

# Performance-Based Assessment on Esp Learning: A Preliminary Research

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**Abstract.** Performance-based assessment means as the process of acquiring, applying knowledge and skills through a learning process to enhance the ability of students in learning progress. Therefore, the present study is conducted to investigate the preliminary research of performance-based assessment on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning, particularly in writing and speaking skills. Further, this study implements descriptive qualitative method to analyzing, to describe, and to summarize various data collected from observation, interviews, questionnaire, and pre-test to non-English students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang. The findings show that the students never implement performance-based assessment. The results of interview and observation indicate the students are excited to have a performance-based learning to enhance their English skills. Meanwhile, the results of questionnaire show the students' enthusiastic to create learning products of writing and speaking. After given a pre-test of writing and speaking, the students' average score is 68. In conclusion, the students need to have better learning activities by implementing performance-based assessment in English learning.

**Key words:** performance-based assessment; ESP learning; preliminary research.

**How to Cite:** Setiawan, A., Hartono, R., Suwandi, S., Fitriati, S. W. (2021). Performance-Based Assessment on Esp Learning: A Preliminary Research. *ISET: International Conference on Science, Education and Technology*, 7 (1), 44-49.

## INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is defined as teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language for the purpose of using it in a particular domain" (Supri et al., 2019). It is designed based on a special context of the special needs of the learner. Therefore, the learning English in universities should be learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Serevina & Mulyati, 2018). English that is learned at the university level should be in accordance with their scientific field so that it helps them to do their assignments and also helps them when they are in the work's world (Artawijaya & Darma, 2015).

Further, this study focus on the preliminary research of performance-based assessment on ESP learning in the university level. ESP is closely related to needs analysis (Refni Wahyuni & Irawan, 2020). The need analysis is needed so that the learning design is relevant to be implemented for students to help them academically and professionally. Further, ESP has two characteristics namely absolute and variable (Kharisma, 2020). First, absolute means; a) ESP meets the special needs of the learner, b) ESP uses methodologies and learning activities that are in accordance with the field of science that is the goal, and c) ESP refers to grammar,

skills, discourse that are in accordance with the methodology and learning activities. Second, variable means; a) ESP is related or designed for specific purposes, b) in certain learning situations, ESP can use a different methodology from general English, c) ESP is generally designed for adult learners (college level or environment work) but it can also be designed for intermediate-level students, d) ESP is generally designed for students with intermediate and advanced language skills, but can also be designed for learners with beginner language skills.

The explanation above can be concluded that ESP is meant as an approach to English learning based on the goals of the students' needs. Therefore, the application of this approach is in line with the government policy in the field of education which emphasizes the purpose of learning English. The learning purposes are aimed to improve the ability of students to use English, especially for academic and professional career needs that allow them to understand and practice authentic material topics according to their majors, effectively (Salma & Prastikawati, 2021).

In English learning of ESP, performance-based assessment is a set of strategies to help students improving knowledge and English productive skills of writing and speaking through

meaningful real tasks and interesting for students in the learning process (Safitri et al., 2018). It is a model that combines assessment and teaching that will change static situations into dynamic, active and varied (Safitri et al., 2018). Another definition, performance-based assessment is an assessment that includes knowledge and skills in the real world to find out mastery of higher-order cognitive abilities that integrate and demonstrate understanding of various subjects. It means the assessment is carried out throughout learning process. Further, performance-based assessment is an important teaching strategy in the learning process since it explores the potential and assesses students' ability to perform and to express their intellectual capacity (Nur Anix & Fauziyah, 2018).

To implement this assessment in the teaching and learning process, the lecturer needs to prepare for its components, namely assignments and rubrics (Guo et al., 2021). The lecturer gives practical assignments to students based on their abilities and skills. The practical tasks emphasize students on problem solving, communication, and conceptual relationships with real-world problems (Lynch, 2003). Moreover, the assignment can be a project, exhibition, portfolios, discussions, presentations or assignments that require students to show performance capabilities (Hairida & Junanto, 2018). Therefore, the assignments must be fair, unbiased, and measurable for students' abilities. It means that the task is assessed based on certain indicators with a rubric.

Previous studies conducted by (Amelia et al., 2019), there is no rubric in the implementation of performance-based assessment. According to (Septifani et al., 2020), the performance rubric contains the components of an ideal performance and descriptors of each of these components. Rubric is a guide to giving a clear score and agreed upon by the teacher and students (Wahyuni, 2015). The rubric consists of an analytic rubric and a holistic rubric. Analytical rubric is rubric scoring is done by making independent judgments on each separate criteria and holistic rubrics. It is called rubrics with scoring done to give comprehensive judgments about performance that incorporate all criteria in one assessment (Ardiani et al., 2016). By using the rubric, it will improve and monitor students' performance, describe students' strengths and weaknesses. It also accommodates classes that have heterogeneous students to encourage both lecturer and students responsible and aware

toward the learning goals (Nur Anix & Fauziyah, 2018).

Thus, the present study is conducted to investigate the preliminary research of performance-based assessment on ESP learning. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to have students' responses toward the ESP learning at non-English department. Other findings are the discussion on the results of students' scores on pre-test to be the need analysis before implementing performance-based assessment in ESP learning.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Goal**

This study employs descriptive qualitative method since the result of the research will be descriptively analyzed. It was conducted to investigate the preliminary research of performance-based assessment on ESP learning. To conduct this preliminary research, there are several steps include doing observation, giving questionnaire, doing interview, and giving pre-test. Those steps are conducted to collect data of the existing of the implementation of performance-based assessment in ESP learning.

### **Sample and Data Collection**

The research was conducted at non-English department of Universitas of Muhammadiyah Semarang. The sample one class consisted of 56 students. To collect the data, first, the observation checklist was conducted during the teaching and learning process to know the process and situation of learning. Second, questionnaire was given to students to get their response toward the ESP learning. Third, interview was conducted to gain the students' information and expectation in the teaching and learning process. Last, the pre-test was given to students to know their English scores particularly in writing and speaking skills.

### **Analyzing of Data**

The data gathered from observation, questionnaire, interview, and pre-test were analyzed qualitatively. In addition, the percentage result of questionnaire and students' scores were transcribed quantitatively. It was aimed to show the detail information of qualitative data.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This phase presented the result and discussion of the instruments used in the research. The interpretations of data analysis are related to the performance-based assessment on ESP learning.

## Observation

In the observation, it showed that the English lecturer arranged the lesson plan based on the objectives of learning English in the study program. The lesson plan included teaching method to support the learning. On the contrary, during the teaching and learning process, most of students did not pay attention to the topic delivered by the lecturer. They enjoyed to have their own discussion. In addition, the students got difficulties to practice writing and speaking. In writing, they did not know how to start writing their ideas. They could not write one paragraph coherently. To solve their problems, they used online dictionary to complete the text. Meanwhile, in speaking, most of students are not able to arrange words orally. Many of them only produced several words to say something in a conversation. They got confused on how to give questions and deliver responses in English.

Likewise, the lecturer did not give time for students to prepare the writing and speaking. The practices were conducted spontaneously so it made students nervous and they were not ready to practice writing and speaking. After the practices, the lecturer gives evaluation and scores to students. To end the meeting, the students were instructed to improve their writing and speaking before the final test.

## Questionnaire

Based on the result of questionnaire, it indicates that the students were enthusiast to study English in ESP learning. They preferred to study in a group discussion to share ideas with their friends. Other results showed that the students were interested to use performance-based assessment in the learning process. During the learning, they needed more time to have a planned project of writing and speaking. Thus, the results above could be concluded that the students wanted new learning method to help them practicing English skills, particularly writing and speaking. Further, the following was the table of questionnaire result.

**Table 1.** The Percentage Result of Questionnaire

No	Main Indicators	Percentage
1	Students' interest in ESP learning	93
2	Using learning media and online platforms	100
3	Learning in a group discussion	100
4	The implementation of performance-based assessment	97
5	Practicing writing and speaking during the ESP learning	94

According to the table above, first indicator of students' interest in ESP learning got 93%. It indicated that most students enjoyed to study ESP learning. Second indicator of using learning media and online platform got 100%. It was meant that the students preferred to implement learning media and also interested to use online platform to share their English performances. Third indicator of learning in a group discussion got 100%. It showed that the students interested to apply cooperative learning during the learning process. Fourth indicator of the implementation of performance-based assessment got 97% which indicated that they wanted to have new learning method in ESP learning. Last, fifth indicator of practicing writing and speaking during ESP learning got 94%. It was meant that the students were enthusiast to practice the English productive skills during the learning process.

## Interview

The interview session discussed the students' obstacles and preferences in the process of teaching and learning. First, the students explained that they could not write English paragraph completely. They got confused how to start writing by arranging the subject, predicate, object, and adverb. Further, they did not have enough English vocabularies to write many words. Moreover, the students were also not confident to speak in English. They were afraid to produce wrong sentence-patterns. In term of pronunciation, they sometimes got difficulties on how to pronounce words correctly. In addition, they were not fluent to deliver their opinion in a conversation. Lastly, they often did not understand what was said by others, so it made them did pauses during the talk.

Based on the learning obstacles above, the students preferred to have learning method to help them in practicing writing and speaking. Further, they were excited to apply performance-based assessment in the process teaching and learning. They also interested to use learning media and to study in a group discussion. A group discussion helped them to share ideas and gave suggestions to each other.

## Pre-Test

In this session, it showed the results of students' mean scores on practicing writing and speaking. The pre-test was conducted one time for each skill of writing and speaking.

**Table 2.** Students' Score of Pre-Test

English Skill	Students' Mean Score
Writing	66
Speaking	68

Table 2 above showed the mean score of students writing was 66. It indicated that they were not able to write text appropriately. They did not arrange the sentences coherently so the sentences were meaningless. Meanwhile, the results of students' speaking mean score was 68. It was meant that they did not have a good ability in speaking. They got difficulties to deliver ideas in English, so they did many pauses during the conversation.

### Discussion

In the process of teaching and learning, the correlation between teaching method and learning goals should be synchronized, particularly in ESP learning. Based on the results of the observation data, it showed that the ESP learning did not implement performance-based assessment to support the students' English learning improvement. The learning process applied traditional method by explaining material and giving tasks to students. Whereas (Wiyaka, 2020) stated performance-based assessment is an important teaching strategy to develop in the learning process since it explores the potential and assess student talent on performance that challenges gifted students to express intellectual capacity. Moreover, (Gallardo, 2020) mention the given project-task to students takes advantage of thought processes, which are often identified as central differentiation, such as comparing, classifying, induction, deduction, constructing support, abstraction, investigation, problem solving, and discovery. It means that performance-based assessment is considered appropriate to be applied in ESP learning to develop students in critical thinking and creative thinking skills for problem solving skill.

Furthermore, the results of questionnaire concluded that the students were interested in ESP learning process by having a small group discussion. It was aimed to reduce their nervous during the English practices. (Setiawan & Mulyadi, 2021) stated small group discussion is one of the active learning methods where in the learning process students are divided into small groups to solve and discuss several problem topics. Therefore, a learning process through a group discussion strategy prioritizes the pattern of cooperation in small groups so that none of the

students feel that they are the smartest mastering the material. During the group discussion students, students are expected to get used to expressing opinions and working together in developing social skills (Hidayati & Niati, 2019). It concludes that discussion is a scientific conversation conducted by several students to exchange opinions about to seek solutions or answers to a problem.

Meanwhile, the results of interview could mean that most of students were not able to start writing a paragraph coherently. Further, they also faced technical obstacles on practicing speaking. Therefore, to help students in solving their learning problems, (Arhin, 2014) suggested to implement performance-based assessment as a variety of method that has several benefits. First, it provides initial information before learning begins so that lecturers can design learning scenarios appropriately. Second, it provides feedback for both lecturers and students to improve the quality of the learning process. Third, it also provides information on the achievement of certain learning objectives, for example concluding the achievement of English productive skills. It means that during the implementation of performance-based assessment, students are asked to prepare and then demonstrate their understanding and ability the English productive skills in various contexts.

Likewise, the results of students' mean score on their English skills did not achieve the category of good. It concluded that they did not have good understanding and performance in English productive skills. Therefore, the teaching process in ESP learning must have a specification purpose based on the study program. For writing and speaking skills, the implementation of performance-based assessment is needed since it has basic characteristic that students are instructed to demonstrate their ability to create a product in a learning activity. (Lynch, 2003) stated both learning and assessment are not inseparable in the implementation of performance-based assessment. Task-oriented demonstration requires students not only to understand, but also to analyze, to evaluate and to be creative in problem solving learning.

### CONCLUSION

The preliminary research of performance-based assessment on ESP learning was conducted at non-English department in Universitas of Muhammadiyah Semarang. To collect the data, there were several instruments included

observation, questionnaire, interview, and pre-test. The results showed that the students are not able to write text coherently and arrange words orally. Many of them only produced several words to say something in a conversation. They got confused on how to give questions and deliver responses in English. In addition, they were not fluent to deliver their opinion in a conversation. Lastly, they often did not understand what was said by others, so it made them did pauses during the talk. Thus, in ESP learning should implement performance-based assessment.

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