Teachers' Beliefs and Practices Towards Language Assessment in an Indonesian Islamic University

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, assessment design and implementation issues have been a severe concern in teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Language assessment, which is inextricably linked to EFL teachers' conceptions and education, influences students and their learning. This case study investigates teachers' underlying beliefs concerning EFL assessment as well as their practices in the classrooms of Indonesian Islamic universities. The study engaged ten university EFL teachers who work in an Indonesian Islamic Higher Education institution. The participants were recruited using the purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews were used to determine teachers' beliefs about language assessment. Thematic analysis was used to transcribe, code and segment data to establish themes, categories, and subcategories that depict participants' beliefs regarding EFL assessment. The findings revealed that the participants used various terms to describe assessment, providing an exciting background to their practices. They also believed in language assessment's varied purposes, including administrative and pedagogical purposes. Most participants conceived assessment as an extension of EFL classroom teaching and learning, thus significantly impacting student learning and approaches to learning. Therefore, considering how assessments enhance student learning would influence teachers' decision-making. This paper also describes the implications of these findings for better governance of institutional systems for assessing English as a Foreign Language.

1. Introduction

In the last few decades, in the context of teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the issue of assessment design and its implementation in classroom practice has become a serious concern. Researchers and practitioners have explored and investigated effective and efficient assessment approaches for monitoring and evaluating EFL learning and teaching in local and global contexts (Finch, 2002; Pratiwi, Dewi, & Paramartha, 2019; Wang, Lee, & Park, 2020). Inayah, Komariah, and Nasir (2019), for example, conducted a study entitled The Practice of Authentic Assessment in an EFL Speaking Classroom. Their study aimed at describing the application of authentic assessment in a speaking classroom which links to the types of assessment and the scoring rubric. Other researchers, Pratiwi, Dewi, and Paramartha (2019), focused their study on examining how summative evaluations given by eleventh-grade English teachers reflect Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). These researchers show how assessment becomes an issue of concern for EFL learning and teaching. This is because assessment is of central importance in education and an integral part of teaching (Tara, 2005) and helps teachers improve the quality of student

learning (Widiastuti, Mukminatien, Prayogo, & Irawati, 2020). Moreover, high-quality and effective assessments are robust for learning, especially when used appropriately.

The theoretical framework in this study would assist the researcher in defining the variables discussed as well to inform the rationale for analyzing those variables and other relevant elements. Bliem and Davinroy (1997, p. 3) highlighted that "teachers' thinking, planning, interactive decision making, and beliefs are interwoven facets that impact their classroom practices daily." It indicates that implicit theories and beliefs about assessment would shape teachers' thinking and planning that would be reflected in their daily classroom practices and thus will contribute significantly to the teaching and learning process (Pajares, 1992). Therefore, understanding the theory behind teachers' beliefs and practices about assessment is worth studying. Brown (2004) purported that teachers' concepts are not uniform or straightforward; they appear varied and linked. Therefore, taking teachers' conception of assessment into account becomes essential as a number of studies have shown the significant effects of teachers' concept of teaching, learning, and curricula on the way they teach and what students learn (Muñoz, Palacio, & Escobar, 2012; Pajares, 1992). To determine the indicators of the variables in this study, the researcher referred their study to Brown's four major conceptions of assessment. Brown (2004) proposes a multitude of assessment purposes, which he divides into four categories: improvement, school accountability, student accountability, and irrelevance. Improvement conceptions propose the use of assessment to improve the quality of student learning; school and student accountability propose the use of assessment to monitor a school's performance and students' learning progress, respectively; and irrelevant conceptions propose pointless purposes of assessment. Similarly, Popham (2017) also proposes four major assessment goals, including" determining students' current status, monitoring students' progress, assigning grades, and determining one's own instructional effectiveness."

After reviewing the extensive literature on assessment purposes, the researcher found two main categories of assessment purposes to prove and improve student learning. The earlier assessment is often referred to by researchers and practitioners as an assessment of learning (AoL) (Stiggins, 2002) or a summative assessment, while the latter is often denoted as an assessment for learning (AfL) (Stiggins, 2002), or formative assessment (Popham, 2017). Popham further argued that teachers and students could use formative assessment to make any adjustments needed to improve the teaching and learning process. When high-quality classroom evaluation is used for formative reasons, it offers teachers feedback that can help them improve their teaching and students that help them learn. Suppose teachers and students could collaborate throughout the formative assessment process; it is believed to produce strong learning outcomes. Therefore, the new paradigm of student learning assessment has been shifted from using assessment to assign grades and accountability demands to use assessment to shape, inform, and enhance student learning (Shepard, 2000). In addition, Stiggins (2002) suggests putting a lot more investment into assessment for learning.

Some evidence is that teachers' beliefs on teaching and learning have influenced the way teachers teach and assess learning, including what students learn. Munoz, Palacio, and Escobar (2012) studied teachers' beliefs about assessment in particular and

the assessment system used at a language center of a private university in Colombia. They involved sixty-two teachers in gathering information using surveys, written reports, and interviews. The results indicated a contradiction between what teachers said they did and what they believed. In reality, the participants believe that assessment is helpful for formative evaluation. Teachers realize the changes that need to be made to improve their teaching techniques and offer more meaningful learning activities through evaluation, which is considered a process of educational regulation. Therefore, the study suggested that teachers require more significant opportunities for reflection, self-evaluation, and instruction on formative assessment procedures.

Similarly, 35 Iranian EFL teachers from different schools all over the country participated in a study conducted by Saad, Sardareh, and Ambarwati (2013). An open-ended questionnaire was used to gather information. The results showed that teachers' opinions on the nature of assessment were influenced by their contextual background, sociopolitical situations, and understanding of the language teaching and learning field. However, because of top-down managerial approaches to evaluation and education, this study also found that teachers did not play a substantial role in assessment. The participants emphasized the importance of teachers' assessment belief and their crucial role in assessment.

Yu and Lee (2014) conducted a qualitative study in China to examine 26 Chinese EFL instructors' opinions and methods regarding the use and function of peer feedback in the writing classroom. Semi-structured interviews were used to look into teachers' opinions on peer feedback and how they apply it in their classes. It was found that teachers' perspectives on the value and effectiveness of peer feedback for students' development as writers and L2 learners varied widely. Furthermore, their tactics varied tremendously depending on their beliefs and their teaching situation. When it comes to peer criticism in L2 writing, teachers frequently act following their convictions; however, this is not always the case, and teachers' methods may change over time if their beliefs do as well. The study results suggest that EFL teachers may not be aware of the value and potential of peer feedback for their students' growth, which prevents students from participating in and reaping the benefits of peer interactions in L2 writing.

Azis (2015) looked at the assessment practices of 107 English junior high teachers in Indonesia. A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were presented to participants in the mixed-method analysis. Based on the survey, assessment is used to support teaching and learning and highlight student and institutional accountability. They did not seem to agree with those who said the decision didn't matter. In contrast, Puad and Ashton (2021) carried out research at an Indonesian island's Islamic boarding school. Six English conducts discussions on classroom-based evaluation as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors at secondary schools. Since the Indonesian government intends to implement a big curriculum change in 2020 that mandates teachers use formative assessment techniques in the classroom, it is imperative to explore instructors' opinions. This study found that teachers tended to view classroom-based evaluation as summative instead of formative. Along with their academic abilities, a considerable focus was placed on evaluating pupils' attitudes and behavior in the classroom. Grades and test scores were also used to make children accountable for their learning and achievement to their

teachers and parents. The difficulties of applying formative assessment procedures within the classroom in traditional and hierarchical societies are highlighted in this article.

The previous studies, as described above, specified that teachers' beliefs about EFL assessment influenced the implementation of classroom assessment. However, there has been little comprehensive research investigating the phenomenon of teachers' beliefs of assessment in the Indonesian Islamic higher education context. It implies that more teachers should develop their assessment skills and should always consider factors that may influence classroom assessment implementation. Shohamy, Inbar-Lourie, and Poehner (2008) argued that assessment refers to two significant elements called "the what" and "the how." "The what" means the perceptions and conceptualization of the language itself, while the how means any approach to evaluating this knowledge.

The earlier discussions on assessment (Black & William, 1998) underlined that all assessment procedures are fundamentally social. They occur in social settings and are performed by, on, and for social actors (Chang, 2006). Classroom-based assessment is not a technical, objective activity but rather one that is integrated into the teaching and learning cycle and takes place in the local school context. Assuming a socio-cultural framework, the researcher considers language assessment as a part of classroom activities, which are not isolated and decontextualized. This assumes that teachers are professionals, not self-contained people and that they are social actors making complex and conflicted evaluation judgements. In this study, the sociocultural theory will provide foundation and formulate the understanding of the teachers' belief on assessment and its effects on teachers' practices in their daily classroom. However, despite the comprehensive number of research on assessment, we still found some limitations on studies about teachers' cognition on assessment and their practices, especially in the Islamic university EFL classroom. Moreover, most of the literature in the Indonesian context focused their studies on the secondary level, which intrigued me to focus my study in the Islamic university context. Thus, the proposed research questions stated above will be carried out to provide a better understanding of language classroom assessment and a solid foundation for teaching in Islamic higher education.

Therefore, based on the background above, it is considered critical to study teachers' beliefs of assessment in Islamic EFL university classrooms. The main goals of this study are to identify EFL teachers' beliefs regarding assessment and to investigate how EFL teachers undertake assessment practices concerning their beliefs. Examining what they believe is necessary for tailoring their knowledge to educational objectives and standards related to EFL learning and teaching.

2. Method
2.1. Research Design

This case study investigates the underlying beliefs of teachers and practices related to assessing student EFL learning in the classrooms and their practices in an Indonesian Islamic university. According to Yin (2003, p. 13), a case study is "an empirical inquiry analyzing a current event in its real-life context." Furthermore, it is an intensive examination of a single unit (Gerring, 2007). These two definitions imply that a case study technique focuses its examination on a single unit or phenomenon to

better understand the situation at hand. The researcher engaged a case study method in the present study because they intended to cover the contextual issues that are most pertinent to the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, teachers' conceptions or beliefs about assessment will be examined using Brown's (2004) four significant conceptions of assessment.

2.2. Sampling Technique

The study engaged a group of ten university EFL teachers who work in one Indonesian Islamic university. The ten participants were recruited using purposive sampling (Ezzy, 2002; Punch, 2005). It means that the recruitment of the participants was based on who was in the best position to provide insightful information in answering the research questions, as well as who was willing to do so. In this case, the participants were EFL teachers who teach at Islamic higher education institutions with a minimum of two years of teaching experience. Those who did not meet these criteria were not involved in this research.

2.3. Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires on assessment were used to inquire into the teachers' beliefs about language assessment and their practices. The instrument for the semi-structured interview was self-developed, while the open-ended questionnaires, which consisted of twenty-eight questions, were adapted from Shohamy et al. (2008). The two instruments are used to determine EFL language teachers' perceptions and practices. The open-ended questionnaire is divided into two key elements: (a) Background information includes age, teaching experience length, and teaching level; and (b) Assessment practices include frequency of assessment, types of assessment, type of tools used, the contribution of tools to the final score, the specific language components of each tool, the emphasis on content, language, or both, and the importance and purposes of assessment.

The interview questions mainly asked about EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment and their practices in EFL teaching and learning. This present research, however, did not include observation as one of the data collection methods, which could be considered one of the limitations of this study.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires on assessment. Interviews lasted for about 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with the participants. The interviews consisted of open questions intended to elicit information about the teachers' beliefs on assessments and their practices in the classroom. The open-ended questionnaire was distributed to the participants the same day after being interviewed.

2.4. Technique of Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data collection, thematic analysis was used in this research. In addition, this technique is used to help any researchers in their qualitative research to obtain their research objectives by indicating or discovering the themes with the amount of data that has been collected. Further, Braun and Clarke (2016) emphasized that thematic analysis is well known for its accessibility, flexibility, and as a means of analyzing data in qualitative research. Therefore, thematic analysis was used in the present study to transcribe, code and segment data to establish themes, categories, and subcategories that depict participants' beliefs regarding EFL

assessment and their assessment practices. Braun and Clarke (2016) suggested six different steps in the thematic analysis, including: (a) Familiarity with the data gathered from individual interviews with EFL teachers. In this stage, the researcher attempted to understand the data by exploring and investigating the participants' answers through in-depth interviews; (b) Generating initial codes. At this stage, the researcher investigated the data to decide and label them into several codes for the findings of this research; (c) Searching for a theme. In this phase, several themes were identified based on Brown's four major conceptions of assessment; (d) Reviewing potential themes. In this step, the predefined themes were rechecked and verified. This step needed to be done to determine whether the themes were suitable for this research. Further, additional themes are needed if specific themes are deemed inadequate; (e) Defining and naming the themes. The results of this research were obtained as the result of how the researcher tried to finally find out the final themes for each subject; and (f) Generating the report. Finally, the themes which answered the research question were concluded and defined as the last step in analyzing the data.

3. Findings

In this section, the researcher presents their findings based on the data taken from interviews and open-ended questionnaires. The analysis of teachers' beliefs and practices in the assessment of EFL learning and teaching revealed several themes related to their conceptions of EFL assessment and their classroom practices. The participating teachers used various themes to describe the assessment, providing an interesting background to their personal practices. They also used several themes to describe the varied language assessment purposes, including administrative and pedagogical purposes. Most participants conceived assessment as an extension of EFL classroom teaching and learning and as having a significant impact on student learning, approaches to learning, and student motivation. This closely relates to one of the assessment purposes suggested by Brown (2004) as assessment for learning in which assessment is used to improve the quality of student learning. Thus, considering how assessments will enhance student learning heavily influences teachers' decision-making.

3.1. Teachers' conceptions about assessment in EFL learning and teaching

EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment in EFL learning were derived from the questionnaire and interview responses. The teacher-participants gave a clear conception of the assessment of student learning. From all the participants, it seems that they have shared the same concept of assessment, which refers to the way in assessing the learning process, in other words, assessment is seen as the tool to measure students' performance. For example, Teacher 1 mentioned the concept of assessment as a way to assess students' progress in learning. She stated:

> … *in every stage of learning, especially EFL learners, we must need assessment to determine the improvement of our students…*

In line with this statement, Teacher 4 also explained that assessment relates to the evaluation of students' learning whether there is progress or not in the middle and at the end of their learning.

When we teach, we will always need to assess the result of our teaching. The teacher should see the progress or evaluate the extent of students' achievement. I think that is where assessment takes place.

While another respondent mentioned, that assessment is a process of giving a score to students based on the subject the teachers teach.

From the responses, it can be seen that most of the teachers teaching in Islamic higher education still believe that assessments improve learning (formative dimension) and prove learning by giving the grade at the end of the semester (summative dimension).

In terms of formative assessment, it is clearly mentioned that the participants use the assessment as a reference for them to determine which part should be improved. For example, it could be from how the material is delivered or the need to adjust it to the student's needs. In addition, in the summative assessment, it can be seen that the participants provide types of assessment either in the form of projects or oral interviews.

3.2. Teachers' purposes of conducting assessment in EFL learning and teaching

To find out the teachers' purposes for conducting assessments in EFL learning and teaching, the participants filled out the questionnaire and were asked this question during the interview. Both the questionnaire and interview results seem to reflect a professionally engaged EFL teacher.

The questionnaire result showed that most respondents perceived the importance of assessment, and none of them perceived the purposes of assessment as somewhat necessary or not important. It can be seen in the Table 1.

Table 1. The percentage of assessment purposes

No.	The Purpose of the assessment	Percentage			
		Very Important	Important	Somewhat important	Not Important
1.	To assess ongoing learning progress	60%	40%	0%	0%
2.	To diagnose difficulties	60%	40%	0%	0%
3.	To place into a program or course	60%	40%	0%	0%
4.	To assess end-of-semester achievement	60%	40%	0%	0%
5.	To assess grades	90%	10%	0%	0%

Nine participants argued that the purpose of assessment, which is to assess grades, is very important (90%), and only one participant said that assessing grades is essential (10%). Meanwhile, the other four purposes (to assess ongoing learning progress, to diagnose difficulties, to place into a program or a course, and to assess end-of-semester achievement) were perceived as very important (60%) and essential (40%), respectively. This is in line with the interview result in which Teacher 3 mentioned that she used assessment to give grades based on students' performance.

*To me, I use assessment as a way to find **out** students' **understanding** of what I teach, give them grades based on their performance, and determine whether my **objectives have been achieved or not.***

Similarly, Teacher 2 also stated that the purpose of assessment is to give scores to the students. By doing this, she could evaluate which part of her teaching should be improved and determine whether she has reached the teaching objectives.

*"The purpose of assessment is to **assess student's learning progress** and to find out which parts need to improve. By doing this, I could evaluate whether the **course's objectives** have been reached, and at the same time, I could assess students' achievement and **give them a score** based on their performance."*

In this case, it can be noted that the participants with less experience in teaching perceive summative assessment as the major purpose of assessment. It relates to their own definition of assessment as measuring students' performance or knowing how much they know. In addition, we can see that most of the teachers in this study believe that assessment could help them determine whether their teaching objectives are met.

Surprisingly, participants with a longer experience and training in language teaching gave more complex explanations regarding the purpose of the assessment. Teacher 1 clearly mentioned that assessment could be used for teachers as well as students. She perceived assessment as a reflection of the teachers toward their own teaching, including the strategies or methodology she used. While the students can use the result of the assessment to know their performance. In this case, it is clear that assessment for learning plays its role.

These teachers' perspectives confirm what Burden and Byrd (2010, p. 277) mentioned in their book "assessing students is necessary to help teachers determine the degree to which educational objectives have been achieved and help teachers know their students as individuals". In addition, these purposes revealed by the researcher are in line with what Popham (2017) highlighted in his book, that assessment is to monitor, grade, and check students' current status as well as instructional effectiveness. However, there is no clear and specific information about how the teachers reflect their own teaching based on the assessment they used. Thus, this gap could open room for improvement in this study to explore those aspects in further study.

3.3. The principles that should guide assessment

The data on this topic were gathered through interviews. The participants revealed various information. According to Teacher 6, the principle of assessment should be flexible, achievable, and meet the H+1 concept. She argued that:

… the point is that the assessment should be suitable for what we teach and meet the H+1 concept. It means the material given to them should be 1 level harder than students' average ability.

In addition, Teacher 7 clearly stated that the assessment given to students should be based on the skill taught or meet the validity criteria and make sure the assessment is manageable or practical without taking too much time. She said:

Well, to me, the principle of assessment should be valid. I mean, our assessment is based on the skill we teach. The assessment is also easy to conduct.

Still, in a similar vein, Teacher 8 mentioned that:

Assessment should consider students' condition. The task given should meet students' condition and their level.

Furthermore, Teacher 4 listed some principles of assessment based on her opinion, including accountability, transparency, objectivity, and relevance. These principles should be well considered in conducting the assessment in the classroom.

According to the collected data above, we could see that the participants believed that assessment should carefully consider the students' condition. It means that the assessment should meet the criteria of flexibility and inclusiveness. The assessment also should be transparent and objective. In addition, the participants argued that the task could and should be made or adapted from the resources used, which means it has to meet the validity and relevancy criteria.

3.4.   The relationship between learning, teaching and assessment

The interview result showed that learning, teaching and assessment become integral and should be interconnected. The response of the participants can be seen as follow:

Teacher 1 stated:

In any class, the teacher must know whether their students understand the material given or not, and thus assessment is needed. In addition, the teacher needs to make sure that the learning process has taken place.

Furthermore, all participants argued that learning, teaching, and assessment are closely related. Teacher 3 even added that it is impossible to have an assessment without teaching and learning; therefore, assessment should become the final goal. In addition, teacher 5 argued:

Learning is a process of consuming as much knowledge as a student needs either from the teacher or other resources. Teaching is a process in transferring knowledge from the teacher to students, while assessment is an evaluation set to measure students' ability in particular academic subjects after they get several treatments in classroom meetings either during the learning process or at the end of the learning session.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that teaching, learning, and assessment are the three elements connected and, thus should be functioned optimally to reach the objective of quality education.

3.5.   The importance of assessment for students' EFL learning

Regarding the importance of assessment for students' EFL learning, all the responses lead to the same understanding that assessment would give information or feedback to students on how effective or how well they performed in the class. The response of Teacher 6 can be seen as follows:

…well, I think the assessment is critical in any teaching that we have because it is used to help us determine the progress of whether the learning provided has increased or is stagnant

In addition, Teacher 2 stated that assessment for students' EFL learning is very important. She further said that:

Assessment could help me to see the difference before and after my teaching. I could assess the ability of my students from the beginning. However, it also depends on the assessment type, whether peer assessment or self-assessment.

Similarly, Teacher 9 clearly stated that assessment is important for the students to inform them about their abilities. This exactly confirmed what Popham (2017) put in his book stating that assessment should

3.6. The importance of assessment for teachers' teaching

Almost all participants responded that the assessment is important for teachers' teaching. Teachers with longer experience and those with less experience in teaching agreed that teaching without assessment is useless. Regarding the importance of assessment for teachers' teaching, it can be seen that most participants shared the same understanding that assessment is used for the teachers to evaluate either themselves or the progress of their teaching. Therefore, assessment plays an essential role in the teaching and learning process. For example, teacher 1 mentioned as follows:

> *Yes, assessment is important for teachers as it is used for evaluation. A teacher could assess their capacity to teach and identify the extent of students' understanding of the material given. Assessment is also necessary for teachers to identify whether one subject is an extension of the previous subject. Assessment could help teachers determine whether students' results are stagnant or have no improvement.*

Similarly, teacher 8 also mentioned that assessment is vital to evaluate whether the learning objectives are reached. She argued that assessment should be used to improve the learning and teaching process. For example, the teacher could assess whether she needs to revise the lesson plan to suit her students' needs.

Another response from a participant is that assessment is important merely because assessment could give information about students' abilities at the beginning of the class. In this case, assessment plays a diagnostic role for the teacher. She mentioned that knowing students' abilities in the first class would help her adjust the material given and the level of difficulty that suits their students better.

The analysis of the responses above indicates that most participants value the importance of assessment with formative reasons. The results align with the previous question regarding their concepts and the purposes of assessment in their classroom practices.

3.7. EFL Teachers' Practices of Assessment

Based on the result of the questionnaire and the interview with EFL teachers, it is found that most participants share the same belief regarding assessment practices. However, it can be seen clearly from their statements in the interviews and responses on the questionnaires that the teachers could differ in using formative and summative assessment in their teaching. For the purpose of formative assessment, quizzes have become the most common one. While for the summative purpose, most participants agreed that the type of tools used depends on the subject they teach. For example, Teacher 10 mentioned:

> *I think it depends on the class and skill we teach. Each skill has a different system of measurement. For example, I will assess students' fluency, accuracy, and other elements when I teach speaking. Therefore, I usually assess students' performance through oral assessment.*

In addition, Teacher 2 mentioned that she elaborates on different tools in her teaching. She stated the following:

I usually assess students through tests, quizzes, and rubrics. The tests could be in multiple-choice or in the form of a writing project if I teach a writing subject.

Similarly, Teacher 8 also stated that she usually used projects in her summative assessment but again, it depends on the subjects. To illustrate, she gave an example of a CALL subject in which she used a mini-research project to assess student's performance at the end of the semester. She also addressed the importance of oral assessment as an effective way to assess students' understanding immediately, although it's rarely used.

Furthermore, Teacher 5 added that she usually used projects at the end of her class to make her class more exciting and meaningful for students.

I like to give my students projects at the end of the semester. I hope the project can be more exciting and meaningful to them. For example, in my curriculum and material development class, I assigned my students to design a curriculum for an English course at the end of the semester. My students seemed enthusiastic and completed their projects very well.

The interview result is supported by a questionnaire viewing the percentage of projects in assessment toward the final grade. Seven out of ten respondents calculated the project to determine the final grade by 100%. However, one participant put in only 90%, and one of them by 40% of the usage of the project to determine the final grade. In contrast, other assessment procedures are frequently used to calculate the final grades, including written or summative tests, oral tests, direct and online quizzes, and attendance. What seems missing in the finding is that no participants used portfolios in their assessment practices, which is possible to explore in the following study.

4. Discussion

The evidence on teachers' beliefs of assessment suggests that teachers believe assessment both proves and improves learning. This finding confirmed the study conducted by Brown (2004) that teachers agreed that assessment enhances teaching and learning and holds schools responsible. It is interesting to note that most participating teachers indicate their use of formative assessment because they believe it helps student learning. However, few still carry assessments for learning or summative purposes. This finding suggests the participants' awareness of the importance of assessment for learning instead of assessment of learning, indicating that EFL teachers at Indonesian Islamic universities are eager to utilize assessment to shape and enhance student learning and quality teaching. This finding confirms the findings of Qadi (2021) in Saudi Arabian context, perceiving that the highest amount of agreement across all four conceptions of assessment was an improvement of vision.

It is also worth noting that those participants who still hold the accountability purpose of assessment are relatively new in the position of teaching. This finding might suggest that the length of teaching experience influences their conception of assessment. Azis (2012) also notes in her review of several articles on teachers' conceptions and use of assessment that teachers' attitudes and concepts may be influenced by their experiences.

The present study's findings also indicate that none of the participating teachers raises the notion of assessment as irrelevant. This finding is in line with the results Azis (2015) revealed in her mixed-method study examining how Indonesian junior high

school teachers understand assessment and how their conceptions of assessment relate to their assessment practices. Interestingly, in Indonesian education, teachers both at junior secondary school and at Islamic university levels hold similar disagreements with the view that assessment is irrelevant. Participants in these two studies are aware of the strategic roles of assessment and how it is used to prove and improve students' learning and teachers' teaching.

It is noted from the participants' responses that those who have participated in professional development programs on assessment tend to articulate broader and more thorough beliefs and practices of student assessment. This information is in line with the claim made by Azis (2012) that participating in a professional development program positively influences teachers' beliefs and behaviors. It again suggests the potential contribution of teacher professional development programs to support teachers' understanding of assessment practices and improve the quality of their teaching.

5. Conclusion

Based on the finding and discussion, the researcher could draw some conclusions that, in general, most participating teachers indicate their use of formative assessment as they believe it helps student learning, although there were few still hold assessments for learning or summative purposes. An interesting aspect that has not been explored in this research is how lecturers can measure or assess their learning abilities considering that there is no specific measuring instrument used to assess these achievements, even though these participants believe that formative assessment is critical to measure the progress achieved by students. It means the purpose and implementation of the assessment itself are still limited to providing grades to students as a form of school accountability (assessment of learning). For further research, it is necessary to conduct comprehensive research on developing an assessment instrument for Islamic higher education in the EFL context.

This research is expected to help EFL teachers raise their awareness about their own beliefs on language assessment and their teaching practices to improve their teaching and professional growth. In addition, this research provides a significant theoretical contribution to the research regarding the implementation of assessment in general and teachers' beliefs and practices in the Islamic higher education context in particular. Finally, the implication of this research suggests the potential contribution of teacher professional development programs to support EFL teachers' understanding of assessment practices, which improves the quality of their teaching and teachers' assessment literacy.

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