



Basic Knowledge of Middle School English Teachers in Indonesia in Assessing Students ' Writing Ability

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ABSTRACT

The capacity to plan lessons and assess students' learning defines junior high school teachers' professionalism. Because it significantly affects how they evaluate students' writing learning outcomes, junior high school English teacher must have a solid foundation in assessing writing. 87 Junior high school teachers from the district and 38 junior high school teachers from the municipality were asked to participate in this quantitatively descriptive study by completing questionnaires regarding their fundamental writing assessment knowledge. Only 16.09% of district teachers and 26.32% of municipal teachers received scores above 60 as a result. These teachers still have significant difficulties planning, implementing, and evaluating writing even though they are all credentialed and routinely report significant professional activities. All stakeholders, particularly schools and the ministry of education.

Keyword: Basic Knowledge of Assessing *Writing, English Teacher*

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 26-05-2023

Revised 17-06-2023

Accepted 29-06-2023

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INTRODUCTION

The role of the English teacher is very important in evaluating students' writing carefully, especially in assessing linguistic and rhetorical features. Therefore, English teachers are required to understand about *Assessment for Learning* (AfL), *Assessment as Learning* (AsL) and *Assessment of Learning* (AoL) well. AfL requires them to always improve the quality of students' writing learning and ASL encourages teachers to make students actively involved in the assessment and *writing learning process*. Meanwhile at AoL, as a rater or assessor, the teacher must make an assessment of the quality of students' *writing learning* based on the established criteria, to determine the quality of the students' writing learning outcomes (Lee, 2017). The lack of ability of teachers in English assessment causes them to have problems in



collecting and interpreting student learning outcomes, especially in the form of summative and formative assessments. Therefore, they often use arbitrary assessments without evaluating or revising the questions or assessment materials. They also rarely use statistical procedures to see how the impact and influence of their assessments on student learning outcomes (Moses & Mohamad, 2019; Zulkifli et al., 2018).

To assess students' *writing results*, Deluca (2012) states that teachers are influenced by cognitive, affective and perceptual factors. These factors depend on the education, experience, and training he has attended. However, Xu & Brown (2017) and Chesnut & Cullen (2014) emphasize that the basic knowledge of teachers in *writing assessment* is the first and foremost basis before the accuracy of the assessment, the selection of the assessment method and the teacher's perception in practicing *writing assessment*. The basic knowledge of teachers in assessing their students' *writing* will determine how well and effectively they assess their students' *writing* (Kemdikbud, 2017; Xu & Brown, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gonzalez et al. (2017) said that every teacher has a different level of understanding of the same rubric. This happened when Gonzalez et al (2017) studied 7 teachers who assessed a student's writing using the same analytic rubric. This resulted in the variability of the assessment or there was a difference in the understanding of knowledge about the assessment of the seven teachers. Therefore, teachers need to improve their knowledge and ability to assess their students' writing. The different teacher assessments show how deep their basic knowledge of *writing assessment* is. In addition, the basic knowledge of assessing *writing* also affects teachers' perceptions in carrying out *writing assessments*, teacher effectiveness in *writing assessments*, and teachers' abilities in choosing *writing assessment methods* (Bailey et al., 2017).

Many English teachers who have been teaching for more than ten years still complain about the task of evaluating their students' writing. The task of evaluating and assessing students' *writing* is considered as the workload of the English teacher. This happens because of the lack of knowledge of evaluating a teacher's *writing results* (Ghanbari et al., 2012). Basic knowledge of *writing assessment*. This greatly affects teaching practice and the quality of *writing assessment* students (Fritz & Ruegg, 2013; Rahayu & Rahayu, 2019; Rahayu, 2020).



Therefore, the teacher as an evaluator/rater must be able to make a good evaluation of his students' *writing*, to measure student learning mastery in an assessment procedure that is valid, objective, fair, integrated, open, systematic, based on criteria and reliable assessment methods. Teachers must also be able to disseminate their student learning outcomes to the students themselves, to schools, parents, government, and other related parties (Kemendikbud, 2017).

Considering the complexity of preparing, implementing, and disseminating student evaluations in writing English, this study intends to find out and explore how deep the basic knowledge of junior high school English teachers is in preparing evaluations, conducting evaluations and disseminating the results of evaluations of students' *writing learning*. This study invited junior high school teachers because in Indonesia, English paragraph writing lessons or short essays began to be taught in junior high schools (Kemendikbud, 2016; 2017). Previous research (Chesnut & Cullen, 2014; Wang et al., 2017) showed that the accuracy of assessing students' *writing* is a teacher's cognitive process, which is believed to affect a teacher's commitment to make assessments better and more confident.

In previous studies on how a rater / assessor evaluates his students are generally held at the college level. Research like this has not involved many junior high school English teachers (Crusan et al., 2016; Djoub, 2017; Deluca, 2012; Xu & Brown, 2016), although the success of *writing evaluations* must start from the beginning, namely the junior high school level. . This study uses a questionnaire about basic knowledge of assessing a teacher's *writing* and aims to investigate the extent of basic knowledge of English teachers in junior high schools in preparing, conducting evaluations, assessing *writing*, and disseminating evaluation results. In addition, this study can predict how teachers conduct *writing assessments*. By taking advantage of the regular monthly MGMP meetings held by a municipality and district city on the island of Java, I distributed questionnaires to certified English teachers. These certified teachers always report learning planning, classroom management, and evaluation activities as professional responsibilities seriously (Nurhattati et al., 2020; Kholis & Murwanti, 2019). After I analyzed the answers of the teachers in the questionnaire, the result was that only 16.09% of certified district teachers and 26.32% of these municipal teachers had a basic knowledge score of assessing students' *writing* above 60. Although this teacher certification program has improved



the standard of living of teachers by increasing their but an increase in basic knowledge about evaluation of *writing learning* students can not necessarily be achieved well (Fahmi et al., 2011).

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative descriptive method using a 22-item questionnaire instrument about the basic knowledge of English teachers in assessing students' writing. Before the questionnaire was applied in this study, the questionnaire was validated by 8 ELT experts consisting of junior high school English teachers, English lecturers and psychologists with good results. Even though it was applied to English teachers, this questionnaire was written in Indonesian to make it easier for them to fill out. In addition, this questionnaire does not measure teachers' English skills, but measures how far their basic knowledge is in assessing students' writing. The following is a basic knowledge questionnaire to assess students' *writing*.

Table 1. Basic Knowledge Questionnaire Assessing Students' *Writing*

Instructions for Work: read the statements below carefully, circle YES if the statement below is True according to your knowledge and circle the word NO if the statement below is False in your opinion.		
1	Each type of writing test has weaknesses that must be known before being used to measure student abilities.	Yes-No
2	The quality of a writing test and its scoring should not depend on where it is tested, when it is tested, and who is the examiner.	Yes-No
3	Good writing ability is determined solely by how correctly students use their grammar in their writing.	Yes-No
4	To measure students' ability to describe people, the appropriate question indicator is "students can write down the physical appearance of people appropriately and acceptably, by being given a dialogue about someone's biography".	Yes-No
5	The selection of test material/content must be adjusted to the wishes of students.	Yes-No
6	To assess students' ability in proper text structure is to instruct students to arrange random sentences into one coherent and logical paragraph	Yes-No
7	To assess students' ability to write recount-text, the purpose of the test, the format of the questions, the level of difficulty of the questions, the time to complete the questions, the assessment aspects and the method of assessment must be considered by the teacher so that students are able to retell their experiences well in a paragraph.	Yes-No
8	The technique used to measure students' writing skills and sub-writing skills is determined by colleagues	Yes-No
9	To improve the quality of student writing, students must pay attention to the level of accuracy of grammar and vocabulary through peer evaluation/assessment between students.	Yes-No
10	In a good writing test, the number of words a student writes is determined based on the smartest student in the class	Yes-No
11	Indicator writing test based on writing test indicators	Yes-No
12	There is no need to make a key to the writing questions because student answers are very subjective and varied	Yes-No



13	Both objective questions and objective questions need to be made based on the problem indicators.	Yes-No
14	In addition to being carried out by ELT/ESL experts, the quality of face validity, content validity, empirical validity of a question must also be validated by the teacher supervisor	Yes-No
15	Questions whose face validity and content validity were validated by colleagues were used for monitoring and evaluation purposes by the teacher supervisor.	Yes-No
16	The purpose of testing questions in test development is to find out the students' initial abilities	Yes-No
17	Good test items are selected and determined based on the question grid	Yes-No
18	Analysis of Learning Evaluation Results (ALER) is applied to each student's assessment to measure the level of learning completeness	Yes-No
19	ALER interprets real test scores to describe the level of student achievement.	Yes-No
20	Analytical scoring has the advantage of identifying students' writing abilities globally	Yes-No
21	Multiple choice questions on national exams such as compiling random sentences into full paragraphs are appropriate for testing writing skills	Yes-No
22	Information on student test results must be shared with students, schools, government, and other related parties subjectively.	Yes-No

The twenty-two items of the questionnaire measure the planning, implementation and dissemination of assessment results, which are usually carried out by a teacher. The questionnaire does not absolutely measure the ability of a junior high school English teacher, but tries to describe the extent of the teacher's basic knowledge in evaluating students' *writing assignments* which are usually carried out on a daily basis. The items of the questionnaire can be added again to sharpen the description of the teacher's basic abilities in evaluating *writing*. The minimum score for this questionnaire is 0 if there is correct and the maximum is 100. The score for each item is 4.5. So the total score of a questionnaire is the correct answer multiplied by 4.5.

This questionnaire was filled out and completed by 38 of the 55 public junior high school English teachers who registered in a city on the island of Java, and 87 of the 110 public junior high school English teachers who registered in a regency city on the island of Java. On average, they graduated from a bachelor's degree program in English. A small number of master's degrees in English and learning technology. The teachers filled out this questionnaire at an English *writing assessment training* conducted by the MGMP in their respective cities and districts shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic took place in Indonesia. They work on average within 30-45 minutes before the training is carried out. After the questionnaire was filled in, their answers were corrected and the results were used as a benchmark for the teachers' initial ability to evaluate their students' *writing*.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the results of a questionnaire conducted by English teachers in a district and municipality on the island of Java, the results are presented as follows. The basic knowledge score assessing the *writing* of 87 junior high school English teachers in a district is between 27 to 75, with the lowest score 0 and the highest 100. How the distribution of the basic knowledge score assesses the *writing* of junior high school English teachers in a district is described in detail in the chart below:

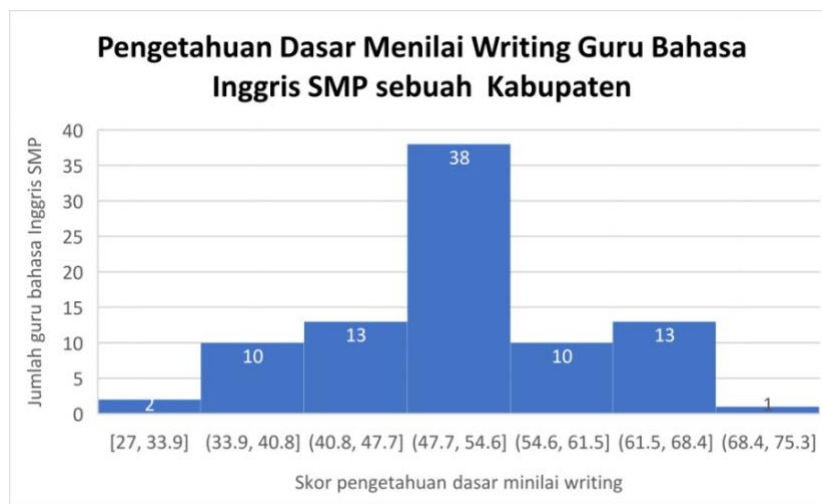


Figure 1. Basic Knowledge Chart Assessing English Teacher *Writing* in a District Middle School

In Figure 1 above, the basic knowledge score assessing the *writing* of English teachers in a district junior high school is 2 teachers getting a score of 27 to 33.9; 10 teachers scored 33.9 to 40.8; 13 teachers got a score of 40.8 until 47.7; 38 teacher get score 47.7 until 54.6 ; 10 teacher get a score of 54.6 to 61.5; 13 teachers scored 61.5 to 68.4; and a teacher gets a score of 75.3. So most of the teachers have scores as big as *writing* evaluation and only 14 teachers scored above 60. These teachers had difficulty and 2. Meanwhile, the results of obtaining a basic knowledge score assessing the *writing* of 38 English teachers in a municipality are depicted in the chart below.

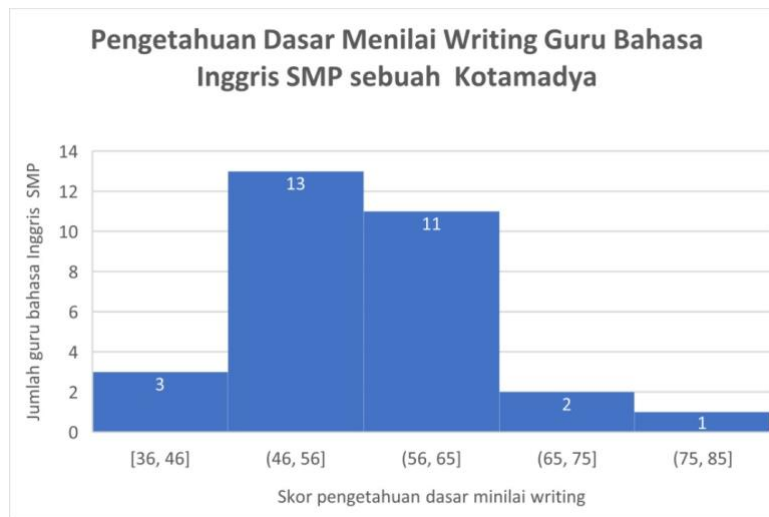


Figure 2. Chart of Basic Knowledge Assessing the *Writing* of an English Teacher at a Municipal Junior High School

In Figure 2 above, the basic knowledge score assessing the *writing* of English teachers in a municipal junior high school is 3 teachers with a score of 36-46; 13 teachers scored 46-56; 11 teachers scored 56-65; 2 teachers get a score of 65 and 75; and 1 teacher scored 77. Only 10 of the 38 teachers who filled out the questionnaire scored above 60. Most of them scored between 46-56. The English teachers in this municipality also experienced the same difficulties as the teachers in the districts above, but they did not experience any difficulties in question number 21.

Based on the results of the analysis above, 26.32% of language teachers in a district and 16.09% in a municipality who filled out the questionnaire scored 60 and above. This figure is considered small because they are used to making English learning evaluation reports (including *writing evaluations and assessments*) as professional duties and obligations in each semester. (Kholis & Murwanti, 2019; Nurhattati et al., 2020). in fact enhancement the standard of living of the teacher certification allowance has not been able to increase the basic knowledge of evaluating students' *writing learning* (Fahmi et al., 2011).

These teachers experienced difficulties in the preparation, implementation and dissemination of evaluation results. They are not familiar with the forms of *writing questions*, making assessment indicators for writing evaluation, *writing assessment* tools. This shows that



the teacher's problems occurred early on in preparing the *writing assessment*, and supports the statements of Moses & Mohamad (2019) and Zulkifli et al. (2018) that teachers have problems implementing and interpreting student learning outcomes. In addition, they also do not fully understand the application of AfL, AsL and AoL in English classes, especially about learning and learning *writing*. This makes it difficult for teachers to improve the quality of their students' *writing learning*, make students active to always improve their abilities, and conduct evaluations and assessments of their students' *writing* (Rahayu, 2020; Lee, 2017).

From the results of the analysis of the answers to the teacher's questionnaire, they still experience many difficulties in evaluating *writing learning*. They may be used to objective questions that are easier to make and correct so they are not used to making subjective ones. They also do not understand the function of the newly created test test and do not properly understand the function of the Learning Evaluation Results Analysis (AHEB) (Xu & Brown, 2016). These teachers are also not accustomed to using *writing* assessment rubrics and also do not know how to apply them (Gonzalez et al., 2017). They think that multiple choice questions, which actually measure the ability to recognize linguistic and rhetorical features, are able to measure students' *writing abilities*. In fact, to measure students' *writing skills*, teachers must make subjective questions, for example writing simple paragraphs. To disseminate the results of the evaluation of student *writing learning*, some teachers still do not understand how to convey the results of their student *writing assessment* to students, schools, government and other relevant parties (Kemendikbud, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

Basic knowledge of assessing the *writing* of an English teacher greatly determines the quality of how the teacher prepares, implements and assesses the *writing results* of his students. In this study, it is actually not possible to explain in general how the basic knowledge of a teacher is in assessing *writing* in Indonesia because the respondents in this study only came from one district and one municipality. Not all teachers in both places filled out the questionnaire because not all teachers could be present at the time of distributing the questionnaire. However, because the questionnaire scores in these two places are still below 30, I can conclude that other cities in Indonesia can show the same thing.



Lack of a basic knowledge score for assessing *writing* indicates that these English teachers have had problems from preparing a *writing assessment* to implementing and interpreting student learning outcomes. They do not understand the function and application of AfL, AsL, and AoL in their classrooms. This makes it difficult for teachers to improve the quality of students' *writing* learning, make students active to always improve their abilities, and make assessments. This must be anticipated by schools, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and LPTKs by equipping prospective students of English teachers and English teachers with comprehensive learning evaluation knowledge and skills, especially assessment *writing*.

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