

Competency-Based Assessment: Design and Implementation in English for Frontliner Classroom

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Abstract

This study was aimed at finding out the design and implementation of Competency-Based Assessment in English for Frontliner classroom of training center. This research belonged to descriptive qualitative. It was conducted in English for Frontliner classroom at *Balai Latihan Kerja* Surakarta. Three English instructors were selected as the participants through purposive sampling. The sources of data are informants, events, and documents. Descriptive qualitative analysis was used to analyze the data. The result shows that (1) Competency-Based Assessment design involves delivering Information Book and fulfilling Work Book, discussing place and time for the assessment, and applying skill test and questioning as assessment type; (2) Competency-Based Assessment implementation comprises making sure Information Book and Work Book has been delivered, conducting assessment in the agreed place and time, assessing students' performance, giving feedback during and at the end of assessment activity, reassessing student who is 'not-yet-competent', recording and reporting the assessment result.

Keywords: Competency-Based Assessment, English for Frontliner, Training Center

Introduction

Understanding the significance of having English language skills in meeting global business standards, public non-formal vocational training providers, known as *Balai Latihan Kerja* (BLK), under the authority of The Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration have built several programs, such as English for Frontliner program to nurture Indonesian resource. BLK is a technical implementation unit in the field of training labor and responsible to the Directorate General of Training and Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration. The Ministry of Manpower through BLK offers work training programs for job seekers in the all territory of Indonesia. In order to prepare trainees in a global economy, Competency-Based Training and Assessment is utilized as the educational approach. BLK also assigns a certificate based on the assessment that must be passed by the students. The assessment called Competency-Based Assessment that involves seven units of competencies based on Competency-Based Training curriculum. Results obtained from Competency-Based Assessment provide employers an indication of level of ability attained by individual students for a particular job.

According to Western Australian Department of Training (2002), competency based assessment is "the process of collecting evidence and making judgments on whether competence has been achieved". Here, an assessor works with a trainee to collect evidence of competence, using the benchmarks delivered by the unit standards that contain the national qualifications. Competency-Based Assessment offers a particular method in measuring students' competence. It is a criterion-based assessment. Students are evaluated against a set of performance criteria. Competency-based assessment reveals another component in the assessment of students' performance, which is helpful to teachers in uncovering students' ability. It contributes information to the employers in the selection of potential employees.

The quality of an assessment remarkably affects teaching and learning. Ng (2005) affirmed that if assessment is not designed well, it can undermine the positive influence of a particular teaching and learning approaches. Bringing about this fact, it is very important to concentrate on these matters in designing the assessment. Well-designed assessment might be a beneficial medium of assessing materials and tasks in order to attain the educational goals. The essential objectives of competency-based assessment are creditable and supported by many educators and practitioners, but the rigorous face validity of competency-based assessment has tended to result in arguments. In fact, evidence about their efficacy is hard to find. We hope that by reviewing and the literature on the ideas and experiences underlying competency-based assessment, we can contribute to the objective evaluation of the merits of this approach for English for Specific Purpose (ESP) qualification.

A number of Competency-Based Assessment studies have been done in various contexts of several majors. The results of Competency-Based Assessment study in Anh & Tnahn (2014) clarifies that studying methods, curriculum, methods of teaching are not really effective in assessing learners' capacity, leading to the fact that graduates do not meet the demands of labor market and employers in the use of language proficiently in integration period. Griffith and Lim (2014) recommended that competency based assessments must focus more on providing information about a student's progress than on providing a grade for an assignment. Ng (2005) concluded that competency-based assessment would be more effective when it is an ongoing process. He outlined that the

evaluation of students' performance cannot be fully reviewed under a few tasks, but under long-term development. Exploring the implementation of Competency-Based Assessment becomes important to analyze. Hence to grow more elaboration on this issue, this study is an attempt to investigate the design and implementation of Competency-Based Assessment in English for Frontliner Classroom of *Balai Latihan Kerja* Surakarta.

Related Literature

For Gonczi, et al (1993), competency is a combination of attributes underlying some aspect of successful professional performance; A set of relevant attributes includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Efrim, et al. (2003) argued that related in a vocational context, competencies can often be readily inferred by observing outcomes. Rivin (2015) outlined that competency includes the ability to apply skills and knowledge beyond the immediate classroom setting. In other words competency is a set of attributive behaviour (involves, knowledge, skill, and attitude) to employ work activities in a real job situations. To confirm that an individual can perform to the standard expected in the workplace, it is a need to administer competency-based assessment. Western Australian Department of Training (2002) postulated that competency-based assessment refers to the process of collecting evidence and making judgments on whether competence has been achieved. So we can say that competency-based assessment is the process of evaluating individual's competence aligned with prescribed standards of performance related on real work activities. Competency-Based Assessment ensures that students are capable of performing the standard expected in the workplace as transcribed in the competency standards. Western Australian Department of Training (2002) explained that the calculation of these assessments considers a trainee to be competent or not.

As a general rule in competency-based assessment, selecting the methods is needed based on most direct and relevant to the performance being assessed. One of the advantages of Competency-Based Training is that the teaching learning process can be designed individually by students and/or instructors to ensure flexibility. Hence, assessment procedures cannot be restricted to one mode, but it must support a range of different methods that can be applied in proportion to the needs of students and instructors. To avoid using a narrow evidence base, a mix of assessment sources may be used. The different types of assessment with the particular methods and processes are illustrated in more detail by Hager, et al. (1994) in Deißinger and Hellwig (2011: 18) in Table 1.

Table 2.1 Types of Assessment

Assessment form	Observation
Methods	Product and/or process on-the-job
Type	Checklists, rating scales, log books, skills books, work experience diary, interaction analysis, peer assessments, time series analysis
Testing process	Checking, categorising, rating
Assessment form	Skill tests
Methods	Work sample, skill sample, practical project
Type	Checklists, rating scales, research tasks, assignments
Testing process	Checking, categorising, rating
Assessment form	Simulation
Methods	Simulation, observation of product and /or process
Type	Case studies, simulators, computer-adaptive tests, faults-findings
Testing process	Checking, categorising, rating
Assessment form	Evidence of prior learning /achievement
Methods	Examination of evidence
Type	Certification, transcripts, portfolios
Testing process	Checking, categorising, rating
Assessment form	Questioning
Methods	Oral, written, questioning
Type	Supply answer (short answer, restricted essay, extended essay) vs. select answer (multiple choice, matching, completion, true/false, alternate answer, identification), viva voce or oral exam, self-ratings
Testing process	Checking, categorising, rating

Table 1 demonstrates that assessment can be conducted as an observation of processes or products on the job, as a skills test in which a certain practical sample of a skill must be demonstrated or as a simulation of work activities, which is normally conducted off the job. Formerly gained competences can be assessed through the provision of evidence of these competences. Furthermore, more traditional forms of assessment such as oral or written tests can be applied especially with regard to assessment of underpinning theoretical knowledge. This combination is also operated for other assessment form.

Research Methodology

The study belongs to qualitative research. Thus, the data interpretation was made in form of description. The sources of data were obtained from informants, events, and documents. The informants involved three English instructors and students who had the willingness to give valuable and related information corresponding to Competency-Based Assessment process. These informants were

selected through purposive sampling. It was semi-structured interview that was conducted to interview the informants concerning to the Competency-Based Assessment design and implementation in English classroom. The events were the ongoing assessment process done in the classroom. The documents used to analyze the implementation of Competency-Based Assessment were Module, Information Book, Work Book, and Assessment Book. These data were in the form of written document. In analyzing the data, it was applied data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, et al., 2014). Data analysis process is begun by reviewing, selecting, summarizing raw data. Then, the data transformed into narrative text, table, and graphic. As a final point, the data findings were concluded.

Findings

The investigation results deal with the design and implementation of Competency-Based Assessment in English for Frontliner Classroom. These results are divided into two aspects along the lines of research problems. They are Competency-Based Assessment design and Competency-Based Assessment implementation. Designing Competency-Based Assessment is identified as an essential step to plan and prepare before it goes to the implementation. Well-designed assessment would direct its implementation properly. It would also relieve instructors to conduct the assessment. In English for Frontliner program, the assessment was conducted when each unit of competency has done. The instructors made sure that the students were ready to be assessed. Instructor asked the students whether or not they are ready for assessment or it can be seen from the course that instructors have taught as well. Further, all work criteria should have been taught by instructor as well to the students. The instructors ensured that the time and place for assessment had been agreed with the students. Instructors negotiated an exact time and place with students or simply announced date and time for assessment to students.

Beside selected documents, the instructors also designed the assessment into certain methods and testing processes. There were two sections of assessment were accomplished by each instructor. Related to the assessment design, written test and demonstration were employed by Instructor I to evaluate students' competency. Firstly, written test (for testing theory) was applied to assess students' knowledge. The content of written test was taken from Assessment Book. According to the standard, students needed to reach score of 75% to be stated competent. Instructor I declared that all students were competent in this section. Secondly, demonstration (for testing performance) was applied to examine students' skill in English. Instructor I administered each student to perform a demonstration as customer service at Delivery Service Company. There were around 10% students confirmed 'not yet competent' in this section. Next to study students' attitude, Instructor I directed observation of students' behavior in class.

With reference to assessment design, Instructor II utilized two parts of assessment. The first part was spoken test to assess theory. It was in form of oral questioning. The questions were related to the current unit, Greeting. Extended essay was regulated as assessment type. Accordingly, students might develop the answer by themselves. For testing process, checking was used to collect evidence of students' proficiency. Here, Instructor II had prepared checklist to assess students. The instructor checked the list every time students could achieve it. To pass this assessment section, students needed to be 100% correct in answering the question. Instructor II affirmed that for spoken test, students needed to be 100% correct, especially in the critical part. Most students were announced 'competent' in this section. There were only two students that were 'not yet competent'. They would be reassessed later. Instructor II explained that reassessment process was the result of student-instructor agreement. This agreement included time, place, and the material that would be reassessed. The second part was spoken test as well, but it was to test performance or skill. Students in group of two performed a dialog about Greeting. The testing process was similar with the first section that is checking. All students in this section were declared to be competent.

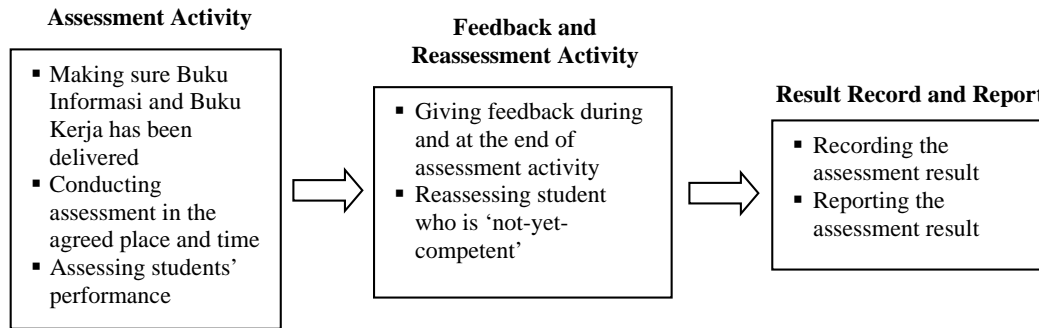
Instructor III also designed the assessment into certain methods and testing processes. There were two sections of assessment were accomplished. First was spoken test. Students were ordered to make a dialog in group of 2 and performed it in front of class. This assessment applied demonstration as assessment method and checking as testing process. Second assessment was written test. Instructor III arranged teacher-made-test that involved multiple choice and association test. This section used written test as assessment method and rating as testing process. Rating was preferred as students needed to achieve 70% as the minimum score.

Table 1. The Summary of Assessment Form Used by The Instructors

No.	Instructor	Assessment Form	Method	Type	Testing Process
1.	Instructor I	Skill test	Demonstration	Checklist	Rating
2.	Instructor II	Skill test	Demonstration	Checklist	Checking
3.	Instructor III	Skill test	Demonstration	Checklist	Checking
4.	Instructor I	Questioning	Oral questioning	Supply answer (short answer)	Checking
5.	Instructor II	Questioning	Written questioning	Select answer	Rating
6.	Instructor III	Questioning	Written questioning	Select answer	Checking

In conclusion, all instructors employed skill test and questioning as the assessment form. Skill test was primarily utilized to assess students' skill, despite of in some occasion instructors might combine this assessment form to assess attitude. Questioning was mostly developed to test knowledge. The summary of questioning utilized by the instructors is shown in Table 1.

Figure 1. The Implementation of Competency-Based Assessment



The implementation of Competency-Based Assessment process covers three ideas. They are conducting assessment activity, providing feedback and reassessment opportunities, and recording and reporting the result. The stage of the process is illustrated in figure 1. Executing the assessment in compliance with its technical regulation is fundamental to achieve basis purpose and desired output of this training and assessment. Largely, all the instructors implement Competency-Based Assessment in line with its procedure. The process of the assessment involves conducting assessment activity, providing feedback, reassessment opportunities, recording the result, and reporting the result. In assessment activity, the instructors made sure that Information Book and Work Book had been taught, conducted the assessment in agreed place and time, and assessed students' performance. The instructors gave feedback during and at the end of assessment activity. Next, they reassessed students who were the minimum score or 'not-yet-competent'. The instructors, then, recorded and reported the result to the institution. Finally, the institution reported the result to the students at the final plenary session.

Discussion

The findings portrayed formerly will be discussed in this section compared to the relevant references dealing with the implementation of competency based assessment based on English curriculum. After entire work criteria had been taught to the students, the instructors asked the students whether or not they are ready for assessment. Making sure that the students were ready to be assessed is critical step before conducting the assessment. The instructors also ensured that the place and time for assessment had been agreed with the students. By announcing the time, the students could prepare properly and made them confident to deal with the assessment. Here, the students might appeal if they believed the assessment had not been carried out in accordance with the assessment planning and preparation. Assessment design must be developed and provided to all students prior to their assessment. By way of describing assessment plan and preparation, it has shown that the instructors systematically organized the actions in designing the assessment. Only a bit was skipped. The assessment tools or materials did not experiment first to an appropriate sample of people. As a matter of fact, designing suitable as well as convincing assessment was fairly consuming time, costing amount of expense, and involving several partakers. It was feasibly unmanageable for the instructors to trial the materials or tools before.

Competency-Based Assessment carried out in the agreed place and time with students. In one session of assessment, there was only one assessment method that was performed. Additionally, the other method was managed to the next session. The frequency of assessments should vary so it might represent adequate information to support sufficient reliability. The assessment treated to appraise not just students' knowledge, skill, and attitude, but also to enrich their proficiency to integrate, produce, and apply these competencies in performing real work activities.

The assessment of students' knowledge, skill, and attitude must involve careful and thorough examination of the extent to which students have demonstrated the work criteria. During the assessment, the instructors fostered various assessment methods. Sole use of one method might not afford a reliable result. Each competency should be measured more than one time, and in more than one way, for example by performing demonstration, oral questioning, and written questioning. This was arranged to collect evidence of students' performance from a range of sides. The assessment used to measure competencies should concentrate on units of competency by way of they might appear in real workplace in the role of 'how-to-do' rather than 'to-know-how'. As Drisko (2014) pointed out that the more real-world the assessment is, the more value the results hold for determining students' competency.

Another important consideration is to deliver feedback. Feedback from instructors is key source of information in the quality monitoring of students' performance and its developments. The assessment necessitates an instructor to arrange for feedback to the students. The feedback might embrace how far competency has been performed and what points the students must extend. Australian Skills Quality Authority (2015) affirmed that providing feedback exhibit fairness in the assessment process and grants a student to understand why a result was awarded. In practice, feedback was given during and in the end of assessment. The feedback contained correction related to the performance, description of weaknesses, and reinforcement of reassessment chance to each the student. On the other hand, it was also found that some instructors did not convey feedback as soon the assessment has finished because of lack of time. This gap might reduce response value both for students and the instructors. For the purpose of collecting feedback, developing student peer feedback becomes the solution to the insufficient assessment hours. Besides it will help the instructors to revise, appraise,

and improve students' performance, it boosts other students to be active and critical during the assessment process. Providing the opportunities to produce and receive feedback also enhances students' learning experiences and cultivates their proficient skill set.

In assessment activity, the instructors managed such assessment form, method, types, and testing process against the performance criteria. After conducting the assessment, the collected evidence was process by instructor until the decision whether a student was 'competent' or 'not-yet-competent'. Students who could not reach minimum limit score of a unit of competency was offered reassessment chance. A student deserved three times chance to remedy the assessment. After three times of reassessment, if a student remained fail, they were declared 'not-yet-competent' for the unit of competency. As a matter of fact, most students who stated 'not-yet-competent' at first, they only needed once reassessment to rectify their result. This finding proved that students exhibited awareness to learn and master competency elements, as well as a motivation to pass the assessment. It included as positive washback of the assessment. The assessment encouraged students to study more and performed well for this assessment to the same extent they promoted a connection between standards and instruction. Assessment system must incorporate ongoing recording and reporting the result. Instructors also the pertinent parties must ensure that all assessment method and materials are suitably documented. This documentation underlines the core units of competencies being assessed. The instructors, in this phase, constructed the recapitulation of assessment result of all units of competency and devolved to management training institution. The executors, then, checked and validated the data. Beside off-the-job assessment result, the executors also calculated on-the-job assessment result composed by workplace parties. After the result was processed, it was distributed to students in form of certificate.

It is important that Competency-Based Assessment should be design well and implement systemically as its procedure. The discussion might lead to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the assessment process done in English classroom. With the understanding the strengths and weaknesses that are identified in teaching and learning activities, the new plan can be set to improve and enhance the training quality (Anh and Thanh, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the study that has been carried out, we can say that there are two points to conclude. First, Competency-Based Assessment design involves delivering Information Book and fulfilling Work Book, discussing place and time for the assessment, and applying skill test and questioning as assessment type. Second, Competency-Based Assessment implementation comprises making sure Information Book and Work Book has been delivered, conducting assessment in the agreed place and time, assessing students' performance, giving feedback during and at the end of assessment activity, reassessing student who is 'not-yet-competent', recording and reporting the assessment result. The result of this study shows that the implementation of competency-based assessment in vocational training, the area of Competency-Based Assessment in vocational training remains a remarkably intangible one. Regardless of the imperfection and the restraint of this study which the researcher acknowledges, hopefully it can be recorded at least as an attempt to break a new ground in mapping and analyzing the implementation of competency-based assessment in training institution in Indonesia. There still needs for more empirical study to explore in terms of Competency-Based Assessment in Indonesia. Since the purpose of this study to know its design and implementation, it is expected further researcher to consider more on this issue. In addition the validity and reliability of competency-based assessment and its outcome also needs to be studied.

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