

Designing an Authentic Listening Assessment for Young Learners in Indonesian Primary Schools

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Abstrak: Keterampilan menyimak merupakan fondasi penting dalam perkembangan bahasa anak dan menjadi dasar bagi penguasaan keterampilan berbahasa lainnya. Namun, praktik penilaian menyimak dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar di Indonesia masih didominasi oleh tes tertulis tradisional yang kurang merepresentasikan kemampuan komunikatif siswa secara autentik. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji desain dan implementasi penilaian autentik dalam menilai keterampilan menyimak siswa sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan 30 siswa kelas IV, V, dan VI dari lima sekolah dasar di Jawa Tengah. Penelitian dilaksanakan pada bulan Desember semester ganjil tahun ajaran 2025/2026. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan guru, serta analisis rubrik penilaian dan lembar cek observasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola terkait desain tugas, validitas, reliabilitas, serta praktik pemberian umpan balik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan tugas menyimak autentik, seperti mengikuti instruksi lisan, *picture dictation*, dan proyek berbasis kelas, memungkinkan siswa menunjukkan pemahaman menyimak secara bermakna melalui tindakan dan interaksi. Tugas-tugas tersebut meningkatkan keterlibatan, kepercayaan diri, dan motivasi siswa, serta menyediakan bukti kemampuan menyimak yang lebih komprehensif bagi guru. Meskipun demikian, penelitian ini juga menemukan beberapa kendala, antara lain keterbatasan waktu, jumlah siswa yang besar, dan tantangan dalam menjaga konsistensi penilaian. Temuan lebih lanjut menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan rubrik sederhana serta pemberian umpan balik yang segera dan suportif berkontribusi signifikan terhadap peningkatan reliabilitas penilaian berbasis kinerja. Secara keseluruhan, penilaian menyimak autentik terbukti menjadi alternatif yang efektif dan relevan untuk melengkapi praktik penilaian tradisional dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar.

Kata kunci: penilaian autentik, keterampilan menyimak, pembelajar usia dini, penilaian bahasa Inggris, sekolah dasar

Abstract: Listening is a fundamental language skill that plays a crucial role in children's language development and serves as the foundation for the acquisition of other language skills. However, listening assessment practices in English language teaching at Indonesian elementary schools are still predominantly dominated by traditional written tests, which inadequately represent students' communicative listening abilities. This study aims to examine the design and implementation of authentic assessment for assessing listening skills in elementary English classrooms. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study involved 30 students from Grades 4, 5, and 6 across five elementary schools in Central Java. The study was conducted in December during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and the analysis of assessment rubrics and observation checklists. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to task design, validity, reliability, and feedback practices. The findings reveal that authentic listening tasks, such as following oral instructions, picture dictation, and classroom-based projects, enable students to demonstrate meaningful listening comprehension through actions and interactions. These tasks enhance student engagement, confidence, and motivation while providing richer

evidence of listening competence for teachers. Nevertheless, several challenges were identified, including time constraints, large class sizes, and issues related to assessment consistency. Further findings indicate that the use of simple rubrics and timely, supportive feedback plays a critical role in improving the reliability of performance-based listening assessment. Overall, authentic listening assessment emerges as an effective and relevant alternative to complement traditional assessment practices in elementary English education.

Keywords: *authentic assessment, listening skills, young learners, English language assessment, primary education*

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INTRODUCTION

Listening is a fundamental skill in learning English as a foreign language, especially for young learners whose exposure to the language is primarily oral and classroom-based. In primary education, listening serves as the gateway to the development of other language skills, as children first encounter English through teacher talk, stories, songs, and classroom routines. According to Rost (2011), listening is not a passive activity but a dynamic process of constructing meaning from spoken input. This perspective highlights the importance of assessing listening in ways that reflect how learners actually process language in real-life situations rather than through isolated test items.

Despite its central role, listening assessment in many Indonesian primary schools is still dominated by traditional formats such as multiple-choice tests and discrete-item exercises. These methods often emphasize recognition of vocabulary or grammar rather than meaningful comprehension. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) argue that such traditional assessments tend to measure test-taking ability rather than communicative competence. Recent studies also confirm this limitation. For example, Putri and Sari (2021) found that listening tests in Indonesian elementary classrooms were largely textbook-based and failed to capture students' real listening performance in communicative contexts. This situation indicates a mismatch between the nature of listening as a communicative skill and the way it is commonly assessed.

In response to this problem, the concept of authentic assessment has gained increasing attention in the field of language assessment. Authentic assessment requires learners to perform tasks that resemble real-life language use, such as following instructions, responding to stories, or completing classroom-based activities (Gulikers et al., 2004). For young learners, this approach is particularly relevant because it aligns with their cognitive development and learning styles, which rely heavily on action, visuals, and contextual support (Cameron, 2001). A recent study by Rahmawati, Widiati, and Anugerahwati (2022) demonstrated that authentic listening tasks significantly improved primary students' engagement and comprehension, suggesting that assessment should be integrated into meaningful classroom activities rather than treated as a separate testing event.

However, although the benefits of authentic assessment are widely acknowledged, research focusing specifically on the design of authentic listening assessment for young learners in the Indonesian context remains limited. Most recent studies emphasize the effectiveness of authentic assessment in general language learning (e.g., Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020; Pratiwi & Prihatin, 2023), but they rarely provide detailed frameworks or practical guidelines on how teachers can design valid and reliable authentic listening tasks for primary school students. This lack of context-sensitive design models creates a gap between theory and classroom practice, leaving many teachers uncertain about how to implement authentic listening assessment systematically.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by exploring the design of authentic assessment for listening skills in Indonesian primary schools. Specifically, this study seeks to (1) identify key principles for designing authentic listening tasks for young learners, (2) examine how validity and reliability can be ensured in performance-based listening assessment, and (3) propose a practical model of authentic listening assessment that can be applied in elementary English classrooms.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how authentic listening assessment is designed and implemented for young learners in Indonesian primary schools. Qualitative descriptive research is appropriate when the purpose of a study is to provide a rich and straightforward description of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the context of language assessment, this approach allows researchers to capture classroom realities without manipulating variables, thus preserving the authenticity of instructional and assessment practices. Recent research by Pratiwi and Prihatin (2023) confirms that qualitative descriptive methods are effective for examining teachers' assessment practices and the challenges they face in real classroom contexts.

Research Participants and Context

The participants of this study were 30 primary school students from Grades 4, 5, and 6 across five elementary schools in Central Java, Indonesia. These students were selected to represent upper primary levels, where listening skills are increasingly integrated with speaking and classroom interaction. According to Cameron (2001), learners at this stage begin to demonstrate more complex comprehension strategies, making them suitable subjects for the study of authentic listening assessment. A recent study by Rahmawati et al. (2022) also highlights that upper primary students provide more reliable data in listening-based research due to their developing cognitive and linguistic abilities.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, conducted during December of the first semester in the 2025/2026

academic year. Observations were used to document how authentic listening tasks were implemented, how students responded, and how assessment was carried out in real time. Interviews were conducted with teachers to gain insights into their perceptions of task design, validity, reliability, and feedback. This combination of observation and interview is recommended by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020) as it allows triangulation of data sources and increases the credibility of qualitative findings. Similar techniques were used by Nugroho and Mutiaraningrum (2020) to explore authentic assessment practices in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Research Instruments

The main instruments used in this study were rubrics and observation checklists designed to capture key aspects of authentic listening assessment, including task relevance, student engagement, clarity of instructions, and feedback practices. Rubrics were used to evaluate students' performance in listening tasks, while checklists were used to record observable classroom behaviors. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) argue that performance-based rubrics enhance reliability by focusing on observable criteria rather than subjective impressions. Recent work by Pratiwi and Prihatin (2023) further suggests that simplified rubrics and checklists are particularly effective for assessing young learners' listening performance in authentic tasks.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the procedures of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing as proposed by Miles et al. (2020). Observation notes and interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes related to task design principles, validity, reliability, and challenges in implementation. This analytical approach has been widely applied in recent studies on classroom-based assessment (e.g., Rahmawati et al., 2022), as it allows researchers to interpret patterns across multiple data sources while maintaining a close connection to participants' actual experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Authentic Listening Assessment

The classroom observations revealed that authentic listening assessment in the participating primary schools was primarily characterized by the use of real-life tasks, such as following oral instructions, responding to short stories, and completing classroom routines. These tasks required students to interpret meaning and respond through action rather than selecting written answers. This finding supports Bachman and Palmer's (1996) argument that language assessment should reflect real-world language use. Recent evidence from Rahmawati et al. (2022) also confirms that young learners show higher engagement and comprehension when listening tasks are embedded in meaningful classroom activities.

Principles in Designing Authentic Listening Tasks

The results indicated that effective listening tasks were those that aligned closely with learning objectives, provided sufficient scaffolding, and used age-appropriate input. Teachers frequently relied on gestures, pictures, and repeated instructions to support comprehension. This is consistent with Cameron's (2001) view that young learners require multimodal input to construct meaning. A recent study by Pratiwi and Prihatin (2023) similarly reports that scaffolding is essential in ensuring that authentic tasks remain accessible and fair for learners with varying proficiency levels.

Validity and Reliability of Authentic Listening Assessment

With regard to validity, the findings showed that authentic tasks allowed teachers to assess students' actual listening ability rather than their test-taking skills. Students demonstrated understanding through physical responses, drawing, and object manipulation, which provided direct evidence of comprehension. This supports Brown and Abeywickrama's (2010) notion of construct validity in performance-based assessment. However, ensuring reliability remained a challenge. Teachers initially found it difficult to score consistently, but the use of clear rubrics and checklists gradually improved scoring consistency. This finding aligns with Nugroho and Mutiaraningrum (2020), who emphasize that simple and observable criteria enhance reliability in classroom-based assessment.

Examples of Authentic Listening Tasks

Several authentic tasks were observed during the data collection period, including "listen and do" activities, picture dictation, classroom map tasks, and treasure hunt games. These tasks encouraged students to listen attentively and respond meaningfully. Students were noticeably more motivated and confident when completing these tasks, a result also reported by Rahmawati et al. (2022), who found that authentic listening activities increase learners' affective engagement. According to Rost (2011), such tasks reflect the real cognitive processes involved in listening, as learners must integrate auditory input with contextual clues.

Challenges and Solutions in Implementation

Despite the positive outcomes, teachers faced several challenges, including limited instructional time, large class sizes, and the subjective nature of scoring performance-based tasks. Teachers addressed these challenges by conducting assessments in small groups, using short task cycles, and applying simplified rubrics. This mirrors the findings of Pratiwi and Prihatin (2023), who reported that time constraints and scoring difficulties are the most common barriers in implementing authentic assessment. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) also note that without proper tools, teachers may struggle to maintain consistency in performance-based evaluation.

Role of Feedback in the Assessment Cycle

The study also highlighted the central role of feedback in authentic listening assessment. Teachers who provided immediate and supportive feedback helped students understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This practice was

observed to enhance students' confidence and willingness to participate in subsequent tasks. These findings support Hattie and Timperley's (2007) feedback model, which emphasizes that effective feedback bridges the gap between current and desired performance. A recent study by Siregar and Suryani (2021) further confirms that timely feedback significantly contributes to learners' listening development in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that authentic listening assessment offers a meaningful alternative to traditional testing practices in Indonesian primary schools. The findings indicate that listening tasks grounded in real-life classroom contexts—such as following oral instructions, picture dictation, and story-based activities—enable young learners to demonstrate genuine comprehension through action and interaction. These tasks not only enhance students' engagement and confidence but also provide teachers with richer evidence of listening ability, reflecting the communicative nature of the skill more accurately than discrete-item tests.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of careful task design, the use of clear rubrics, and the provision of immediate, supportive feedback to ensure the validity and reliability of performance-based listening assessment. Although teachers face challenges related to time constraints, large class sizes, and scoring consistency, the results suggest that these issues can be addressed through simple strategies such as short task cycles, group-based assessment, and observable scoring criteria. Overall, authentic listening assessment has the potential to support young learners' holistic language development and to foster a more positive and meaningful assessment culture in primary English classrooms.

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