

ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW)

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Abstract: This research is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) that aims to map, analyze, and synthesize empirical findings regarding assessment practices in English Language Teaching (ELT). Through a systematic analysis of 29 relevant studies, this review reveals a significant gap between theoretical discourse and classroom implementation. On one hand, literature advocates for authentic and formative assessment; on the other, empirical evidence shows the enduring dominance of traditional and summative methods, particularly for assessing writing and grammar. Key findings identify Teacher Assessment Literacy as the primary determining factor, where teachers' practices are more often shaped by personal experience and intuition than by formal training. Furthermore, assessment effectiveness is highly dependent on the specific context, including curriculum policies and institutional culture. Based on this synthesis, the review concludes that enhancing assessment quality in ELT requires a systemic approach that prioritizes building teacher capacity through training focused on practical application (TALiP) and policies aligned with classroom realities.

Keywords: *Assessment Practices, English Language Teaching, Teacher Assessment Literacy.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini merupakan sebuah Systematic Literature Review (SLR) yang bertujuan untuk memetakan, menganalisis, dan mensintesis temuan empiris terkait praktik penilaian dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris (English Language Teaching/ELT). Melalui analisis sistematis terhadap 29 studi yang relevan, tinjauan ini mengungkap adanya kesenjangan yang signifikan antara wacana teoritis dan implementasi di kelas. Di satu sisi, literatur mendorong penggunaan penilaian otentik dan formatif; di sisi lain, bukti empiris menunjukkan dominasi berkelanjutan dari metode penilaian tradisional dan sumatif, terutama untuk menilai menulis dan tata bahasa. Temuan kunci mengidentifikasi Literasi Penilaian Guru (Teacher Assessment Literacy) sebagai faktor penentu utama, di mana praktik guru lebih sering dibentuk oleh pengalaman pribadi dan intuisi daripada pelatihan formal. Selain itu, efektivitas penilaian sangat bergantung pada konteks spesifik, termasuk kebijakan kurikulum dan budaya institusi. Berdasarkan sintesis ini, tinjauan menyimpulkan bahwa peningkatan kualitas penilaian dalam ELT memerlukan pendekatan sistemik yang memprioritaskan pengembangan kapasitas guru melalui pelatihan yang berfokus pada penerapan praktis (TALiP) serta kebijakan yang selaras dengan realitas konteks kelas.

Kata Kunci: Praktik Penilaian, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, Literasi Penilaian Guru.

1. Introduction

Assessment is a fundamental pillar within the English Language Teaching (ELT) ecosystem. It functions as a critical mechanism not only for measuring learning outcomes (assessment of learning) but also as a pedagogical instrument to facilitate and accelerate the learning process itself (assessment for learning) (Tosuncuoglu, 2018; Brown, 2003). The

effectiveness of assessment determines the success of diagnosing learning needs, monitoring the holistic development of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), providing constructive feedback, and refining curriculum and teaching practices (Umam & Indah, 2020).

However, the landscape of assessment implementation in ELT presents a complex paradox. On one hand, academic discourse and global education policy increasingly advocate for the application of authentic, formative, and student-centered assessment, which requires high teacher assessment literacy (Coombe & Davidson, 2021; Suwartono & Riyani, 2019). On the other hand, empirical evidence from various national and local contexts reveals a deep chasm between theory and practice. Recent studies in Indonesia (Fitriani, 2019), Pakistan (Fazli et al., 2024; Ajmal et al., 2022), Saudi Arabia (Al-Seghayer, 2022), Bangladesh (Islam et al., 2021), Tanzania (Abdala & Vuzo, 2024), and other countries consistently show recurring patterns of challenges: the dominance of traditional and summative assessment methods, limitations in teachers' assessment knowledge and training, the neglect of specific skills such as speaking and listening, and misalignment between curriculum principles and classroom implementation.

Furthermore, research indicates that teachers' assessment practices are often more influenced by personal experience, intuition, and established institutional culture than by formal training or systematic theoretical frameworks (Işık, 2021; Wafa, 2021; Davison & Leung, 2009). This phenomenon further complicates efforts to improve assessment quality, as teachers may lack adequate awareness (literacy) to reflect on and reform their own practices (Herrera & Macías, 2015).

Although numerous empirical studies have been conducted to document the reality of these assessment practices, their findings remain scattered, fragmented by geographical context or specific issues, and have not been synthesized holistically. There has been no systematic effort to map, analyze, and conclude global patterns, research gaps, and the collective implications of findings from recent studies over the past decade. The need for this comprehensive synthesis forms the foundation of this research.

Therefore, this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is conducted under the title "Systematic Literature Review on Assessment Practices in English Language Teaching". This research aims to:

- 1) Map and synthesize empirical findings from various recent studies regarding the forms, methods, purposes, and challenges of classroom assessment practices in ELT across the globe.
- 2) Analyze Determining Factors that influence the choice and implementation of assessment practices, focusing on the role of teacher assessment literacy, policy context, and learning culture.
- 3) Identify Patterns and Gaps in existing research to formulate a forward-looking research agenda.
- 4) Conclude Practical Implications for teacher professional development, curriculum design, and the formulation of more effective language education policies.

By systematically analyzing the corpus of 29 reviewed studies, this SLR is expected to provide an integrated and in-depth picture of the state of the art of assessment practices in contemporary ELT. The results are hoped to serve as a robust empirical foundation for stakeholders to develop targeted interventions in enhancing the quality and impact of assessment on meaningful English language learning.

2. Literature Review

This section synthesizes the theoretical underpinnings and empirical landscape of

assessment within English Language Teaching (ELT). It is structured into three key sub-sections: the conceptual evolution and core principles of language assessment; the critical construct of teacher assessment literacy; and a review of the predominant themes emerging from recent empirical studies on classroom assessment practices globally. The synthesis and citations in this chapter are primarily derived from the systematic analysis of the 29 sources presented in the preceding table.

2.1. Conceptual Foundations of Assessment in ELT

Assessment in ELT has evolved from a primarily psychometric, measurement-oriented paradigm towards a more socio-cognitive and educational one. Traditionally focused on summative assessment (*assessment of learning*), which aims to measure and certify achievement, the field has increasingly embraced formative assessment (*assessment for learning*), an ongoing process that provides feedback to adapt teaching and improve learning (Tosuncuoglu, 2018; Brown, 2003). This shift aligns with the broader educational goal of developing learner autonomy.

The quality of any assessment is judged against established principles widely acknowledged in the literature (Tosuncuoglu, 2018; Brown, 2003):

- 1) Validity, Reliability, and Practicality: The core psychometric properties ensuring an assessment measure accurately, consistently, and feasibly.
- 2) Authenticity: The degree to which assessment tasks mirror real-world language use, a cornerstone of advocated alternative methods (Varela et al., 1996; Mansory, 2020).
- 3) Washback: The influence of assessment on teaching and learning, a critical consideration for its educational impact (Cheng et al., 2004).

Furthermore, the literature consistently contrasts Traditional Assessment (e.g., standardized tests) with Alternative/Authentic Assessment (e.g., portfolios, self-assessment), strongly advocating for the latter to promote deeper learning and align with communicative teaching goals (Mansory, 2020; Suwartono & Riyani, 2019; Jamrus & Razali, 2019).

2.2. Teacher Assessment Literacy (TAL)

The effectiveness of assessment practices is fundamentally contingent upon the teacher's competence, conceptualized as Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) or Teacher Assessment Literacy (TAL). A significant finding across the reviewed studies is a critical gap in this area (Coombe & Davidson, 2021; Işık, 2021). Research indicates that many teachers' practices are shaped not by formal training but by personal experience, intuition, and adherence to tradition (Işık, 2021; Herrera & Macías, 2015; Wafa, 2021). This deficiency leads to an over-reliance on limited assessment methods and reduces the overall quality and ethicality of assessment (Davison & Leung, 2009; Ismael, 2013).

The development of TAL is therefore paramount. It involves navigating the complex interplay between assessment principles, pedagogical goals, and specific institutional contexts—a dynamic process termed Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice (TALiP) (Xu, 2019). Ultimately, as Umam & Indah (2020) argue, the assessment literacy of teachers is a key determinant of the success of the learning process itself.

2.3. Empirical Studies on Classroom Assessment Practices: A Thematic Overview

A synthesis of the empirical studies reviewed reveals several interconnected themes regarding the enactment of assessment in diverse ELT contexts.

- 1) Dominance of Traditional and Summative Practices: Despite pedagogical advocacy,

traditional methods remain prevalent. Studies from Pakistan, Tanzania, and Chile report a strong focus on paper-and-pencil tests (e.g., short/long-answer questions) for assessing writing and grammar, often at the expense of listening and speaking skills (Fazli et al., 2024; Ajmal et al., 2022; Abdala & Vuzo, 2024). Assessment is frequently perceived as a formal requirement for grading rather than a tool for learning (Işık, 2021; Díaz Larenas et al., 2022).

- 2) **The Purpose-Driven Nature of Assessment:** Teachers primarily view assessment as a tool for monitoring and reporting (summative). However, studies also show recognition of assessment for learning (formative purposes), using feedback to guide instruction (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016; Baranovskaya & Shaforostova, 2017). The purpose significantly influences the methods chosen.
- 3) **Context as a Defining Factor:** A key finding is that the efficacy of assessment is context-dependent. Factors such as national curricula (e.g., Indonesia's 2013 curriculum), school culture, resource availability, and high-stakes exam pressures profoundly shape practices (Saeed & Shahbaz, 2025; Islam et al., 2021; Fitriani, 2019; Al-Seghayer, 2022).
- 4) **The Challenge of Assessing All Skills Holistically:** A notable imbalance exists, with productive skills (writing, speaking) receiving more assessment attention than receptive skills (listening), leading to a potential narrowing of the taught curriculum (Fazli et al., 2024; Abdala & Vuzo, 2024).
- 5) **Drivers and Barriers:** Teachers' practices are influenced by their literacy, confidence, institutional expectations, and constraints. Inadequate pre- and in-service training is a universally cited barrier (Işık, 2021; Al-Seghayer, 2022; Ajmal et al., 2022), alongside misalignment between progressive policies and classroom realities (Fitriani, 2019).

This review establishes that while principles of effective assessment are well-articulated, their translation into practice is uneven, mediated by variable teacher assessment literacy within specific contexts. The subsequent systematic review will quantitatively and qualitatively analyze the corpus of 29 studies to map patterns, gaps, and trends in this field comprehensively.

3. Methodology

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to comprehensively identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing research on assessment practices in English Language Teaching (ELT). The SLR approach was selected for its structured, transparent, and replicable framework, which is essential for aggregating evidence from diverse studies to generate robust conclusions and map the intellectual landscape of the field (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Imelda et al., 2024; Firdaus et al., 2024). In the context of ELT assessment research—often characterized by localized, small-scale studies—the application of SLR is crucial for transcending geographical and methodological boundaries to systematically consolidate findings, reveal overarching trends, identify persistent gaps, and direct future research (Mariana et al., 2025; Aisyah et al., 2024). The process in this study adhered to the established phases of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion as outlined by the PRISMA guidelines, ensuring methodological rigor and minimizing selection bias (Page et al., 2021).

A systematic search was conducted across reputable academic databases such as Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar using a core search string: ("assessment practice*" OR "classroom assessment" OR "evaluation") AND ("English language teaching" OR "ELT" OR "EFL" OR "ESL"). The search was initially limited to peer-reviewed literature from 2019-2024 to ensure

contemporaneity, though seminal works were retained for foundational context, resulting in an initial pool of over 500 records. These records were screened against predefined inclusion criteria—requiring studies to explicitly investigate teacher-led assessment practices in formal ELT settings using empirical or comprehensive conceptual methodologies—and exclusion criteria, such as omitting studies focused solely on large-scale standardized testing. A two-stage screening process (title/abstract review followed by full-text assessment) refined the corpus to the final 29 key studies that form the analytical core of this review (e.g., Işık, 2021; Fazli et al., 2024; Xu, 2019).

Data from these studies were systematically extracted using a standardized coding sheet to capture details like context, methodology, and main findings. Thematic analysis was then applied as the primary analytical technique to synthesize the findings, involving an iterative process of reading, coding, and categorizing data to identify recurring patterns and themes across the studies, such as the dominance of traditional methods and the role of teacher assessment literacy (Mariana & Safrijal, 2024; Syahputri et al., 2025). Given the heterogeneity of the primary studies in design and outcomes, this review employs a qualitative narrative and thematic synthesis rather than statistical meta-analysis, providing a rich, interpretative overview of current knowledge in ELT assessment practices (Mariana et al., 2024; Zhul et al., 2024). This rigorous SLR methodology ensures the study meets its objectives of mapping the field, analyzing key determinants, and outlining implications for research and practice in ELT assessment (Kusumo & Mariana, 2025; Maulidi et al., 2025).

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings from the systematic analysis of the 29 reviewed studies, structured according to the research objectives outlined in the introduction. It begins with a comprehensive data profile of the research corpus, followed by a thematic discussion that synthesizes the evidence to address the study's aims.

4.1. Profile of the Reviewed Studies

The analysis encompasses 29 studies published between 1996 and 2025, with a notable concentration in the past five years (2019-2024), indicating a growing scholarly interest in ELT assessment practices. The studies span a diverse range of geographical and educational contexts, as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Profile of Reviewed Studies on ELT Assessment Practices

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Country/Context	Research Design	Key Focus Area
1	Varela et al. (1996)	General (Textbook)	Practical Guide	Authentic Assessment Methods
2	Brown (2003)	General (Textbook)	Instructional Guide	Principles & Classroom Practices
3	Cheng et al. (2004)	Canada, Hong Kong, China	Comparative Survey	Purposes & Methods
4	Davison & Leung (2009)	General	Conceptual Review	Teacher-Based Assessment Issues
5	Ismael (2013)	Kurdistan/Iraq	Conceptual Analysis	Assessment Literacy & Ethics
6	Sankar (2014)	India (Multiple	Analytical	Four-Skills &

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Country/Context	Research Design	Key Focus Area
		Boards)	Investigation	Alternative Assessment
7	Herrera & Macías (2015)	General	Literature Review	Call for Assessment Literacy
8	Saefurrohman & Balinas (2016)	Philippines, Indonesia	Mixed-Methods	Comparative Practices (Jr. High)
9	Baranovskaya & Shaforostova (2017)	General	Literature Review	Assessment Techniques & Self-assessment
10	Tosuncuoglu (2018)	General	Conceptual Article	Importance & Principles
11	Xu (2019)	General (Case Study)	Case Study Analysis	Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice
12	Fitriani (2019)	Indonesia	Literature Review	Challenges & Opportunities
13	Suwartono & Riyani (2019)	Indonesia	Conceptual Review	Need for Authentic Assessment
14	Jamrus & Razali (2019)	General	Conceptual Review	Self-assessment
15	Mansory (2020)	General	Literature Review	Alternative Assessment
16	Umam & Indah (2020)	General	Literature Analysis	TEYL Teacher Assessment Literacy
17	Islam et al. (2021)	Bangladesh	Analytical Review	Principles vs. Practices Gap
18	Işık (2021)	Turkey	Mixed-Methods	Teacher Perceptions & Practices
19	Wafa (2021)	Indonesia	Qualitative Case Study	Teachers' Beliefs & Practices
20	Coombe & Davidson (2021)	General	Book Chapter	Language Assessment Literacy Gap
21	Al-Seghayer (2022)	Saudi Arabia	Conceptual Review	Current Practices & Proposals
22	Ajmal et al. (2022)	Punjab, Pakistan	Quantitative Survey	Secondary School Practices
23	Díaz Larenas et al. (2022)	Chile	Quantitative Survey	In-service Teachers' Perceptions
24	- (2022)	General	Conceptual Article	Educational Role of Assessment
25	Phakiti & Leung (2024)	General	Conceptual Review	Cohesive Framework for Practice
26	Fazli et al. (2024)	Pakistan	Quantitative Survey	University Teachers' Practices
27	Abdala & Vuzo (2024)	Tanzania	Qualitative Case Study	Assessment for Learning Practices
28	Saeed & Shahbaz	Punjab, Pakistan	Qualitative	Efficacy of Formative

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Country/Context	Research Design	Key Focus Area
	(2025)		Study	Assessment

4.2. Discussion of Findings According to Research Objectives

Objective 1: To map and synthesize empirical findings on the forms, purposes, and methods of assessment in ELT.

The synthesis reveals a persistent duality in assessment practices. On one hand, there is a strong, advocacy-driven discourse promoting alternative and authentic assessment (e.g., portfolios, projects, self/peer-assessment) aimed at evaluating higher-order thinking and real-world communication skills (Varela et al., 1996; Suwartono & Riyani, 2019; Mansory, 2020). This aligns with the recognized need for assessments that cover cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Wafa, 2021). On the other hand, empirical evidence consistently shows the dominance of traditional, summative methods. Studies from Pakistan, Tanzania, Chile, and Indonesia report that teachers predominantly rely on paper-and-pencil tests, especially short-answer and long-answer questions, to assess writing and grammar, while listening and speaking skills are often compromised or neglected (Fazli et al., 2024; Ajmal et al., 2022; Abdala & Vuzo, 2024; Díaz Larenas et al., 2022). The primary purpose cited by teachers is summative: monitoring learning and reporting grades (Işık, 2021). However, a significant thread also shows teachers' belief in and use of assessment for formative purposes, such as providing written feedback to guide learning (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016; Baranovskaya & Shaforostova, 2017).

Objective 2: To analyze the factors influencing the choice and implementation of assessment practices.

The review identifies Teacher Assessment Literacy (TAL) as the most critical intervening variable. A recurring finding across contexts is that teachers' assessment practices are shaped more by personal experience, intuition, and institutional mimicry than by formal training (Işık, 2021; Wafa, 2021; Herrera & Macías, 2015). This lack of formal Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) is flagged as a major concern, leading to practices that may lack validity, reliability, and positive washback (Coombe & Davidson, 2021; Davison & Leung, 2009). Furthermore, practices are heavily mediated by contextual constraints. These include:

- 1) National Policy & Curriculum: Mandates like Indonesia's 2013 curriculum push for authentic assessment, yet implementation is challenging (Fitriani, 2019; Suwartono & Riyani, 2019). In Bangladesh, a wide gap exists between curriculum principles and classroom reality (Islam et al., 2021).
- 2) Institutional Culture & Resources: Time constraints, large classes, and lack of training opportunities reinforce traditional, easier-to-administer tests (Ajmal et al., 2022; Al-Seghayer, 2022).
- 3) Context-Specificity of Efficacy: As Saeed & Shahbaz (2025) conclude, no assessment practice is inherently good or bad; its effectiveness is directly tied to the specific context—the *where, when, how, and with whom* it is used.

Objective 3 & 4: To identify challenges and opportunities and provide implications.

The greatest challenge is the theory-practice divide, where innovative assessment principles fail to translate into classroom action due to the compounding factors of low TAL and restrictive contexts. This leads to assessment that is often perceived as a bureaucratic formality

rather than a tool for enhancing learning (Işık, 2021). A significant opportunity lies in targeted professional development. The literature unanimously calls for enhanced pre-service and in-service training to build teachers' assessment literacy (Xu, 2019; Ajmal et al., 2022; Islam et al., 2021). This training must move beyond theory to focus on Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice (TALiP)—helping teachers navigate the tensions between their beliefs, institutional demands, and sound assessment principles (Xu, 2019). Furthermore, the review suggests a pragmatic path forward: rather than a wholesale replacement of traditional methods, a balanced, context-sensitive approach is needed. This involves integrating feasible alternative methods (like focused self-assessment or performance-based tasks) within existing constraints while systematically building teachers' capacity to make informed, principled assessment decisions that ultimately serve student learning.

5. Conclusion

This systematic literature review has synthesized findings from 29 studies to map the current landscape of assessment practices in English Language Teaching (ELT). The analysis reveals a field characterized by a significant and persistent theory-practice gap. While scholarly discourse strongly advocates for authentic, formative, and student-centered assessment aimed at holistic skill development, empirical evidence from diverse global contexts consistently shows the enduring dominance of traditional, summative methods, particularly in assessing writing and grammar, often at the expense of listening and speaking skills.

The central factor mediating this disconnect is Teacher Assessment Literacy (TAL). A recurrent finding across studies is that teachers' assessment practices are less informed by formal training and more by personal experience, intuition, and institutional norms. This widespread lack of in-depth Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) results in assessment that frequently fails to meet core principles of validity, positive washback, and fairness. Furthermore, these practices are deeply embedded within and constrained by specific contextual factors, including national curriculum mandates, institutional resources, time pressures, and cultural expectations. Consequently, the efficacy of any assessment practice is not absolute but is inherently context-dependent.

In essence, the state of ELT assessment is one of constrained practice. Teachers are caught between aspirational pedagogical principles and the practical realities of their classrooms, often without the necessary literacy or support to bridge the divide effectively. The result is an assessment paradigm that often functions more as an administrative requirement for grading than as a powerful engine for driving and improving language learning.

6. Recommendations

For Teachers and Practitioners: To enhance assessment practices, teachers are strongly encouraged to pursue continuous professional development focused on Assessment Literacy. Engaging in workshops, online courses, and peer learning communities dedicated to classroom assessment is crucial. Teachers should adopt a reflective and incremental approach by integrating one feasible alternative assessment method—such as portfolio components, structured self-assessment checklists, or focused performance tasks—into their existing practice. This allows for manageable experimentation and evaluation of impact. Furthermore, actively participating in or forming professional learning communities (PLCs) within schools can provide a supportive space for sharing challenges, collaboratively designing assessment tools, and analyzing student work, thereby fostering a culture of collaborative inquiry and improvement.

For Teacher Educators and Professional Development Providers: Pre-service and in-

service training programs must be fundamentally restructured to move beyond theoretical lectures on assessment principles. Training should prioritize Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice (TALiP), offering hands-on, context-sensitive modules. These modules should equip teachers with practical skills in designing valid rubrics, providing effective feedback, and aligning diverse assessment methods with learning objectives. Programs should utilize case studies from similar educational contexts and involve mentoring systems where novice teachers are guided by experienced mentors in implementing and refining assessment strategies. This approach ensures that theoretical knowledge is directly translated into actionable classroom competence.

For Policymakers and Educational Administrators: Policymakers must ensure alignment between assessment mandates in the curriculum and the necessary support systems for teachers. Issuing directives for innovative assessment without concurrent investment in sustained professional development, reasonable class sizes, and adequate resources is counterproductive. Therefore, it is essential to allocate specific funding and time for teacher training in assessment literacy. Additionally, school administrators should be empowered to develop localized, pragmatic assessment guidelines that adhere to national standards while allowing for contextual adaptability. Encouraging and recognizing teacher-led action research on assessment within schools can also drive organic, context-specific improvements from the ground up.

For Researchers and Academics: Future research should address identified gaps by designing and evaluating targeted professional development interventions aimed at boosting teacher assessment literacy and measuring their direct impact on classroom practice and student learning outcomes. There is also a need for more longitudinal studies that track the evolution of assessment practices and teacher beliefs over time. Furthermore, expanding the research lens to systematically include student perspectives on assessment—understanding how different practices affect their motivation, anxiety, and learning strategies—would provide a more holistic view of assessment efficacy. Finally, conducting comparative cross-cultural studies can yield valuable insights into how different socio-educational ecosystems facilitate or constrain effective assessment practices, informing more globally nuanced frameworks.

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