

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a brief explanation of the study. It consists of the background of the study, the questions and purposes of this research, the research significance, the research scope, the conceptual framework, and previous studies related to this research.

A. Background

This research explores teachers' perspectives on the use of diagnostic assessments tools in terms of usefulness in the EFL Classroom. Typically, teachers use summative or formative assessment instruments in class to determine student achievement. This type of test provides helpful information about student achievement levels, but is limited in providing more detailed information about student progress. Nevertheless, formative assessment ideally informs both the teacher and the student about their understanding of the learning targets for the course (Kraus, 2002). Therefore, formative assessment is usually conducted by teachers to find out their students' progress and to help them change their instructional approach; one of the purposes of formative assessment is typically diagnostic (Richards, 2008). Diagnostic assessment is essential in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). According to Novrina (2023), an assessment tool used to gather data on students' abilities and weaknesses is the diagnostic assessment, which provides a framework for learning planning based on individual student situations. In conclusion, diagnostic assessments enable teachers to effectively tailor instruction to meet the needs of individual students, thereby promoting more meaningful and targeted learning outcomes.

Additionally, according to Brown (2004), a diagnostic test is designed to identify specific aspects of a language. Diagnostic assessment is widely acknowledged worldwide as a practical approach to promote personalized learning (Kholid, p. 2024). Diagnostic assessment is essential to enhance students' interests and abilities through differentiated learning strategies designed to meet the diverse needs of students by taking into account individual readiness levels, interests, and

profiles. Practical diagnostic assessment in EFL is a task that requires more than linguistic skills; requires a deep understanding of pedagogical principles.

Furthermore, diagnostic assessment identifies learners' strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge or use of language (Daniel, 2006). Based on Jang (2014), the belief is that a diagnostic assessment aims to identify a student's areas of strength and weakness based on evaluation and education and then uses the data to assist in the student's education. Moreover, teachers play an important role in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, and they build on what students know while addressing students' weaknesses (Johnson, 2017). It enables educators to design targeted teaching strategies that meet learners' needs.

In addition, in the preliminary observation during the teaching practicum at a senior high school in 2024, a class that does not use diagnostic assessment presents several issues regarding students' abilities and understanding. Students often feel confused about their learning because they do not know their strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Another influencing factor is that the teacher struggles to adjust the teaching material because they do not understand the students' needs. Moreover, understanding the perspective of teachers who use diagnostic assessment in their teaching provides new insights into its importance. However, based on Brown (2018), teachers prioritize understanding individual students' learning needs through initial assessments, such as placement tests and informal quizzes, to identify proficiency levels and specific areas that need support. This insight significantly affects learning strategies, as teachers modify lesson plans based on assessment results, allowing for differentiated instruction that meets the needs of various students. Moreover, feedback plays a vital role in this process; timely and constructive feedback helps students recognize their strengths and weaknesses, fostering responsibility for their learning (Timperley, 2007). While many students appreciated the opportunity to understand their learning gaps through diagnostic assessment, some expressed anxiety about assessment, highlighting the need for a supportive assessment environment (Ronald, 2012). This research is crucial as it can meet the growing need for effective language education in an era of globalization, improve student learning outcomes, support teacher professional

development, and inform education policy. By identifying best practices in customizing teaching to meet various learning needs, this research can improve teaching effectiveness and create a collaborative learning environment where students feel empowered in their educational process.

Meanwhile, previous research has said that diagnostic assessment is crucial in understanding students' abilities and designing appropriate learning (Yolanda, 2024). According to Nissa (2024), diagnostic assessment supports learner-centered learning. Teachers' knowledge of learners' characteristics, needs, and initial understanding is the basis for designing practical assessments. Moreover, Selcuk (2022) states that experienced teachers can identify and implement the stages of diagnostic assessment. Furthermore, previous research shows how to implement diagnostic assessment in improving learning and how diagnostic assessment fits into the curriculum. However, the scope of diagnostic assessment in EFL classrooms from teachers' perspectives is still not widely discussed. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by evaluating teachers' perspectives on diagnostic assessment in EFL classrooms. The role of teachers in this diagnostic assessment is vital; understanding how teachers use this assessment tools makes it easier for them to develop their abilities in this area. This diagnostic assessment provides insight for teachers in adjusting the lesson plans they will deliver. It offers students a clearer understanding of their learning needs.

B. Research Question

A set of research questions have been developed based on the issues discussed earlier. There are two questions that this research aims to answer:

1. What are teachers' perspectives on the use of diagnostic assessment tools in terms of their usefulness in the EFL classroom?
2. How appropriate are the teachers' diagnostic assessment tools in identifying students' abilities and learning needs?

C. Research Purposes

The objectives of this study are based on the research questions above. The aims of this study are:

1. To describe teachers' perspectives on the usefulness of diagnostic assessment tools in the EFL classroom.
2. To analyze the appropriateness of teachers' diagnostic assessment tools in identifying students' abilities and learning needs.

D. Research Significance

1. Theoretical Significances

The theoretical significance of this study regarding teacher's perspectives on the use diagnostic assessments tools for the EFL classroom is its ability to add to existing knowledge. This research assists in creating a clear framework for understanding diagnostic assessment in EFL education and provides insights into effective practices and strategies in language teaching. By highlighting the teacher's perspective, which is often given less attention in the literature, this study enhances the discussion on the role of educators in assessment and its impact on student learning outcomes. In addition, this research improves the understanding of how evaluation and teaching are interconnected, especially regarding lesson planning and teaching strategies. It also examines how these assessments affect student learning in relation to differentiated teaching and personalized learning.

2. Practical Significances

In exploring teacher's perspectives, this study provides excellent insight into how the use of these diagnostic assessments tools are designed to meet students' needs. In terms of practicality, this study has the following significance:

- a. For teachers, conduct evaluations that are aligned with learning objectives, and to identify individual student needs.
- b. For other researchers, this research serves as a source for future studies on assessment methods or curriculum development in education.

E. Research Scope

This current research focuses on teachers' perspectives on the diagnostic assessments tool they use in English as a foreign language (EFL) for senior high schools in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. The participants in this study include teachers with experience teaching and conducting diagnostic assessments in the classroom. The present study examines teachers' perspectives on the use of diagnostic assessments tool, focusing on their perceived purpose and significance within the context of instructional practice. Additionally, the scope of the research is limited to EFL context in formal senior high school settings and does not include primary, vocational, or informal education sectors.

F. Conceptual Framework

This research investigates teachers' perspectives on diagnostic assessment tools they use in EFL classroom. Diagnostic assessment is an approach that attempts to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in learning. It assists teachers in determining students' current understanding of a subject and their competencies, abilities, preferences, and learning styles before instruction begins. Diagnostic assessment is a pre-assessment that enables teachers to identify students' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills prior to instruction (Malika, 2022). Based on Popham (2008), diagnostic assessment is important for identifying student learning needs and informing instructional decisions. In addition, diagnostic assessment helps teachers pinpoint students' current understanding of the subject, competencies, abilities, learning preferences, and styles before teaching begins (Ofodu, 2019). This approach adopts the perspective that diagnostic assessment aims to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' knowledge, thus enabling teachers to create appropriate learning experiences.

Teachers' experience and perspectives are the main factors in the use of diagnostic assessment and play a crucial role in shaping its implementation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Guskey (2002) stated that experienced educators are more likely to engage in reflective practices, allowing them to adapt their assessment methods based on past experiences and student feedback. Moreover, differences in experience can lead to variations in the

effectiveness of diagnostic assessments, as experienced teachers are more adept at creating a supportive learning environment that encourages student engagement and reduces anxiety during assessments (Hattie, 2007). This approach allows them to make more effective diagnostic assessments appropriate to their classroom's context. The framework below highlight developments in teacher's perspective:

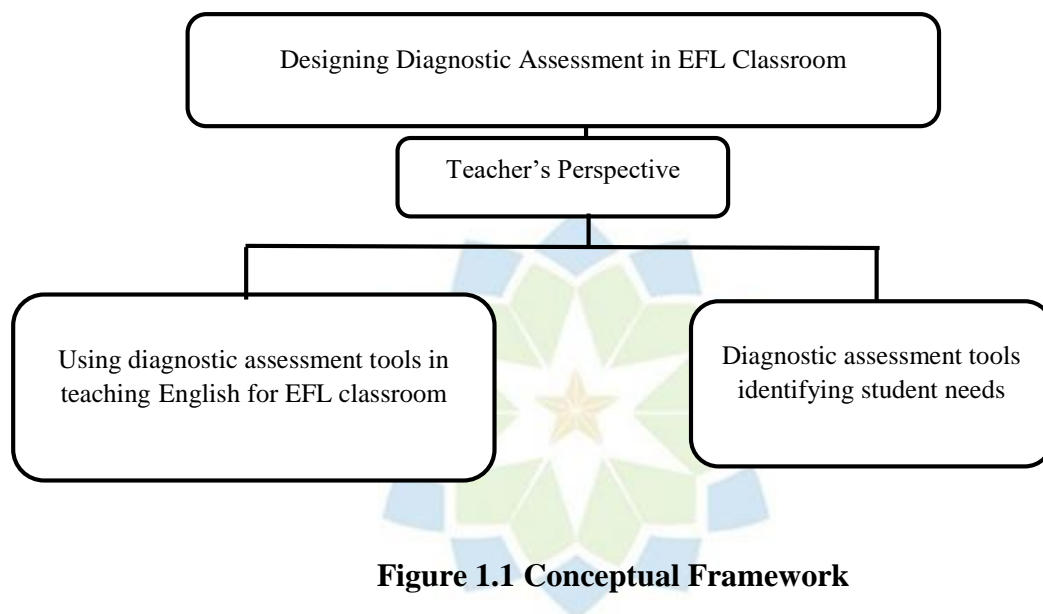


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Diagnostic assessment plays a crucial role in the EFL classroom by identifying students' strengths and weaknesses in language proficiency. According to Hanif (2023), diagnostic tests are essential in English learning within the independent curriculum, as they collect information about students' skills or performance related to specific content or learning materials. The primary purpose of conducting such assessments is to align instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners, ensuring that teaching strategies are aligned with individual learning objectives. Moreover, Brown (2018) stated that teachers prioritize understanding individual students' learning needs through initial assessment, such as placement tests and informal quizzes, to identify proficiency levels and specific areas that need support. Teachers are central to this process, as their expertise and understanding of student dynamics significantly influence the design and effectiveness of this assessment. However, several factors affect the design of diagnostic assessment, and teachers often face challenges such as the need to balance assessment with

instructional design. Hence, addressing these challenges is essential for maximizing the benefits of diagnostic assessment in enhancing language learning outcomes.

G. Previous Research

There are several previous studies related to the topic of current research. Khoirunnisa (2024) conducted teachers' perspectives of the implementation diagnostic assessments in elementary school students centered learning. It is stated diagnostic assessments which are planned and implemented, are essential in supporting learner-centered learning. Teachers' knowledge of learners' characteristics, needs, and initial understanding is necessary for designing practical assessments. In addition, diagnostic assessment evaluation results help teachers plan lessons that meet learners' needs and provide constructive feedback. The methodology used in this study is descriptive qualitative methods through semi-structured interviews with fourth-grade teachers at SDN Sawojajar 6 in Malang city East Java Indonesia.

The second previous study is from a journal Kholid (2024) conducted implementing diagnostic assessment in designing differentiated learning for English language learning at the junior high schools. This study highlights how teachers use various diagnostic assessment tools such as Quizizz, Akupinta.id, and questionnaires to identify students' needs, interests, and readiness. The results show that effective diagnostic assessment supports the development of differentiated learning modules and improves student engagement and learning outcomes. In addition, this journal discusses the process and principles of implementing differentiated learning that suits student diversity, as well as the importance of training and professional development for teachers to optimize teaching strategies that are oriented towards students' individual needs. The methodology used in this research uses qualitative methods with an interview and observation approach collect data related to the implementation of diagnostic assessments and the design of differentiated learning modules. Thus, the subjects of this journal are teachers and students at the primary and secondary school levels involved in the diagnostic assessment process and differentiated learning in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia, particularly in English language learning.

The third, the article written by Nikmard (2019) conducted the effect of diagnostic assessment on EFL learners' performance on selective and productive reading tasks said that diagnostic assessment has a significant effect on the amount of learners' improvement as they can learn different strategies to be used in diverse situations afterward. Moreover, diagnostic assessment assist teachers in identifying the most effective feedback for each student in solving their problems. This journal uses an experimental group through pretest and posttest with participants consisting of 60 elementary-level female EFL students.

The fourth previous study comes from a journal written Novrina (2023) conducted implementation of diagnostic assessment as one of the steps to improve learning in the implementation of the independent curriculum it is said that diagnostic assessment is a form of pre-assessment to find out information about students' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, skills, readiness, interests and learning profiles which then this information can be used to guide learning and curriculum planning. In addition, the implementation of diagnostic assessments is carried out from the planning, implementation, diagnostic analysis, and non-advanced stages. This journal uses a documentary research method to gather information, and the data collection focuses on documents used for diagnostic assessment by teachers, including teaching modules and diagnostic test instruments. The participants in this study consist of official documents from the Ministry of Education and Culture regarding diagnostic assessment and its application, as well as results from other researchers.

Lastly, previous study comes from a journal written by Monika Yolanda (2024) conducted analysis of teacher preparedness in the implementation of diagnostic assessment at SDN Pengampon III Cirebon city states that it is important to note that a firm understanding of the concept of diagnostic assessment will provide a good foundation for designing and implementing assessments in the classroom. This journal uses a qualitative approach, collecting data through written descriptive data and utilizing a questionnaire to determine readiness, with the subjects consisting of two teachers at the school.

The difference between this research and previous research lies in the focus of the research and the methods used. Earlier research focuses on teacher perceptions in implementing diagnostic assessments on elementary school and the effects of diagnostic assessments on students. Meanwhile, this research focuses on the teacher's perspective in designing diagnostic assessments in EFL classrooms. Thus, the difference in methods is that previous research uses documentary studies, phenomenological approaches, and descriptive qualitative methods. In contrast, this research uses a qualitative case study emphasizing a more in-depth exploration of the phenomenon or case.

