

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the background of this study will be elaborated on. Subsequently, the background is followed by research questions, aims of the research, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

Assessing students' performance in the teaching and learning process is one of the most critical responsibilities of a teacher. This is because teachers spend their professional time performing classroom-based assessment activities (Deluca & Klinger, 2010); up to 50 percent of their time (Plake et al., 1993) monitoring their students' achievement (Stiggins, 1995) and assessing students learning outcome (Lian et al., 2014). How the teachers performed classroom-based assessments affects the quality of their instruction towards the quality of the assessments used (Mertler & Campbell, 2005; Rad, 2019). Thus, having adequate knowledge and skills to assess students' learning within the classroom practice is considered essential for teachers.

More specifically, assessment knowledge is considered the foundation of classroom-based assessment (henceforth CBA). It is broadly defined as assessment knowledge to design, implement, grade, provide feedback (Lam, 2019), and communicate the assessment result (Brookhart, 1999, 2001) to review or possibly revise learning processes (Suskie, 2018). Teachers who are literate in assessment, therefore, know how to collect reliable data about student performance, use the assessment to support student learning, and know how to communicate assessment results effectively.

In a similar vein, Stiggins (2001) pointed out the unacceptably low levels of assessment literacy of school teachers and administrators. He also noticed that teachers who were not literate in assessment resulted in inaccurate assessments to students and prevented them from realizing their full academic potential. Hence, it can be inferred that assessment literacy enhances teachers' assessment practices, which have a significant impact on the quality of student learning (Coombs et al., 2018). In other words, classroom-based assessment practice is influenced by teachers' assessment literacy

levels. Therefore, it intrigued the researcher to investigate teachers' assessment literacy levels and how they affect classroom-based assessment practice.

Studies regarding assessment literacy (AL) have appeared in education literature since the 1990s (Stiggins, 1991). Thus, it can be said that studies on assessment literacy is not a new concept in language assessment. Several attempts had been made to examine AL as an output of teacher training or professional development program, one of the research had been conducted by Saputra, et al. (2020). They sought to examine trajectory teachers who signed up for a Professional Learning Community (PLC) project to develop language assessment literacy. This study showed that the PLC increased teachers' understandings of AL and authentic assessment practices, motivated teachers to reflect on assessment practices, and increased awareness and enthusiasm for change. However, the findings of this study are only derived from interviews and observations of six out of twenty-five trajectory teachers. Therefore, it is important to investigate their classroom-based assessment practice as the effort to actualize AL among the school teachers will not happen only in a single workshop. It is a long-term process to be followed.

As the above research findings illustrate, it can be said that trained teachers use assessment to improve teaching practice and use the AL as a starting point for better implementations of classroom-based assessment. This contrasts with a study by Vogt and Tsagari (2014), where it has been found that their teacher participants' assessment literacy was not very well-developed since the majority of teachers believe that their training (either at pre or in-service level) has not prepared them sufficiently for teachers' work. This study also found that the assessment practices were not more than grading activities. Thus, it can be seen that having training or coursework cannot guarantee the teachers have sufficient knowledge and skills in classroom-based assessment practices.

Moreover, AL has also been explored by comparing different elements, such as pre-service and in-service teachers (Mertler, 2003; Mertler & Campbell, 2005; Trisanti, 2019), teachers' knowledge, perception, or conceptions with teachers' skill or their classroom practice (Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018; Lam, 2019; Lian et al., 2014; Luthfiyyah et al., 2020; Muhammad & Bardakçi, 2019; Rad, 2019; Zulaiha et al., 2020) and examined AL through developing of instruments that attempt to measure teachers' assessment competence (Howell, 2013; Plake et al., 1993; Shim, 2009).

Nevertheless, previous studies also revealed a variety of findings regarding teachers' assessment knowledge. The teachers were more knowledgeable for assessment of learning (summative assessment) than assessment for learning (formative assessment) (Deluca & Klinger, 2010; Puad & Ashton, 2020; Volante & Fazio, 2007). They had partial knowledge concerning classroom-based assessments type; assessment of, for, and as learning (Lam, 2019). There was also a discrepancy between teachers' knowledge and their classroom practice (Jannati, 2015; Luthfiyyah et al., 2020; Zulaiha et al., 2020). The results of these previous studies inferred that the teachers have limited knowledge and practice in assessment. Regrettably, some studies reported that most teachers generally had low level of assessment literacy (Muhammad & Bardakçi, 2019; Yamtim & Wongwanich, 2014). Therefore, examining teachers' assessment literacy levels and understanding their assessment practices in the classroom deemed necessary to be conducted.

Three previous research in the Indonesian context that had been mentioned shared a similar focus, and thus, the result also had similar points. One of the research was explored by Luthfiyyah et al. (2020) who employed a descriptive quantitative design to explore EFL secondary (junior and senior high school) teachers' assessment literacy and assessment practice. The data was gathered using an online survey adopted from the Teachers Assessment Literacy Questionnaire (TALQ) by Plake et al. (1993) and semi-structured interviews. The data obtained from the online survey revealed that teachers are generally at a moderate level of assessment literacy. However, the data obtained from interviews reflected different conceptions of assessment, procedures, and challenges in assessment practice due to an individual level of AL, institutional and national policies, and socio-culture factors. From Luthfiyyah's study, it can be inferred that AL is not a single factor that can influence teachers' assessment practice.

In a similar vein, Aria et al. (2021) focused on examining classroom-based assessment practice of 48 EFL secondary teachers. This study was conducted in the form of a survey research aimed at describing how teachers' self-perceived on the basic principles of assessment with respect to their practice in classroom-based assessment. In this study, data was collected using an online survey using survey instrument of Shim (2009). An interesting fact that can be discovered in this research is that most teachers

practice assessment *for* learning (henceforth AfL), in which teachers conducted assessments to support student learning and use the results as feedback to improve and modify teaching. The teachers in this study appeared to be literate and excellent in understanding and applying the concept in practice. The findings in this study are well-described since it includes the detailed results of teachers' responses. However, the results of this study are only derived from questionnaire data and need further investigation on classroom observation regarding how excellent the teachers practice their understanding. Hence, investigating this current study through interview and document analysis is deemed necessary to respond to the call for increased research in this area of assessment literacy.

Finally, research by Zulaiha, et al. (2020), using a mixed-methods design, explored EFL junior secondary school teachers' perceptions of classroom-based assessment and understood the extent to which teachers' perceptions are reflected in their practice. Data was collected through questionnaires adopted from Shims' (2009), semi-structured interviews, and document analysis including curriculum, syllabus, lesson plans, sample assessment materials, and student work. Findings from twenty-two Indonesian EFL teachers in six public junior secondary schools confirmed that teachers sought to put their assessment knowledge into practice. However, this study also revealed some discrepancies between teachers' knowledge and classroom assessment practices. Data from the qualitative phase in this study in terms of document analysis data is less explored. Therefore, this case gives a gap to this current study which deals with an in-depth investigation of teachers' assessment literacy by exploring the documents of teachers' work to show their activities in teaching-learning process to see how the teachers practice classroom-based assessment.

Hence, to fill this gap, this current study focused on investigating classroom-based assessments with the coverage of the study dealing with teachers' assessment literacy levels and classroom-based assessment practices. This research is expected to strengthen the results of the previous research and benefit institutions, teachers and researchers in Indonesia from three perspectives (theoretically, practically, and policy) as explained in subsection 1.4.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background above, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What is the level of English secondary school teachers' classroom-based assessment literacy?
2. How do the English secondary school teachers practice classroom-based assessment?

1.3 Aims of the Study

Based on the research questions above, there are two primary aims of the present study:

1. To investigate the classroom-based assessment literacy level of English secondary school teachers, and
2. To understand how English secondary school teachers practice classroom-based assessment.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The current study's findings are expected to provide significant contributions from three perspectives; theoretical, practical, and policy benefits.

Theoretically, this study offers some important insights regarding classroom-based assessment practice in improving student learning. It is also expected that this research provides a clear understanding and theoretical foundations of classroom-based assessment literacy and could be a reference for further researchers in researching a similar field.

Practically, by investigating teachers' assessment literacy level and how it affects their assessment practices, it provides fruitful information and suggestions for students, teachers, researchers, educators, practitioners, and professionals to better understand classroom-based assessment practices.

The last, from policy perspective, the results of this study are expected to give beneficial contributions to the stakeholders, particularly the government of Riau province, regarding the information on teachers' assessment literacy practices. So, the government

can be concerned about improving teacher professional competencies in the area of assessment.

1.5 Clarification of Key Terms

Several terms will be used throughout this study, which is defined here as they are used:

a. Assessment literacy (AL)

As presented in the *Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students*, AL comprises teachers' abilities to select and develop appropriate assessment methods for instructional decisions; to administer, score, and interpret the results of both externally produced and teacher-produced assessments; to use assessment results to make decisions about individual students, teaching planning, developing curriculum, and school improvement; to develop valid pupil grading procedures; to communicate assessment results to multiple stakeholders; and to recognize unethical, illegal, and inappropriate assessment methods (AFT, NCME, NEA, 1990). To sum up, in the context of this study, AL refers to the teacher's ability in developing appropriate assessment methods for instructional decisions in the classroom to provide effective teaching and successful learning.

b. Teacher Assessment Literacy (TAL)

Stiggin (1995) describes an assessment literate teachers know what they are assessing, why they are doing so, how best to assess the student performance, possible problems, and how these problems can be prevented. In this study, teacher assessment literacy refers to teachers' knowledge and skills in assessment. Teachers who are literate in the assessment are able to answer five core questions in the assessment; why assess, assess what, assess how, communicate how, and involve students how.

c. Classroom-based assessment (CbA)

CbA is an assessment carried out in the classroom by the teachers with formative assessment used day-to-day to gain its primary focus on the ongoing improvement of learning for all students (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2020). In this study, CbA is concerned with formative assessment carried out by the teacher in the classroom.

d. Classroom-based assessment literacy (CbAL)

CbAL is the knowledge and skills needed to do two things; gather accurate information about students' achievement and use the assessment process and its results effectively to improve achievement (Chappuis et al., 2014). Thus, in this current study, CbAL refers to knowledge and skills in applying the assessment process and effectively interpreting the results to encourage meaningful learning.

1.6 Thesis Organization

Chapter I provides the background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, significance of the research, clarification of key terms, and the paper organization.

Chapter II explains related theories and literature. It consists of several parts as the main concept of assessment literacy, components in assessment literacy involving knowledge base, teacher beliefs, and teacher practice, classroom-based assessment literacy, level of teacher assessment literacy, standards of teachers' competencies in assessment, and keys to quality classroom-based assessment.

Chapter III discusses the methodology in conducting this research. It contains the method and design of the research, site and participant, instrumentations, data collection procedures, and data analysis that describe how the data would be presented and analyzed in chapter IV.

Chapter IV covers findings from the data collection and discussions related to the findings. This chapter has three major parts of findings and discussion based on instruments used in data collection; questionnaire, interview, and document. The research questions are answered in this chapter.

Chapter V encompasses the conclusions of the research. This chapter also contains the implications and recommendations of the study. Several suggestions for teachers, institutions, and future researchers in similar fields are also mentioned in this chapter.

1.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented the introduction of the research. It covers several parts, involving the background of the research as the primary research basis, research questions as the main point of the research investigation, which is inherently connected to the

objective of the study, the significance of the study as new insight regarding the aims of the research, clarification key terms as the understanding of each term in this research, and thesis organization as the outline of the information included in this study.