

Stakeholders' Perceptions and Implications of Classroom-Based Reading Assessment: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The assessment has moved vigorously in becoming an essential aspect of effective teaching and learning. The Malaysian Education has imparted the classroom-based assessment aspirant to the holistic advancement of the learners. However, most of the English language learners, as well as the educators, struggle in terms of classroom-based reading assessment. Stakeholders have varying perceptions due to their own perceptions of advantages and disadvantages of classroom-based reading assessment. This paper provides a literature review on the perceptions of the educators, and the challenges of classroom-based reading assessment faced by the educators. The literature review includes 1) the perceptions of the educators, 2) the advantages and disadvantages of classroom-based reading assessment.

Keywords

Reading-Assessment, Educators, Perceptions, English as a Second Language (ESL)

1. Introduction

As Malaysia's second official language, English was used as a communication medium of various fields, particularly in the academic field (Ibrahim & Mat Samaan, 2010). Hence, the need to ensure that proficiency has been vital. The 2017 Annual Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2015 (Ministry of Education, 2018) reported that in the first wave from 2013-2015, the Ministry of Education had cultivated three things; the rise of literacy and numeracy programmes, higher enrolment of pre-school and primary school and the decline of the demographic gap. One of the efforts is the introduction of a Roadmap for English Language Education Reform (Ministry of Education, 2015a) spanning from 2015 to 2025

by the alignment of the English language programmes with the Common European Framework for Language (CEFR).

Language plays a vital role in reading. Therefore, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 emphasizes the importance of reading and writing skills in ESL teaching and reading (Wan Ishak & Mohamad, 2018). Despite the transformation over the years, the process of assessing reading has remained stagnant over the years (Chang et al., 2018). In order to read and understand the content of the book, the students have to understand the language (Chen et al., 2016). As reading is one of the skills tested in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), the reading assessment took into serious consideration in implementing the classroom-based assessment. Reading encompasses the process of rendering words to form content (Floyd et al., 2007) and the skills of reading are very crucial in uplifting the English level of proficiency. Reading assessment is an excellent way of informing researchers, teachers, administrators, and policy-makers of the benefit of learning environments or the harm of it towards the English Second Language learners. The responsibility lies heavily on the educators to grasp the uses and impacts of reading assessment as the executor of the reading assessment in a classroom-based setting. However, the varying perceptions of the stakeholders often hinder the effective implementation of classroom-based reading assessment.

The study of perceptions of ESL educators in classroom-based reading assessment would help the teacher in understanding which aids them in their profession (Donaghue, 2003). The experience gathered paired with the perceived perceptions from this study would further help gather new data for improvement and enrichment of CEFR Classroom-Based Reading Assessment in primary schools. The voices and insights of teachers (Zaichner & Liston, 1996) in this study would help provide input and reflection and discussion (Ramazani, 2012) in the areas of teaching and learning as well as provide a base idea for a more in-depth future research for other researchers who wished to study similar area. Teachers' perceptions related to teaching and practices would be useful to researchers to enhance other teachers practice and help improve the current situation in Malaysian classroom (Johari & Abdul Aziz, 2019), which could pave a clearer way in improving the English language learning, by including the perceptions of the group that would execute the reformation, the teachers.

This literature review will attempt to provide answers to the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of the educators on CEFR classroom-based reading assessment?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of CEFR classroom-based reading assessment?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Assessment Reform in Malaysian Education System

The last two decades saw the shift in the teaching instruction and learning (Nicol

& Macfarlene-Dick, 2010). The adoption of CEFR changes the curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment (Mohd Don & Abdullah, 2019). Learners are now being encouraged to construct their own knowledge and skills (Nicol, 1997; Barr & Tagg, 1995) through active learning and assessment.

One of the objectives in achieving Vision 2020 involves the development of higher order thinking skills among Malaysian pupils (Othman & Mohamad, 2014). Responding to the challenges in the globalization, the education system in Malaysia responded with the manifestation of National Education Blueprint 2013-2015 where it focuses on the particular skills and attributes refined to higher order thinking skills (Che Md Ghazali et al., 2018). The changes saw the Malaysian Ministry of Education launching a new curriculum reform that changed the Standard Curriculum for Primary School (SCPS) that saw a change in curriculum innovation set and performance level for all primary schools (Sidhu, Kaur, & Chi, 2018).

Under the education reform, English second language learners were given a detailed description of what learners can do in relation to listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Mohd Don & Abdulah, 2019). IELTS, TOEFL and TOEIC are some of the international high-stakes tests that aligned to CEFR. In Malaysia, 54% of the learners obtained a minimum Level 2 proficiency in reading where at the least, they could identify the main idea in a text of medium length, identify information based on specific, though sometimes intricate criteria, and reflecting on the objective and documents form when channelled (OECD, 2019). The results of PISA for Malaysian learners has increased in 2018 results compared to in 2012, as it increases to 415 in 2018 compared to in 2012 with a score of 398. For these reasons, CEFR syllabus and form of assessment become a prominent feature in the reform of Malaysia's English language education, to be the top tier countries in the global assessment such as PISA and TIMSS within 15 years (Ministry of Education, 2015b).

In order to compete with the globalization (Veloo et al., 2015), assessment form has been reformed. The only form of assessment in Level 1 primary schools was changed that classroom-based assessment (CBA) would be used as the main form of assessment, replacing any summative form of assessment starting in early 2019. The reform gives full autonomy towards the teacher in the form of assessment that would happen in the classroom with the choice of conducting story-telling, games, quiz, role-play, project-based activities and other forms of suitable assessment. The implementation of CEFR in classroom-based assessment also calls for higher pupils' engagement with English through educational programmes and activities, which often includes other stakeholders such as the parents, administrations and the community. Since the method of assessment that focuses on summative assessment and authentic real-life learning, parents have also involved in helping their child complete tasks as a classroom-based assessment (Aziz, 2018).

In classroom-based assessment, pupils could be assessed through many dif-

ferent methods of assessments such as communication with teachers and peers, informal assessments, content are inventories, classroom works, rubrics, scoring guide, writing journals or using checklists (Suzieleez et al., 2009). Classroom assessment is also described as continuous by whatever means to improve learning in each teaching unit (Ahmad, 2010). Assessment could be done through on-going feedback called formative to improve the pupil's achievement (Popham, 2008) or by measuring the level of attainment in the form of monitored examination called summative (Rayment, 2006). A study by Mohd Fadhli Ahmad (2010) found out that there are five principles to be considered in ensuring high-quality assessments which are validity, reliability, objectivity, administration and interpretation.

Unlike state-wide mandated standardized testing that gives the same set of tests to assess the pupils' overall understanding and that contributes to public accountability, classroom-based assessments enable teacher to evaluate the classroom instructions and identify their pupils' personal needs (Resnick & Resnick, 1992). Teachers generate information to improve their instructional decision in classroom setting using various methods such as informal observations by the teacher, casual questioning, and paper and pencil tests (Wixson et al, 1994; Genesee & Hamayan, 1991) in form of worksheets, quiz or writing task.

2.2. Educators Perception towards Classroom-Based Reading Assessment

The classroom-based assessment (CBA) portrays an advanced directive in educational policies where the teachers entirely govern assessment. The ministry suggested few forms of assessment such as story-telling, project-based activities, games, role play, quiz and other forms of suitable assessment according to the teacher's jurisdiction. The alignment of CEFR has become an important element in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 with the primary purpose to raise the education level to global standards (Azman, 2016). Tatiana and Gopal (2017) had found out that in the coming decade, CEFR in English language learning and assessment are predicted to play a dynamic task in the reconstruction course of Malaysian's English Language education system. However, data that can be used to support this belief is rather limited as there has been a lack of studies conducted on the perceptions of stakeholders towards the classroom-based reading assessment.

Classroom assessment is an assessment conducted in the classroom by the teachers (Black & William, 2004). The embrace of a broad spectrum of activities is an essential part of classroom assessment where it ranges from the development of paper-pencil test and measures of performance to using assessment results in assessing the learning and development of the learners. The new educational policies in which assessment is fully conducted by the subject teacher in the form of suitable assessment are deemed by the teachers. One of the primary issues in ensuring CEFR elements in the reading classroom-based assessment as shown is lack of research that describes how assessment helps educators to de-

velop most suitable classroom assessment that would benefit the stakeholders; educators and their learners (Afflerbach, 2008). The divided standardize form of CEFR classroom-based reading assessment implementation also bring chaos among educators in the country particularly the level 1 primary school educators due to the educator's perception (Wan Ishak & Mohamad, 2018).

Moreover, educators often had minimal knowledge and minimum exposure and low level of classroom-based reading assessment (Mohamad Uri & Abd Aziz, 2018). One of the issues raised that hinders the incorporation of classroom-based reading assessment in the educator's teaching were their own resistance towards the new framework, lack of training in classroom-based reading assessment, and negative perceptions towards classroom-based reading assessment. The issues of cascading in schools and earning institution also have become a major setback as only selected educators would go to assessment courses and having to cascade the content with the other educators with 25 hours cascading in-house training. The lack of direct references and influence of different perceptions of the courses would lead to different set understanding and perceptions of classroom-based reading assessment.

As the content of the CEFR syllabus involves in the classroom-based reading assessment were based on different setting and culture, the reading assessment done was questionable as it gives more advantages towards the privileged learners and technologies advantage to fully grasp the content. Johari & Abd Aziz (2019) in their study found that educators have mixed perceptions on the use of CEFR textbook in classroom-based reading assessment, in schools. The use of content of different cultural background from Asian setting provides disadvantages as the book contained much cultural difference and nature of CEFR implementation deemed as neo-colonisation and not relevant to the Malaysian context. Reading assessment derived from the context often resulted in varying perception from various stakeholders.

A study of educators' perception by Malakolunthu & Sim (2010) showed that educators agreed that classroom-based assessment is the way forward in the assessment. However, the issues of insufficient guidelines, lack of educator's knowledge base, and lack of external monitoring were raised based on the findings of the semi-structured interviews. The confidence to teach subject matter will influence teaching outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Many educators also perceived that the courses provided for them are not sufficient to prepare them to become English language teachers (Wati, 2011). However, despite all the negative perceptions towards classroom-based reading assessment, educators were also optimistic and believed that the new direction is vital to improve the English proficiency level of learners in Malaysia, despite the challenges and obstacles perceived (Mohamad Uri & Abd Aziz, 2018; Ali & Iqbal, 2018). The reading assessment in classroom setting would need a vocabulary foundation from the learners and the knowledge base from the educators which would lead to increase of the validity of the assessment done.

2.3. Advantages of Classroom-Based Assessment

McMillan (2007) expresses classroom-based assessment as a process that not only documents the pupil's knowledge and understanding but also advocates and enhances pupils learning. The use of personalised classroom-reading assessment would help educators in improving their learning instructions and focusing on the improvement of their learners. The pupils would also benefit as they progress through the assessment in which they would be aware of their strength and weakness.

Classroom-based assessment is a continuous process. It gives a more immediate measure of progress and achievement of the learners, guide and improve learning instruction, and diagnose pupil's knowledge of a topic (Hurley & Tinajero, 2001; Short, 1993). Pupils and parents gained information about the pupils' progress and ways to improve their learning with the classroom-based assessment report. The assessment performance report is very detailed in which each performance level would have the description of what the learners could do, instead of what they should do.

Jia et al. (2006) findings in a study indicate that classroom-based assessment (CBA) has many positive impacts on teaching and learning. It helps educators make a decision on instruction, assessing without threat and provide support and continuous effort that acts as a tool to assess results of teaching. The teachers would have a personal report on each pupils' progress in monitoring daily progress of their pupils (Resnick & Resnick, 1992). It helps teachers identify the weaknesses and strengths of their instruction and promotes efforts to improve teaching practice (Garcia & Pearson, 1994). Classroom-based assessment assists educators in the process of teaching the content, nurturing learners' learning, and measuring the learner's learning progress continuously (Cheng et al., 2004).

The use of classroom-based reading assessment gives educators a bigger responsibility to design quality assessments that align with the learning outcomes as they are the most suitable people to assess their students and they have a better understanding of the context of the subject area (Salmiah, 2013). This provides opportunities for educators to continuously monitor their students and to give constructive feedback to improve their learners' learning abilities (Mansor et al., 2013).

Moreover, the classroom-based assessment provides daily improvement of teaching and learning and could help the core and base for attaining education excellence and growth of the school (Stiggins, 1999). Learners would be assessed to improve their knowledge, not just gauge their understanding and encourage better educational equity for all pupils—no one left behind. The schools could have a rough idea and estimation of their learner's proficiency level, thus help in deciding the best intervention to help improve the learner's performance level in classroom-based reading assessment.

As classroom-based assessment promotes differentiation of the learners' needs and skills, the use of classroom-based reading assessment would help educators

identify their teaching practices and perceptions towards their assessment. In term of reading assessment, the classroom-based assessment would provide more exceptional ability in measuring complex reading tasks and provide adequate information on the use of various learners' reading strategies and skills (Garcia & Pearson, 1994). It would provide more significant opportunities in contextualised setting to measure complex constructs such as language proficiency and reading (Hamayan, 1995).

Classroom-based assessment is oriented individually, and it lessens the risk of cultural bias to which state-mandated summative tests are often prone (Chamberlain & Medinos-Landurand, 1991). CEFR lies heavily on differentiation in which they have many different forms of differentiation; thus, there would be no issue where the content used based on CEFR would not be suitable for classroom-based reading assessment of different learners. The classroom-based assessment also promotes the active involvement of the learners in the assessment in which their feedback would take into consideration, unlike the traditional summative assessment where it only focuses on the academic standard.

Besides that, classroom-based assessment could foster learners' metacognitive ability (Flavell, 1977; Garner, 1987). The formative classroom-assessment provides an appropriate venue for learning (Black & William, 2004) and the models and scaffolding during the reading classroom-assessment enables learners to learn to be metacognitive (Afflerbach & Meuwissen, 2005).

2.4. Disadvantages of Classroom-Based Assessment

While classroom-based evaluation has many benefits through research and past studies, some concerns need to about the use of classroom-based reading evaluation.

Classroom-based assessments require more time from the educators in terms of planning and have more impact on the learning instruction and learners' learning rather than doing formal measurement procedures (Airasian, 1991). As classroom-based assessment has replaced the summative type of assessment, more focus would in completing and assessing the learners in terms of reading in the classroom. The educators would be given full autonomy in deciding the types of classroom-based assessment for their learners. It would require extra effort by the educators to personalise classroom-based kind of assessment that would suit their learners' proficiency level and classroom setting.

There has been little research to understand the educator's perceptions and use of classroom-based reading assessment (Jia et al., 2006). Educators have to explore the usefulness and the aspect of classroom-based reading assessment that suits their learners' ability and needs. The lack of knowledge base of the educators would affect the classroom-based assessment. Educators who have inadequate skills in classroom-assessment would have problems in conducting the classroom-based reading assessment, and this would lead to the issues of disparity among the parents regarding the performance level of their child.

Classroom-based assessment requires the educators to take the role of not only to educate learners but also, but also as the examiner. Therefore, many educators felt unprepared to play the double role (Choi, 1999). The lack of confidence would result in the ratings of the classroom-based reading assessment to be more subjective. The lack of confidence and negative perceptions of the educators would influence the effective classroom-based assessment.

Another problem with classroom-based reading assessment was the concerns of the large classes (Raman & Yamat, 2014). Generally, Malaysian public schools are packed with students; whereby each classroom needs to accommodate about thirty to forty students or more. The atmosphere in the crowded classes' environment made classroom-based reading assessment implementation difficult. The concerns are how the educators would assess the reading of the learners in such a setting where there were so many students in one class. This brings up the issues of different perceptions of assessment and ranking by the educators as there would be many different forms of assessment that educators could implement and whether one assessment should be done for the whole class or making a differentiation type assessment where the students would be assessed according to their own level of proficiency. What kinds of information will the teacher provide to support her judgment that the assessment decision is reliable would be the questions that would arise and this makes classroom-based assessment difficult to conduct (Smith, 2003).

3. Conclusion and Implications

The findings from the past studies of CEFR, perceptions and classroom-based assessment are significant guide to the researcher on the need for CEFR classroom-based assessment (CBA) regarding the perceptions, the types of assessment and modes to incorporate in teaching. The implementation of classroom-based reading assessment often faces the issues in the perception of classroom-based assessment, such as lack of educators' knowledge base, the reliability of the assessment and lack of reference and materials.

Understanding the perceptions in terms of use, function and effectiveness would help the researcher make predictions about teaching and assessment practices in classrooms (Jia, Zohreh, & Burlbaw, 2006). It is believed that the perceptions of the educators as the stakeholders would provide beneficial insights towards the improvement of English teaching and learning and better form of classroom-based reading assessment.

Apart from the ESL teachers' and pupils' perceptions, the study of parent's perceptions of classroom-based assessment is equally vital in studying the topic of classroom-based assessment. Some implications from this paper would be helpful towards the ESL teachers, pupils as well as the parents. In light of the perceptions brought by the implementation of classroom-based reading assessment, appropriate measures and approaches could address the issue. The positive perspective towards CEFR classroom-based assessment would provide a

positive impact and motivate learners to master the target language.

The understanding of classroom-based reading assessment was often overlooked by the teachers as learning has always been autonomous by the educators, where they would be the ones controlling the figure of educational process. As the stakeholder directly involved in the classroom-based assessment, their perceptions had great influence in gauging the motivation, interest and usefulness of introducing a full formative assessment practice in schools. Classroom-based assessment was often viewed as helpful as they would give the learners with prompt estimation of development, procurement and discover the pupils' knowledge and understanding of an issue. Therefore, the knowledge of classroom-based reading assessment to actually help them monitor their progress, and not make them feel discouraged with what the performance level represents, is equally important. The study of the stakeholder's perceptions is hoped to enable educators and learners to develop lifelong learning culture and moved beyond the classroom setting.

In conclusion, this study discusses the perceptions of the stakeholders towards the implementation of CEFR reading classroom assessment. Despite the issues highlighted related, the study hopes to investigate the issues and provide understanding of the perceptions towards classroom-based reading assessment. The discoveries of this study should provide more insights into the perceptions of ESL educators and how it would affect classroom-based assessment (CBA) in reading and other issues related to the topic.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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