

Original Paper

Using LMS ‘Elsakti’ as an Effective Assessment Medium for
English EFL Learning

(Case study at the English Department, Faculty of Teacher
Training, Universitas Pancasakti Tegal)

Taufiqulloh^{1*}, Meyga Agustia Nindya¹ & Ihda Rosdiana¹

¹ Faculty of Teacher Training Education, Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, Tegal, Indonesia

* E-mail: taufiqkayla@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study was carried out to seek information on the roles of Elsakti as a medium of assessment in English EFL learning focusing on the opportunities and challenges perceived by EFL learners. It employed a case study research using the interview to obtain in-depth and detailed information from the participants. Six EFL learners of Universitas Pancasakti Tegal were involved in this study conducting telephone interviews. This result reveals that Elsakti has been found to support digitalization where students as well lecturers have higher chances to optimally use digital tools to help them work with assignments and other work more effectively and efficiently. Its features also have essential roles as a medium of assessment in language teaching as they facilitated the creation of a fun learning environment, practicality, automated scoring, and direct feedback. The findings of this study also designate that Elsakti is powerful and potential to be utilized to implement formative assessment more often since it plays important roles in the EFL learning and teaching process, including formative assessment. Meanwhile, the challenges perceived by participating learners in this study were majorly related to the technical problems that the learners did not encounter often or at every meeting.

Keywords

Assessment, EFL, Elsakti, learning management system, medium

1. Introduction

The pandemic situation of COVID in 2019 has created a major transformation in the education context worldwide, including in Indonesia, as there was a shift from prominently conventional teaching and learning to online teaching and learning strategies. Since March 2020, students, parents, teachers, as well as university staff in Indonesia have been grappling with school closures affecting 62.5 million students from pre-primary to higher education. The implementation of online teaching and learning in Indonesia has had a major impact on the progress of education in Indonesia. For instance, there is a significant enhancement in terms of the digitalization of students as well as educators. This arises because of the compulsion to be able to carry out online teaching and learning by integrating technology that supports learning and teaching activities. Digitalization, thus, has been a very widespread influence on everyday lives since its emergence the internet as a form of mass communication, and the widespread use of computers and various kinds of technological devices such as smartphones, laptops, and other gadgets. Besides, digitalization occurs everywhere around the world, hence, the study of digitalization has the potential to cover all aspects of everyday life, including education, and is not limited to the internet or modern communication technologies.

Aside from the enhancement of digital literacy in the educational fields, the implementation of online teaching was hindered by the inequality in educational support facilities in Indonesia. Learners without adaptive teachers, access to devices with adequate features, internet access, mentoring by parents, and facilities for online learning will lose the learning opportunities they would otherwise have in a normal situation. While in fact, the availability of technology has pierced nearly all aspects of primary, secondary, and especially higher education throughout the world. However, Akbari and Pratomo (2022) reported that the integration of technology in Indonesian universities is roundly low. This is indicated by the low usage of the applications of e-learning platforms. To restore post-pandemic learning and avoid further gaps in education, the government of Indonesia is currently publicizing the need for developing digitalization in education. Hence, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has launched three major strategies to accelerate the digital transformation in education; providing more digital infrastructure, setting up a global vision for digital transformation, and establishing a national digital system of education.

In recent times, the various development that has taken place is quite astonishing, especially in the field of technology integrated into the process of learning and teaching activities at schools and even higher education. Several organizations, communities, and individuals have encouraged and offered support in terms of resources in helping educators and teachers after the Covid-19 outbreak to have chances to deliver materials and implement teaching. To be able to facilitate learning and teaching online, schools and higher education institutions not only in Indonesia but also around the world, required teachers and lecturers to integrate online learning tools and platforms such as learning management system (LMS). LMS is an application or web that become a helpful and supporting tool for teachers and educators to conduct online teaching and learning. Various types of LMS have been used by teachers and lecturers

such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, Instructure Canvas, Blackboard, eCollege, Moodle, Dokeos, Olat, Cameli, and Schoology.

Due to the developing number of research that has put great attention on the integration of technology such as LMS in language learning and teaching activities, there is also a growing interest in the use of technology in language assessment in classroom practices (e.g. Deeley, 2018; Dalby & Swan, 2018; Ningsih & Mulyono, 2019; McCallum & Milner, 2020). Deeley (2018) suggested that technology can help teachers in providing feedback such as the use of audio-visual technology that can increase the quality of feedback information and be perceived by students as being more personal. Ningsih and Mulyono (2019) also investigated the EFL teachers' perception of the integration of technology tools for language assessment. The result showed that they are encouraged to use Kahoot! and ZipGrade as digital assessment tools due to their promising merits such as the creation of a fun learning environment, practicality, automated scoring, and direct feedback. In addition, as studied by Dalby and Swan (2018), the integration of technology by using the iPad to administer formative assessment was also found to allow learners to have higher motivation in learning and contribute to learners' effective learning.

In regards to supporting digitalization in education, Universitas Pancasakti Tegal has developed a learning management system named Elsakti. It is a web-based application that becomes a powerful tool to support learning and teaching activities, especially in online contexts. The utilization of Elsakti enables lecturers to check and record attendance lists, post materials which can be in the forms of files, videos, links, or articles, post assignments, open discussions or forums, give scores, and provide feedback. Furthermore, Elsakti is in the form of web-based software focusing on educational purposes that allows interactive online teaching and learning activities between university staff and students that can be accessed everywhere and anytime. Despite the majority of classes has been run offline currently, Elsakti remains beneficial since it is equipped with some features such as managing courses, making a course calendar, administration, and sending and receiving many types of files. More importantly, Elsakti can also be used to conduct assessments since the university staff is enabled to track students' work, share knowledge and comments, give certification and show students' scores and transcripts, and help the implementation of teaching and assessment to be more effective since everything is completely online and does not require paper.

This study is aimed to explore the role of Elsakti as an effective assessment medium for language and teaching activities perceived by Indonesian EFL learners who are currently studying English Education at Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, Indonesia. The results of this study are expected to portray depictions of assessment practices using Elsakti in higher education as well as to provide meaningful suggestions for language assessment in EFL classroom practices.

2. Method

The aim of this study is to explore the voices of Indonesian EFL learners regarding their views on the use of Elsakti in the implementation of assessment during language learning. It employs a case study to obtain in-depth and detailed information about individual perceptions or views through a detailed and in-depth collection of data from multiple sources of information (Yin, 2018). This study describes qualitatively how EFL learners perceived Elsakti to be used as an assessment medium for assessment during classroom practices. The participants of this study were purposively recruited based on several criteria that have been set. First, they were EFL university students who attend face-to-face classes. Second, the class utilizes Elsakti as a medium for learning and teaching, particularly for assessment practices. Third, they experienced the use of Elsakti for more than one semester or approximately four months. Fourth, they agree to be involved in this research. The four aforementioned criteria are intended to be set in order to select the prospective participants of this study.

The researchers have contacted several EFL learners from Universitas Pancasakti Tegal where the researchers are currently teaching. Six EFL learners, three learners from the second year, and three learners from the third year agreed to be the participants in this study. The detailed information of each participant in this study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Background Information of the Participants

| No | Participants | UPS 1 | UPS 2 | UPS 3 | UPS 4 | UPS 5 | UPS 6 |
|----|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | Gender | Male | Female | Male | Female | Female | Female |
| 2 | Major | English | English | English | English | English | English |
| | Education | Education | Education | Education | Education | Education | Education |
| 3 | Semester | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 4 | Province | Central | Central | Central | Central | Central | Central |
| | | Java | Java | Java | Java | Java | Java |

Table 1 illustrates the information of the participating EFL learners who have been interviewed. During the interview, all participants committed that they have experienced the online class and utilized Elsakti. Besides, they are currently coming to face-to-face learning in classrooms, however, the majority of the lecturers remain to use the LMS to assign homework, post materials, as well as to give feedback. The interview was used in this study to collect detailed and in-depth information from participants. Several questions were in the form of open-ended focusing on highlighting the participants' points of view on the opportunities they get when they use Elsakti as a medium of assessment in classes. Besides, they were also asked related the challenges or any barriers that they may encounter when they use Elsakti as a medium of assessment in classes.

To collect the data, the individual interview was conducted by using the telephone ranging from 20 to 25 minutes for each participant, and was carried out based on the participants' convenience in terms of time. The interview was majorly conducted using Bahasa Indonesia to minimize participants' misunderstanding. For the presentation of research findings, the participants' responses were transcribed verbatim and transferred into their English equivalents. The analysis process was focused on characteristics of the language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the interview data, which is referred to as content analysis (Hsieh, 2005). It aimed to organize and elicit meaning from the data collected and capture key thoughts or concepts and draw realistic inferences from it (Hsieh, 2005).

3. Results

The results obtained from the interview are presented below following some key points to address this study's research objectives: 1) EFL learners' views on the opportunities when they use Elsakti as a medium of assessment and 2) EFL learners' views on challenges when they use Elsakti as a medium of assessment. The results of this study will be further presented respectively in the following sections.

3.1 EFL Learners' Views on the Opportunities When They Use Elsakti as a Medium of Assessment

As the starting point, the researcher attempted to grasp the EFL learners' views on the use of formative assessment in the class. In addressing this theme, the question was addressed to ask the learners' views on what opportunities they can get when the lecturers assigned them to use Elsakti to do some projects, homework, group discussions, group presentation, weekly quizzes, and other forms of assessment. The responses obtained from the respondents varied regarding the same question, as highlighted as follows.

"...it is very helpful because it simplifies everything and is efficient, especially I don't have to write manually all the assignments. It also allows me to save money because I don't have to print the assignments." (UPS 1)

"The assignments posted in the LMS help me to know which assignments have been finished and which assignment haven't been finished...If it is not posted in the LMS, I sometimes missed the assignment." (UPS 2)

"I think the use of technology-enhanced is useful in some ways such as its efficiency because it is paperless and not time-consuming. There are also some features which ease me to check and submit the assignment." (UPS 3)

"Elsakti helps me to download the materials easily especially when I lost the file I can re-download the materials. Besides, it is also helpful to record my attendance list. The most important one is that I can see the results of weekly assignment (the score) given by the

lecturer” (UPS 4)

“I can manage my time better because when there are some assignments, the deadline of each assignment appeared so that I can finish the most prioritized ones” (UPS 5)

“We can easily check the agenda for a week in order in the home dashboard, particularly what courses, the schedule, along with the assignments. In addition, we can also upload files such as pdf, ms word, ppt, or photos. When the lecturer assigned us to write online texts, the number of words is not limited so that we can share our ideas freely.” (UPS 6)

The results of interviews with six participants of this study showed that their responses were different, and some were similar, regarding the opportunities they perceived from using Elsakti as a medium of assessment. First, the first participant (UPS 1) admitted that Elsakti can be an effective medium for saving extra energy as well as money. This is because students do not need to write the assignment manually on paper. Hence, as also conveyed by the third participant (UPS 3), it is very helpful to make the learning activities paperless, and thus, not time-consuming. Besides, he further added that utilizing Elsakti is helpful in terms of checking and submitting the work assigned by the lecturers. The responses obtained from the two participants portrayed that Elsakti is an effective medium for assessment because it supports digitalization where students as well as lecturers have higher chances to optimally use digital tools to help them work with assignments and other works more effectively and efficiently.

The second opportunity perceived by participants in this study is related to the function of Elsakti which can help them to identify which assignment has been and has not been finished yet, as stated by the second the fifth participants (UPS 2 and UPS 5). In other words, one of the features of Elsakti can function as a reminder for learners related to schedules and assignments. Therefore, it is very helpful to set the priority regarding the assignment. The third opportunity is related to one of the features of Elsakti to help users to download and post or upload materials easily. Both learners and lecturers can post materials, which can be in the forms of PowerPoint slides, materials in forms of ms word and pdf, links, and others, which can be very helpful because, as mentioned by the fourth and the sixth participants (UPS 4 and UPS 6), the materials can be downloaded many times in case they lost. Moreover, when the learners are assigned to give answers to some questions using online texts, the sixth participant (UPS 6) admitted that they can write their ideas easily and do not have to worry because the numbers of words are unlimited. From the point of view of the lecturers, they can not only set the number of words for online texts to unlimited but also limit the number of words. Hence, when it is needed to limit the number of words, such as for an essay or short story, the feature for limiting the number of words can be set and adjusted.

The next opportunities perceived by the participating learners are related to the convenience to take attendance lists and check the results of assignments. As conveyed by the fourth participant (UPS 4),

she could record her attendance list. Besides, for lecturers, it also must be helpful because it saves more time rather than roll-calling learners one by one. When the lecturers set the attendance list for each meeting, they can get the summary of the attendance list for the whole semester. Hence, it is very efficient to check the presence and absence of each student. The next important point is related to the ease to check the results of assignments posted by the lecturers. The participant (UPS 4) admitted that she could track the progress of learning because she could directly know the score and comments given by the lecturers. Moreover, it must be also helpful for lecturers to give scores because they do not need to write the learners' scores and keep records on a paper or book. At the end of the semester, they are facilitated to collect and get the summary of each learner's scores for weekly assignments, mid-term tests, and even final tests.

3.2 EFL Learners' Views on Challenges When They Use Elsakti as a Medium of Assessment

The second question addressed to participating learners attempted to grasp the EFL learners' views on the challenges they face when they use Elsakti as a medium of assessment. The responses obtained from the respondents varied regarding the same question, as highlighted as follows.

"...the major challenge is related to the unclear instructions of the assignment posted by the lecturer. Some lecturers sometimes posted the assignment on Elsakti but we can't understand what we should do. So, I need to discuss this with the class in the chat group to get an understanding of the instruction." (UPS 1)

"The first is related to the Elsakti in terms of its features. The website is errors sometimes such as being unable to fill the attendance list, unable to load the subjects, unable to submit the assignment, and unable to download the materials. The second is related to internet connectivity in the university. It will be very useful to provide Wi-Fi so that we can utilize the internet connection to support us in finishing the work during the break time on campus." (UPS 2)

"Instead of the complete features, I think the appearance of Elsakti is quite uninteresting compared to other LMS which are more colorful. There is also no notifications so that I sometimes missed the assignments" (UPS 3)

"...it is difficult to log in sometimes and I didn't get any notifications" (UPS 4)

"...every time we open Elsakti, we must log in by filling username and password because it couldn't be set automatic." (UPS 5)

"...in terms of server, when Elsakti is accessed by many students, it was sometimes error. Besides, it should also be notifications so that

every time there is an assignment or attendance list sessions we don't miss them." (UPS 6)

The results of the interview showed that there were several challenges faced by participating EFL learners when they use *Elsakti* as a medium of assessment. The first and the most mentioned challenge is related to the unavailability of notifications as stated by the third and fourth participants (UPS 3 and UPS 4). When being interviewed, both participants conveyed that notifications could help to remind them to do assignments and take attendance lists. This is possible because they have attended classes offline, the learners rely on the explanation and instructions directly from the lecturers. Moreover, some of the participants also admitted that not all lecturers utilize *Elsakti* for teaching and learning. Therefore, they may not often open *Elsakti* since the majority of the classes they attend are offline or face-to-face. Besides, regarding the features of *Elsakti* as a medium of assessment, the second participant (UPS 2) conveyed that *Elsakti* has provided complete and essential features. However, she suggested that in terms of its appearance, *Eksakti* needs improvements because it doesn't look colorful compared to other available LMS.

The next challenge when participants in this study use *Elsakti* as a medium of assessment was related to the unstable website of *Elsakti*. As stated by the second and the sixth participants (UPS 2 and UPS 6), *Elsakti* is error several times. As a result, EFL learners could not able to fill out attendance lists, unable to load courses, unable to submit the assignment, and unable to download materials. In addition to that, the sixth participant (UPS 6) admitted that in terms of the server, when *Elsakti* is accessed by a big number of students at the same time, it was sometimes an error. These kinds of technical errors could be deemed as barriers that the lecturers and learners should encounter to deal with the problems. This might be challenging because if the errors happen several times, it could disrupt the teaching and learning process and take more time to find other alternatives to run the assessment. Another challenge is related to the insufficient wifi provided by the campus as admitted by the second participant (UPS 2). This might be a challenge because an internet connection might be essential during the use of *Elsakti* in classes.

The last challenge perceived by participating EFL learners was related to the unclear instructions from the lecturer as stated by the first participant (UPS 1). The online assignment posted in *Elsakti* was somehow confusing for learners because the class might not get an understanding of what should be done with the assignment. Because all students of Universitas Pancasakti Tegal have attended the face-to-face learning on campus, they may rely on direct explanations about the assignments from the lecturers. On the other hand, the lecturers may forget to give further explanations about what the learners should do with the assignment when the lecturers did not write a detailed explanation in *Elsakti*.

4. Discussions

This study is aimed to explore the role of Elsakti as an effective assessment medium for language and teaching activities perceived by Indonesian EFL learners who are currently studying English Education at Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, Indonesia. The results of this study are expected to portray depictions of assessment practices using Elsakti in higher education as well as to provide meaningful suggestions for language assessment in EFL classroom practices. It focuses on exploring the learners' views on the opportunities and challenges when they use Elsakti as a medium of assessment. The results showed that there were several opportunities perceived by learners when they use Elsakti as a medium of assessment. First, Elsakti is an effective medium for saving extra energy and save more time. Second, Elsakti is helpful in terms of checking and submitting the work assigned by the lecturers. Third, Elsakti can help learners identify which assignment has been and has not been finished yet and function as a reminder for learners related to the schedules. Fourth, Elsakti is helpful for users (both learners and lecturers) to download and upload materials easily which can be in the forms of PowerPoint slides, materials in the forms of ms word and pdf, links, online texts, and others. The last opportunity is related to the convenience to record an attendance list and check the results of assignments.

The responses obtained from the participants revealed several roles of Elsakti as a medium of assessment in language teaching. From the points conveyed by the participants, it can be assumed that Elsakti is an effective medium of assessment that supports digitalization where students as well as lecturers have higher chances to optimally use digital tools to help them work with assignments and other works more effectively and efficiently. The result of this study also corresponds to previous studies that demonstrated a growing interest in the use of technology in language assessment (e.g., Deeley, 2018; Dalby & Swan, 2018; Ningsih & Mulyono, 2019; McCallum & Milner, 2020). Besides being helpful to learners, Elsakti also provides big opportunities for lecturers since they are facilitated to give scores and provide feedback easily. This is in line with Deeley (2018) who suggested that the use of LMS or other technology tools can help teachers to provide feedback such as the use that can increase the quality of feedback information and be perceived by students as being more personal. This is also supported by studies conducted by Ningsih and Mulyono (2019) that investigated the EFL teachers' perception of the integration of LMS for language assessment. The result showed that teachers are facilitated to create a fun learning environment, practicality, automated scoring, and direct feedback.

The findings of this study designate the understanding that the majority of EFL learners under this study have been accustomed to the use of technology in their daily lives which is in line with the study by Cartstens et al. (2021) which suggest that technology enhances many learning opportunities and allows for learners comfort. Besides, this has also clearly brought benefits to the lecturers. There was a strand of research that demonstrated results of studies reporting that the majority of teachers under their studies had positive views on the integration of technology-enhanced implementation formative assessment (Anggeraini, 2018; Brady et al., 2019; Mimirinis, 2019). Besides facilitating learners and

lecturers with its advanced features, Elsakti is also beneficial to support the assessment process in language learning, whether for the implementation of formative or summative assessment. This is because lecturers are facilitated to post the instructions or questions in Elsakti along with detailed information about them. The learners simply can fill in or upload their answers regarding the instructions or questions directly to Elsakti. In addition to being paperless, lecturers are also facilitated to give feedback and scores easily. Hence, Elsakti could be a powerful tool to make the assessment process effective and efficient.

Another point that is worth noting is that Elsakti is the potential to be utilized to implement formative assessment more often since it plays an important role in the EFL learning and teaching process. Formative assessment using Elsakti can be implemented during the course of instruction and learning process whether in or outside the classes to show which aspect of the materials the students have mastered and where remedial work is necessary. The implementation of formative assessment has become the current work of literature that demonstrated the positive impacts on learning outcomes (e.g. McCalum, 2021, Akter & Khan, 2020; Widiastuti & Saukah, 2017). In addition, as studied by Dalby and Swan (2018), the formative assessment that integrated technology was also found to allow learners to have higher motivation in learning and contribute to learners' effective learning. Such circumstances are highly potential to happen because EFL learners are most of the time enforced to independently study, search for materials posted in Elsakti, or read articles uploaded by the lecturers in Elsakti by themselves without being dependent on lecturers during EFL learning in the classrooms.

Aside from the challenges offered by Elsakti as a medium of assessment, some EFL learners also perceived some challenges when they use Elsakti. The findings of this study indicated that there were different challenges admitted by the participating EFL learners. The most frequently mentioned by the EFL learners was related to the features of Elsakti used in the classrooms which comprised technical problems and connectivity as well. This kind of problem typically happens also in the use of other LMS. As studied by Larasati (2022), it was found that technical problems while using LMS appear and similar problems turn out also happen in other institutions during the learning and teaching process. This is somewhat contrary to the results of a study by Lutfiyah et al (2021) which states that technology can assist them in terms of workload efficiency. However, such technical problems, such as when the server is down, unable to log in, and difficulties to post or uploading assignments, do not always appear in every learning and teaching process. Hence, it is suggested for lecturers that when technical problems appear, they can provide some alternatives or use other ways as a medium of assessment. As a result, the learning and teaching process can keep running smoothly.

5. Conclusions

This study was carried out to seek information on the roles of Elsakti as a medium of assessment in language learning focusing on the opportunities and challenges perceived by EFL learners of Universitas Pancasakti Tegal. This study reveals that Elsakti has been found to support digitalization

where students as well lecturers have higher chances to optimally use digital tools to help them work with assignments and other work more effectively and efficiently. Besides, Elsakti is also perceived to be a reminder for EFL learners related to schedules and assignments. This opportunity can be deemed as a reminder as well as helping learners to set the priority regarding the assignment. Another beneficial feature of Elsakti is to help users to download and post or upload materials easily in the forms of PowerPoint slides, ms word, pdf, links, and others which can be downloaded many times in case they are lost. In addition, Elsakti offered learners the convenience to take attendance lists and check the results of assignments. For lecturers, moreover, it also must be helpful because it saves more time rather than roll-calling learners one by one. When the lecturers set the attendance list for each meeting, they can get the summary of the attendance list for the whole semester. Hence, it is very efficient to check the presence and absence of each student. The next important point is related to the ease to check the results of assignments posted by the lecturers. Hence, they could track the progress of learning and directly know the score and comments given by the lecturers. At the end of the semester, lecturers are even facilitated to collect and get the summary of each learner's scores for weekly assignments, mid-term tests, and final tests. Meanwhile, the challenges perceived by participating learners in this study were majorly related to the technical problems that the learners did not encounter often or at every meeting. They are the unavailability of notifications, unstable server, insufficient internet connection, as well as unable to load the LMS.

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