indonesia, particularly during the transition from *Kurikulum 2013* to *Kurikulum Merdeka* (the Emancipated Curriculum). The focus of classroom assessments has shifted from summative to formative. This shift gives teachers more freedom to design their assessments. While it presents a great opportunity, it also poses challenges for teachers. English teachers have tried implementing formative assessments but have issues using rubrics and giving feedback (Astari et al., 2023). Some English teachers are still working to comprehend the learning outcomes of the new curriculum (Novita et al., 2023). A study by Kusumawardani & Faridi (2019) found the gap between the curriculum and the implementation of communicative language teaching. The learning objectives through communicative language teaching were not achieved as this approach was not implemented properly. The English class needs more productive skills practice and discipline-related learning materials at the senior high school level. Amin and Rahimi (2022) revealed a misalignment between assessment tasks and learning objectives, which impacted the teaching objectives and did not meet the students' communication needs. Some English teachers are inconsistent in giving classroom assessments (Widiastuti et al., 2023). They conducted different classroom assessments from what was taught in class due to the national exam's priority and the teachers' workload. Neglecting these misalignments may exacerbate existing challenges in the learning environment.

There has been growing interest in the issues of language assessment and its alignment with the curriculum (Boon et al., 2020; Kencana et al., 2022; Nguyen & Vu, 2020; Wallace & Ke, 2023). However, research on the alignment of assessment and learning objectives in the EFL context remains limited, specifically in Indonesia, where curriculum reforms are dynamic.

Kencana et al. (2022) reviewed the alignment between assessment tasks with teaching activities and learning objectives in English lesson plans, but it was limited to document analysis. Widiastuti et al. (2023) investigated the alignment between EFL teachers' understanding of classroom assessment and classroom practices without considering alignment with the current learning outcomes. Gozali et al. (2023) examined the contextual alignment between the assessment for learning and EFL teachers' motivational strategies in higher education, recommending further investigation into alignment with the student learning outcomes. This study aims to investigate how assessment tasks align with learning objectives in English classes and how English teachers develop this alignment. The research questions are: 1) How are the assessment practices aligned with the learning objectives in English lessons? 2) How do English teachers align assessment practices with the learning objectives stated in English lessons?

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Language Teaching in Indonesia

The latest national curriculum in Indonesia, the Emancipated Curriculum, introduced in 2022, provides guidelines for teachers to design a curriculum at the classroom level. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology, stipulated that the learning goals of English subjects are to develop communicative competence in multimodal text, intercultural competence, confidence as independent and responsible individuals, and creative and critical thinking. Referring to the goals, the government has formulated the English learning outcomes for each phase, from elementary school (Phase A) to senior high school (Phase F). High school students are expected to have English language proficiency equivalent to B1 CEFR level. They must interact, communicate, and express their ideas comprehensively in diverse contexts. English language teaching employs genre-based and project-based learning approaches (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). The teaching of English should consider the student's needs. Hence, teachers are encouraged to implement differentiated instruction. Teachers are free to develop their lesson plans and conduct the assessments.

New assessment practices are introduced in the new curriculum. Before the Emancipated Curriculum, the assessment focused on summative assessment. Teachers teaching English for doing the national exam. The assessments in the Emancipated Curriculums include diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to monitor and improve students' learning (Anggarena et al., 2022). Teachers are provided with the flexibility to design the assessment considering the students' characteristics, the alignment between the assessment and the learning objective, and the practicality of the instrument to give feedback to both students and teachers. In the assessment guideline, three options are given to the teachers to measure whether the students achieve the learning goals. They can select among the descriptive criteria, rubric, or score intervals. The teachers' lesson plans include the objectives, teaching-learning process, and assessment tasks.

2.2 Constructive Alignment

Constructive alignment was a concept developed by Biggs (1996), emphasizing the importance of aligning the learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment to enhance learning. It is an outcome-based teaching approach that focuses on defining learning

outcomes before instruction begins, providing a framework for adjusting both teaching and assessment to achieve these goals (Lawrence, 2018). According to Biggs (2003), there are two major aspects: constructive and alignment. Constructive refers to how students construct meaning through relevant and meaningful learning activities, and alignment refers to how teachers set the learning environment to support learning activities to achieve the learning objectives. Hence, constructive alignment starts with setting the learning objectives. Alignment is best achieved when teaching-learning activities and assessment tasks generate the same verbs as in the intended learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2007). They define four stages to design the constructively aligned teaching and assessment:

- 1) Define clear and specified learning objectives in the learning activities. Teachers identify specific knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire by the end of the learning activity. The teacher can use verbs that describe observable behaviors like analyse, evaluate, compose, and apply instead of using terms like know, understand, and comprehend.
- 2) Create a supportive environment to help students achieve learning outcomes. Teachers use interactive, engaging activities that scaffold and instruct students to practice and apply intended outcomes.
- 3) Use the assessment tasks to match and cover the learning outcomes. Teachers choose assessment tasks that directly measure the intended learning objectives. They can use diverse assessment methods to cater to different learning styles, assess various aspects of student learning, and consider the complexity of the learning objectives when designing assessment tasks.
- 4) Convert the assessment into the rubric with the criteria aligned with the learning outcomes. In this stage, the teacher develops a specific and detailed rubric that clearly outlines the criteria for success for each learning objective. Use the same verbs and terminology used in the learning objectives to ensure consistency and alignment.

The aforementioned steps aid teachers in integrating the teaching-learning activities that engage students to actively and meaningfully develop their English language skills. By explicitly specifying verbs in the desired learning outcomes, both the teaching-learning activities and assessment tasks become evident. Developing clear and accurate learning objectives assists teachers in determining how to teach and how to evaluate these objectives. The verbs in the teaching-learning activities reflect the alignment with the assessment and the intended learning objectives (Biggs & Tang, 2007).

2.3 Defining Learning Objectives

In designing a curriculum, learning objectives specify the activities for students to perform. It provides clear direction for both instruction and assessment. Referring to the stages to design aligned teaching and assessment, defining a clear intended learning outcome (ILO) comes at the first stage (Biggs, 2003). ILO refers to written statements indicating the expected students' level of understanding and performance resulting from engaging in the teaching and learning activities.

Defining the level of understanding is a complicated task. Biggs and Tang (2007) suggested using verbs in the learning objectives to address the cognitive level of understanding and performance of understanding. They distinguish between declarative and functioning knowledge. Declarative knowledge is the knowledge that can be declared or told to people

both orally and in writing while functioning knowledge is the knowledge that can be performed or put to work. Some verbs are recommended to formulate learning objectives to indicate what level of knowledge and understanding are to achieve. The verbs are from the lower level, which includes 'describe', 'identify', and 'memorize', and higher level, for example, reflect, hypothesize, solve, etc. Biggs (1996) proposed the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO) Taxonomy to classify students' level of understanding. The taxonomy consists of five levels, which are:

- 1) Pre-structural: The students need help understanding the task or concept. They may provide an irrelevant response.
- 2) Unistructural: The students can understand and recall individual facts or concepts, but they need help to connect them to coherence.
- 3) Multi-structural: The students can identify and describe multiple facts and concepts and make simple connections between elements but need help integrating these elements into complex understanding.
- 4) Relational: The students can explain relationships between different facts or concepts and apply their understanding to new situations.
- 5) Extended abstract: The students can develop and apply abstract models or theories and solve complex problems.

The verbs to form learning objectives are presented in the following table. Referring to the two types of knowledge, the examples of verbs in learning objectives in SOLO Taxonomy can be classified as follows (Biggs & Tang, 2007):

Table 2.1. Typical knowledge verbs by SOLO levels

	Declarative knowledge	Functioning knowledge
Unistructural	memorize, identify, recite	count, match, order
Multi-structural	describe, classify	compute, illustrate
Relational	compare and contrast, explain, argue, analyze	apply, construct, translate, solve near problems, predict within the same domain
Extended abstract	theorize, hypothesize, generalize	reflect, improve, invent, create, solve unseen problems, predict to unknown domain

The SOLO taxonomy can be adopted to set the learning objectives and identify students' level of understanding of the English language.

2.4 Assessment Practices in EFL Classroom

Assessment plays a crucial role in providing information about students' progress, learning needs, and the effectiveness of instructional practices. It evaluates how well the sequence of instructional activities has been implemented. There are two distinct types of assessment to make a decision: formative and summative assessment (Cunningham, 1998). Formative assessment is an ongoing assessment process throughout the teaching-learning activities. Many researchers also use the term 'assessment for learning' instead of formative assessment (William, 2011). In contrast, summative assessment is a formal process of assessment that occurs at the end of a unit, course, or program. Formative assessment provides feedback for students and teachers to improve learning, while summative assessment measures student achievement (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Assessment in constructive alignment has two purposes for both teachers and students. For teachers, assessment checks the quality of teaching. For students, assessment is to monitor

the progress of what is to be learned and achieved. In the constructive alignment concept, the teaching design is outcome-based, while the assessment uses criterion references (Biggs, 2003). Criterion-referenced assessment measures students' performance using predetermined criteria or standards rather than comparing them to other students (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). It helps teachers and students to improve the learning process. This assessment evaluates whether students have achieved the learning goals or desired competencies. Teachers can create rubrics or establish criteria and share them with their students. Such assessments provide valuable feedback and help identify students' strengths and weaknesses.

Creating assessment tasks aligned with the learning objectives takes much work. Language assessment has challenges and issues, including the influence of behavioral psychology, integrative approaches to assessment, communicative language assessment tasks, traditional and alternative assessment, and performance-based assessment (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). The first issue about the influence of behavioral psychology relates to the focus of assessment on sentence-level, grammatical paradigms and a minor focus on real-world, authentic communication. The second issue concerns the integrative approach, whether the assessment should follow communicative competence, which requires integrating English language skills. Some EFL teachers lack the necessary skills to effectively conduct integrative assessments (Adnan et al., 2019). The third is designing communicative tasks to measure students' real-life communication abilities rather than just their linguistic competence. As teachers become aware of communicative competence, the need to change traditional tests into more authentic assessments to elicit meaningful communication has emerged. Some English teachers have found that implementing authentic assessments can be complicated and time-consuming (Rukmini & Saputri, 2017). The final issue about performance-based assessment is when teachers evaluate the actual performance of their students in both oral and written production. EFL teachers encountered challenges related to time, preparation, and performance evaluation rubrics (Salma & Prastikawati, 2021).

Further challenges of communicative performance-based assessment are addressed by Brown and Abeywickrama (2019), including the dynamic assessment, assessment of pragmatic competence, and the increasing use of technology. The first issue is dynamic assessments, where classroom assessments should provide clear tasks, pose questions that prompt students to demonstrate their understanding and provide feedback. The next is the assessment of pragmatics, in which teachers should assess the social interactions and language use in communication. The assessment is not only based on grammatical but also on pragmatic competence. Using technology in assessment can be challenging for teachers because it offers advantages and disadvantages. Teachers should be able to manage integrating technology into the assessment tasks.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research adopted a qualitative case study. It was used in a specific context to seek in-depth answers to "why" or "how" the phenomenon of alignment between learning objectives and assessment practices in a school setting (Yin, 2018). The case was a public senior high school in Jakarta. It was selected for its accessibility and implemented the latest curriculum in English language teaching.

3.2 Participants

Participants were three experienced English teachers, one of each from grades 10, 11, and 12, each possessing over ten years of teaching experience. Teacher A teaches English for grade 10, Teacher B for grade 11, and Teacher C for grade 12. Purposive sampling was employed, selecting participants based on the following criteria: (1) extensive experience teaching English at the senior high school level; (2) current teaching roles at school as English teachers using the latest national curriculum; and (3) willingness to participate in the observations and interviews. The informed consent for confidentiality had been strictly adhered to in this study, both institutional and personal consent. The participants were also informed about the purpose of the research and their rights.

3.3 Instruments

To provide a holistic view of the alignment between assessment practice and learning objectives in English classrooms by having multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018), the study employed three data collection techniques: document, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews. The document includes the teachers' lesson plans and assessment instruments (including the assessment materials and rubrics) and the official document of curriculum accessed and retrieved from the official website of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia.

Three classroom observations were conducted on all of the classes within three consecutive weeks with each participating English teacher to gain insights into how assessment practices are applied in the classroom and to capture a comprehensive view of their teaching and assessment practices. Each observation took place ninety minutes for each class. The observed aspects include the type of assessment teachers employ during their classes, how teachers integrate assessment into their teaching methods, and how students respond to assessment activities and instructions related to learning objectives. The researchers played as the observer (Creswell, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews were administered with the three participants. These interviews explored their perspectives on assessment practices, learning objectives, and the alignment between the two. The interview protocol comprises the teachers' strategy to design the lesson plan and align the assessment with the stated learning objectives. The interviews provided insights into the teachers' viewpoints and experiences regarding assessment and learning objectives. The interviews were recorded. A mix of English and Bahasa Indonesia was used during the interviews. The excerpts in this paper are translated and written in English.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected through documents, classroom observation, and interviews were thematically analysed. The documents were reviewed to identify the stated learning objectives and their alignment with the assessment tasks. Bigg's constructive alignment framework (Biggs, 1996) was employed to analyse the alignments of the assessment and learning objectives. The alignment was analysed based on the use of verbs found in the lesson plans and the classroom practices. The SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1989) was used to identify the student's understanding level as expected in the learning objectives by examining the assessment tasks from the lesson plans. The analysis was conducted by comparing the verbs in the learning objectives (LO) and assessment tasks (AT) stated in the lesson plans. The following chart is used to map the lesson plan and assessment analysis.

Table 3.1. Mapping the lesson plans and assessment practice.

1	Learning objective (LO)	[Stated learning objective]	Level of SOLO taxonomy
	Assessment task (AT)	[Assessment tasks stated in the lesson plan]	Level of SOLO taxonomy

All the learning objectives were coded to examine their representation in the lesson assessment tasks. The analysis helped identify patterns and themes related to aligning assessment practices and learning objectives. In addition, the assessment plan was analysed to assess their alignment with the stated learning objectives and the criteria for evaluating students' work. Document analysis was performed initially to provide a foundation for subsequent data collection and analysis (Morgan, 2022). The data from the classroom observation notes, and the interviews were used to confirm the document analysis results. All data were then identified and categorized to generate themes.

This single case study design allowed for an in-depth examination of assessment practices within a senior high school in Jakarta, but it has limitations regarding generalizability. The findings are specific to this context and may not directly apply to other EFL settings, such as rural schools, private institutions, or different educational levels. However, the study aims to present analytical rather than statistical generalization. It seeks to enhance the theoretical understanding of assessment in similar EFL settings by providing a detailed and nuanced account of assessment practices. Future research could involve multiple case studies across diverse contexts to explore the broader implications of these findings and to develop more comprehensive theories of classroom assessment practices in Indonesia.

4. Results

4.1. The alignment between assessment practices and learning objectives

This study explores the alignment between the assessment practice and learning objectives in English classrooms. After analysing the data through the lenses of the constructive alignment framework and SOLO taxonomy, it was found that most assessment tasks measure the intended learning outcome. The alignment is evident in nearly all lesson plans (Lesson Plans A, B, and C). Clear and explicit verbs are written in the lesson plans. However, the lesson plan does not provide a statement about the assessment.

Lesson plan A on the topic of procedure text shows similar verbs in both learning objectives (LO) and assessment tasks (AT). It is implied from the statements that the expected level of understanding is gradually increased from uni-structural, relational and extended abstract. In LO 1, the verb is 'identify'. The verb 'find out' is used in the lesson plan assessment part. Both verbs have the same level of understanding.

Table 4.1. The first LO and AT of lesson plan A

1	LO	Identify procedure text's social function, structure, and language features and present them independently and creatively.	Unistructural
	AT	Find out detailed information about the social function, structure, and language features of the procedure text "How to Make Sourdough" (Meeting 2)	Unistructural

The second LO and AT use verbs exactly similar to those in the lesson plan. Both use 'present' words to represent what knowledge should be acquired. The AT and LO are aligned and at the relational level of understanding.

Table 4.2. The second LO and AT of lesson plan A

2	LO	Present the steps of making something both in written and oral form considering the social function, text structure, and language features of procedure text.	Relational
	AT	Present the procedure text about 'Global Warming' by considering the text structure and language features in group works. (Meeting 5)	Relational

The third AT is also aligned with the LO. Students are expected to be able to 'create', which means that they exercise functional knowledge. Students are to perform what they understand. The verbs are in the extended abstract level of understanding.

Table 4.3. The third LO and AT of lesson plan A

3	LO	Create procedure text using the correct structure and language features	Extended abstract
	AT	In groups of three, create a project related to procedure text considering the structure of text and language features. Discuss in the class and present the result in front of the class (Meeting 4)	Extended abstract

The classroom observation field notes supported this finding. During the English session, teacher A instructed the students to work in groups and create a project to cook Indonesian foods. They were to work in groups of seven, choose one food, write the procedure of how to make the food and cook it together at home. While cooking, they were to tell the ingredients and steps to cook. The entire process was to be recorded and submitted to the teacher. The interview with teacher A revealed that the assessments for this topic are formative and summative. The formative assessments are conducted weekly in every session, like doing a quiz, reading comprehension, or question and answers. The summative assignment is conducted at meeting 5, the last session for the procedure text topic.

One assessment task in lesson plan B indirectly measures the intended learning outcomes. The data from the document analysis indicates that some of the verbs in the assessment are not similar to the learning objectives. However, they imply the steps to achieving the learning objectives. The verbs in the LO and AT are not completely and directly aligned. It can be seen from the summary of Lesson Plan B below:

Table 4.4. LO and AT of lesson plan B

1	LO	Understand the characteristics of descriptive text: social function, unistructural structure and language features in describing people	unistructural
	AT	- Identify the structure and language features of a descriptive text (Meeting 2) - Discuss in groups the description of every person in the worksheet (Meeting 3) - Write a descriptive text about your favorite person using the correct structure and language features. (Meeting 5) - Write a descriptive text about the person in the picture. (final exam)	Unistructural Relational Extended abstract

The verb in the LO is 'understand,' while the verbs in AT are 'identify,' 'discuss,' and 'write.' It can be seen from the analysis above that the verbs are different. There is only one LO with four ATs in lesson plan B. The verbs in AT show a higher level of understanding than those in LO.

In classroom practice, Teacher B effectively implements all assessment techniques (ATs). During the fifth classroom observation meeting, Teacher B asked students to write a descriptive text in session two. Before the students began writing, Teacher B reviewed the characteristics of descriptive texts and discussed one picture of a person for them to describe. After the discussion, he allowed the students to choose one picture of a famous person provided in the worksheet and encouraged them to start writing their descriptive texts.

The interview with Teacher B revealed that he assumes students understand the material simply because they can write about it. As a result, he feels it is sufficient to create one learning objective (LO) that uses the verb 'understand.' He pointed out that the guidelines and sample lesson plan he reviewed typically employ the verb 'understand.' However, it was confirmed that the assessment tasks are designed not only to evaluate students' understanding of the concepts but also to practice what they have comprehended. Teacher B has a different perception and understanding of using the verb to formulate learning objectives.

Another finding is that lesson plan C only states some assessment activities. It can be seen from the table below:

Table 4.5. LO and AT of the lesson plan C

1	LO	Evaluate the social function, the generic structure, and language features of a hortatory exposition	Relational
	AT	-	-
2	LO	Create a hortatory exposition text correctly	Extended abstract
	AT	Create a hortatory exposition about the current issue in the local context. The final product can be in the form of a text or a speech (as the prime minister or the leader of the opposition) (Formative and Summative)	Extended abstract

From lesson plan C above, it can be seen that the first LO does not have assessment tasks. Meanwhile, the second LO is aligned with the AT. It is implied that there is a discrepancy in the alignment between the LO and AT in lesson plan C.

In the sixth and final meeting on this topic, Teacher C instructed students to evaluate their peers' videos of hortatory expositions and assign scores. He explained the peer assessment rules and the rubric, then reviewed the characteristics of hortatory exposition texts, including their social function and structure. Teacher C noted active participants for potential extra points. He then demonstrated how to evaluate a video using the rubric. Afterward, students worked in pairs, exchanged videos from the previous week, and assessed each other's work.

In an interview, Teacher C clarified that he had asked students to create spoken hortatory expositions and submit recordings. He mentioned that the term "evaluate" in Learning Objective 1 was ambiguous, as it could refer to either assessing a video or identifying a

hortatory exposition text. Teacher C emphasized that the evaluation process involved watching and scoring the videos. These assessment details were not part of the lesson plan.

After analysing the document, observing the classes and interviewing the teachers, there are various alignment combinations between LO and AT in this study. First, the ATs are directly aligned with the LO, both stated in the lesson plans and implemented during the practice. Second, the ATs are partially aligned with the LO. It can be written in the lesson plans or practiced during the teaching-learning activities. Third, there needs to be alignment between the ATs and the LO in the lesson plans and practice. The first combination dominates the others. Most of the ATs are aligned with the LOs.

4.2. Aligning Assessment Practices and Learning Objectives: Strategies and Challenges

The interviews conducted with teachers revealed several strategies, as well as challenges, in aligning assessment practices with learning objectives. Participants described similar approaches to coordinating the various components of their teaching. First, they attempted to create their own lesson plans based on the learning outcomes outlined in the new curriculum guidelines. Some teachers were introduced to updated learning outcomes, templates, and assessment guidelines. While they developed their lesson plans using the knowledge gained from the training, they noted that the training was insufficient. *"I only attended two trainings of the new curriculum, and I am still confused, especially about designing the assessments..." (teacher A)*. English teachers often copied lesson plans, learning materials, and assessments from other teachers' existing plans in different schools or teacher associations. However, these lesson plans often did not align with their students' specific needs and conditions. Teacher B stated, *"I search for lesson plans and assessment tasks online because many are available. I choose complete plans that include assignments, but sometimes they do not match my students' needs"*. Third, teachers review the learning objectives outlined in their lesson plans and discuss assessment strategies with their colleagues. They then determine how to implement both formative and summative assessments for their students. However, a lack of knowledge about effective assessment practices can become a significant challenge. *"...we have a discussion and decide which one is possible and relevant to assess the students..." (teacher C)*.

Three issues are mostly addressed in aligning the assessment practices and learning objectives: time constraints, issues of designing new lesson plans, and difficulties designing assessment tasks.

a. Time constraints

All participants mentioned that English at the high school level has limited time allocation. English subject is only one meeting per week or around 90 minutes per week. There needs to be more than this short duration to deliver the materials. Teacher B said

"I spent 30 minutes or more motivating students and preparing them for class. The effective lesson lasts only around 30-40 minutes..." The issue of time is also addressed by teacher A and teacher C. The teacher has to adjust the assessment to the available time. Teacher A mentioned, *"... I skipped some activities considering the duration or asked students to do the assignments as homework..."*. The teachers change the plan or reduce some part for the timing issue.

b. Issues designing new lesson plans

The recent curriculum shift has presented several challenges for teachers. They are working to break down the learning outcomes into manageable activities for their lesson plans. One of the main issues they face is interpreting these learning outcomes when it comes to defining objectives, selecting appropriate learning activities, and designing assessments. Although teachers are given more freedom to create their lesson plans, many still find it difficult to develop them effectively. Teacher C mentioned, *"In this new curriculum, we are allowed to create our own lesson plans; however, I still encounter difficulties in designing them, particularly for grade 12, as there are no examples available."*

c. Difficulties in designing assessment tasks and rubrics

The next issue mentioned by the teachers is difficulties in designing the assessment. Teacher B shared his experience with various students' abilities in English lessons. The learning pace is different and he stated, *"It is challenging to find various materials and assessments for diverse students' abilities."* In addition, technology is also a challenge for teachers when designing assessment tasks. Teacher C feared students who only copy and paste from the Internet and use artificial intelligence (AI) to answer the written assignments. Hence, he prefers giving students spoken assignments to written assignments.

On the other hand, teachers admitted that technology makes it easier for them to assess the students. It helps archive the works, grade them, and give feedback to students. Teacher A mentioned, *"I write questions in a Google form for the summative assessment and share the link with the students."* He also developed a rubric: *"I make the rubric in Microsoft Excel and write a template for general feedback so I can manage the students' progress reports more easily."*

During the interview, it was confirmed that teachers should include the assessment rubrics in their lesson plans. Teacher B shared that he did not write the rubric in the lesson plan but had it in a separate file and shared it with his students. Teacher C mentioned that even though it was not stated in the lesson plan, he made sure that the grading process was transparent. Teacher C said, *"As you can see, the grading is transparent; they can do self-assessment and check if their works meet the criteria or not."* Teachers faced challenges aligning assessments with learning objectives. They need help with time management, designing assessments and rubrics, and incorporating technology.

It can be concluded that most assessment tasks align with the learning objectives stated in the lesson plans. However, it has been observed that the lessons intend to use functioning knowledge verbs over declarative knowledge verbs. It means that teachers focus on a higher level of understanding, including extended abstract and relational. Three main issues regarding the alignment of assessment practices and teaching-learning activities are time constraints, challenges in lesson plan design, and difficulties in creating assessment tasks and rubrics.

5. Discussion

This study found that most assessment tasks in the lesson plans align with the learning objectives. English teachers identified three strategies for developing aligned lesson plans and practices: implementing knowledge and skills gained from training, adapting existing plans and practices, and engaging in discussions with colleagues. However, a misalignment still exists between assessment practices and learning objectives in English classroom instruction. The study revealed that teachers face challenges such as time constraints, issues with lesson plan design, and difficulties in creating tasks and rubrics. Referring to the steps of aligning teaching and assessment in Biggs' constructive alignment framework, teachers identified challenges in clearly defining learning objectives, designing tasks that address the learning outcomes, and developing rubrics that align with these objectives.

5.1. Constructive Alignment in EFL Classrooms

The ideal situation is that all assessments are aligned with the objectives. It is believed that aligning learning objectives, teaching-learning activities, and assessment tasks is crucial for students and teachers (Sewagegn, 2020). When the curriculum, teaching, and assessment are aligned, teachers are less likely to focus solely on test preparation and support overall learning objectives (Sultana, 2018). Using constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) to analyse the coherence of those aspects helps monitor whether students accomplished the learning outcomes (Jaiswal, 2019). By analysing the use of verbs in the learning objectives and assessment tasks, the alignment of both aspects can be easily captured. SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1989) has given clear levels of understanding growth that indicates how far the learning objective and assessment tasks represent students' competence. The analysis indicated that the verbs in the learning objectives and assessment tasks predominantly reflect higher-order thinking skills ranging from relational to extended abstract, demonstrating a strong understanding of complex concepts. Most assessment tasks align with the learning objectives, but reviewing teachers' lesson plans shows a need for better alignment. Therefore, clarifying learning goals before teaching activities is essential (Milawati et al., 2022).

There are some misalignments between the assessment and learning objectives. The learning objectives formulated by the teachers in their lesson plans need to be clarified to address the issue identified in this study. Several factors could contribute to these alignment problems. A common issue is the lack of clear learning objectives in teachers' lesson plans (Latifa, 2017). Wallace & Ke (2023) found that the language test did not cover all English language skills stated in the curriculum, making the test partially aligned with the learning outcome. Misalignment between the assessment and objectives indicated that English teaching needed to be more comprehensive (Nkhi & Moqasa, 2023). Misalignment between objectives and assessments often leads to unintended teaching practices, such as teaching to the test (Sultana, 2018). Although this issue is not addressed by the teachers in this study, it is implied from their incomplete component of the lesson plans (lesson plan C), different verbs indicating the level of knowledge to be acquired, and incoherence of the activities from the beginning to the end. These misalignments implied that teachers' classroom assessment practices were inconsistent with teachers' understanding of assessment.

The findings of this study indicated that English teachers' assessment literacy needs improvement, especially in adapting to the updated curriculum. This finding is similar to

previous work highlighting the gap between English teachers' knowledge and their assessment practices in the classroom, which underscores the complexity of translating assessment literacy into practice (Zulaiha et al., 2020). Tsagari (2021) found that EFL teachers have low levels of language assessment literacy. To enhance their ability to interpret learning objectives and assessment tasks, continuous professional development for EFL teachers is essential. Training for teachers should focus on formulating objectives, selecting materials and classroom activities that align with the new learning outcomes, and assessing students effectively to ensure they achieve these objectives. This can be obtained from a well-organized language assessment literacy course (Giraldo et al., 2023). Teachers need to be able to translate the assessment knowledge into actual assessment practices (Alonzo et al., 2023). It is also crucial for teacher training and education programs to highlight the importance of curriculum alignment to address both content coverage and appropriate cognitive levels, thereby improving teachers' assessment literacy (Sultana, 2018). Additionally, it is important to remind teachers about the cognitive verbs in the taxonomy, which serve as a framework for developing cognitive skills (Boon et al., 2020). Teachers can be introduced to the SOLO taxonomy as an effective option for outlining different levels of understanding of the intended learning outcomes and creating assessment rubrics (Jaiswal, 2019).

5.2. Classroom Assessment Practices: Teachers' Strategies and Challenges

The teachers mostly express the issue of time constraints as hindering alignment between assessment and learning objectives. Time constraints, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of resources were identified to be the factors affecting the alignment between curriculum and assessment (Akhtar et al., 2022). Time issues impact the designing of the aligned assessment (Genon & Torres, 2020). A restricted timeframe can lead teachers to choose easily graded assessments like traditional tests focusing on basic knowledge or adopt readily available assessments (Wallace & Ke, 2023). Those kinds of assessments might potentially measure only the low level of understanding. Time pressure also impacts the quality of feedback. Teachers might struggle to offer personalized feedback within a limited assessment timeframe (Vattøy & Gamlem, 2020). In this study, to manage the time for grading, teacher C applied peer assessment to evaluate the spoken hortatory exposition. A study by Yin et al. (2022) showed that peer assessment is feasible and beneficial for student learning as it is conducted effectively. Peer assessment is also perceived as effective in promoting students' learning skills (Chorrojprasert, 2021). Besides peer assessment, integrating into assessment, including using artificial intelligence (AI), can help teachers manage the limited time of classroom assessment (Koraishi, 2023).

While the issue of time constraints undoubtedly casts a long shadow on alignment, it is not the only obstacle for English teachers. Designing appropriate assessments and rubrics in lesson planning presents a separate set of alignment challenges (Ansyari, 2018). Teachers grapple with designing assessments to measure students' critical thinking (Akib & Muhsin, 2020). In this study, teacher C shared his problems with creating assessments to measure students' higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Tyas et al. (2019) found that EFL teachers face the challenges of developing HOTS questions because they misunderstand HOTS and lack knowledge about HOTS-based assessment. Teachers also face the challenge of designing assessments that cater to the diversity of learning styles and needs within EFL classrooms (Fitriani, 2019). Therefore, they use differentiated assessments adapted to a spectrum of

learning pathways with clear criteria to overcome this issue (Arsyad & Suadiyatno, 2024). Another factor contributing to this misalignment is that teachers' lesson plans, derived from their textbooks, might not connect to students' authentic language learning experiences (Wotring et al., 2021). Therefore, teachers' ability to manage assessments is crucial as many factors might contribute to aligning the plan and practices.

To conclude, the hurdles associated with time and competence in designing appropriate assessments and rubrics represent the barriers to achieving alignment in EFL classrooms. Addressing these challenges requires an approach that prioritizes professional development and considers individual learners' needs. Teachers require ongoing professional development in assessment literacy (Giraldo, 2019). Workshops focusing on lesson planning and aligning the assessment with specific learning objectives, utilizing diverse assessment methods, and designing rubrics for individual needs can equip teachers with the tools to navigate this complex terrain. Assessment literacy workshops are pivotal to supporting teachers' assessment practices and managing the insufficient formal education about assessment (Hamstra & Bell, 2018). In addition, technology integration and collaboration with colleagues can pave the way for more authentic and effective assessments and provide valuable insights and support, fostering a shared understanding of best practices in alignment-focused EFL assessment. Continuous professional development and collaboration among teachers are vital for achieving effective curriculum and assessment reforms (Lee, 2019), as teachers need further support in aligning curriculum, teaching, and assessment practices.

6. Conclusion

Investigating the alignment between assessment practices and learning objectives in EFL classrooms reveals opportunities and challenges. The study utilized the constructive alignment framework to find that assessment tasks generally match learning objectives. English teachers learned the curriculum guidelines to create learning objectives and design lesson plans through training. They also copied and adapted existing lesson plans from other teachers and engaged in discussions with colleagues to develop aligned objectives, activities, and assessments for their lesson plans. Moreover, analysis of the SOLO taxonomy shows that EFL teachers often incorporate higher-order thinking skills in both learning objectives and assessments, emphasizing relational and extended abstract levels, indicating that students are expected to apply theories to solve real-life problems. However, challenges such as time constraints and difficulties in designing assessment tasks create misalignment. Teachers struggle to articulate measurable learning objectives, forcing them to adjust their assessment practices. To overcome these issues, ongoing professional development in assessment literacy and lesson planning is recommended, including workshops on disseminating learning outcomes in the new curriculum. This study highlights the need for English language teachers to adopt the constructive alignment framework and utilize SOLO taxonomy to evaluate students' critical thinking skills. Future research could focus on strategies to improve alignment, assess the effectiveness of professional development in enhancing assessment literacy, and explore the impact of learner diversity on assessment practices in EFL classrooms.

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