

Implementation of Performance Assessment in Indonesian Language Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum Era: Challenges and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Performance assessment is one of the key instruments in the Merdeka Curriculum that supports authentic, student-centered learning. However, its implementation in Indonesian language learning still faces significant challenges, ranging from limited teacher competence in developing rubrics, time constraints, to minimal use of technology. This study aims to describe the implementation of performance assessment in Indonesian language learning in the Merdeka Curriculum era, including the challenges faced by teachers and the strategies that can be applied. This study employs a narrative literature review method by analyzing scientific articles published between 2020 and 2025 from sources such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and SINTA. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of content analysis: data reduction, classification, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that performance assessment in Indonesian language learning can be applied to writing, speaking, and literary skills. The main challenges include limited teacher competence in designing assessment instruments, time constraints, subjectivity in assessment, and low digital literacy. Strategies that can be implemented include developing analytical rubrics, utilizing technology-based assessment platforms, integrating AI into feedback, and conducting professional development through teacher learning communities. It is concluded that performance-based assessment is highly relevant to the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and can be optimized through a systematic and technology-supported approach.

Keyword:

performance assessment, Indonesian language learning, Merdeka Curriculum, authentic assessment, rubric

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INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shift in assessment within the world of education continues to evolve alongside growing awareness of the importance of authentic and meaningful assessment. For years, Indonesia's educational assessment system has remained dominated by summative written tests that tend to measure only lower-order cognitive skills. In fact, the demands of the 21st century call for assessment that can measure higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), creativity, and students' ability to apply knowledge in real-world situations ([Nurgiyantoro, 2020](#))

The shift from traditional tests to authentic assessment has become a necessity in contemporary education. Authentic assessment is designed to evaluate students' competencies through meaningful tasks that reflect real-world situations, rather than merely measuring the ability to recall facts ([Arifin, 2022](#)). One of the most relevant forms of authentic assessment is performance assessment, which focuses on both the process and the products students produce while completing real-world tasks. Performance assessment is considered capable of accommodating the diversity of students' abilities while fostering the development of the complex skills needed in the modern era.

The Merdeka Curriculum policy, implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), officially establishes authentic assessment as a central component of the learning process. Through the learning and assessment guidelines published by [Kemendikbudristek \(2022\)](#), teachers are encouraged to use formative and diagnostic assessments centered on student development. The Merdeka Curriculum also emphasizes learning flexibility through the concept of differentiated instruction, which requires assessments capable of adapting to the diversity of students' learning needs and abilities.

In the context of Indonesian language learning, performance-based assessment is highly relevant. Language skills—including reading, writing, speaking, and listening—are fundamentally performative in nature, meaning they can only be validly measured when students actually practice these skills in real-world contexts ([Nurgiyantoro, 2020](#)). Assessing short story writing, oral presentations, group discussions, or poetry dramatizations are concrete examples of performance-based assessments that can comprehensively reveal students' language competencies. ([Darwin, 2023](#)) emphasizes that language learning assessments in the Merdeka Curriculum must be able to integrate process and outcome aspects in a balanced manner.

However, actual conditions in the field indicate that teachers still face various challenges in implementing performance-based assessment. [Yunita and Sukenti \(2024\)](#) found that in Indonesian language instruction at junior high schools, teachers still tend to rely on written tests because they are considered more practical and easier to administer. Difficulties in developing valid and reliable assessment rubrics, limited teaching time, and a lack of specialized training on performance-based assessment are the main obstacles faced by teachers. On the other hand, digital technology – which should help streamline the assessment process – has not yet been optimally utilized by most teachers ([Ningsi et al., 2024](#)).

Although there has been a considerable amount of research on performance assessment, studies that specifically integrate the challenges and strategies for implementing performance assessment in Indonesian language instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum remain limited. Most previous studies were field studies conducted in specific schools and have not provided a comprehensive conceptual synthesis. Few articles have attempted to synthesize these findings to provide a holistic picture of the state of performance assessment implementation within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum policy.

Based on this background, this article aims to describe the implementation of performance-based assessment in Indonesian language instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum, including the challenges faced by teachers and implementation strategies based on a literature review. The results of this study are expected to contribute conceptually to the development of assessment practices that are more authentic, effective, and relevant to the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum.

More specifically, the research questions that form the focus of this study are formulated as follows: (1) How is performance-based assessment implemented for writing, speaking, and literary skills in Indonesian language instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum?; (2) What challenges do teachers face in implementing this performance-based assessment?; and (3) What strategies can be applied to overcome these challenges? These three questions serve as the primary framework for presenting the findings and discussion in the following sections, which sequentially address the concepts, implementation, relevance, challenges, and strategies of performance-based assessment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a narrative literature review approach. This method was chosen because it aligns with the study's objective of conceptual analysis – namely, synthesizing and interpreting various findings from relevant scientific sources to

build a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of performance-based assessment in Indonesian language learning under the Merdeka Curriculum ([Mujiburrahman et al., 2023](#)).

The data sources for this study consist of national and international journal articles obtained through the Google Scholar, Garuda, and SINTA databases. The publication range used is from 2020 to 2025, considering that this period covers the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which has been rolled out gradually since 2021. In addition to journal articles, official policy documents from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) were also used as primary sources regarding assessment regulations within the Merdeka Curriculum.

Data collection was conducted using the documentation technique, namely by identifying and collecting relevant articles based on the following search keywords: performance assessment, Indonesian language learning, the Merdeka Curriculum, authentic assessment, and assessment rubrics. The selected articles met the inclusion criteria, which were: relevance of the topic to performance assessment in Indonesian language learning, journal reputation (SINTA-indexed or internationally recognized), publication years ranging from 2020 to 2025, and availability of the full text. The exclusion criteria included articles outside that timeframe, articles irrelevant to the core topic (e.g., performance-based assessment in subjects other than Indonesian), articles available only as abstracts, and articles published in unindexed or suspected predatory journals. The application of these inclusion and exclusion criteria was intended to ensure transparency and accountability in the source selection process. A total of twenty sources were analyzed in this study, drawn from reputable scientific journals and relevant reference books.

The data analysis technique used was content analysis, with the following stages: (1) data reduction, which involves selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research questions; (2) classification, which involves grouping data into appropriate thematic categories; (3) interpretation, which involves critically analyzing the meaning and relationships among the data; and (4) drawing conclusions, which involves systematically formulating the main findings. The analysis process was conducted iteratively to ensure the depth and consistency of the interpretations.

This study is a literature review that does not directly involve informants, respondents, or human subjects; therefore, no informed consent procedure is required. Nevertheless, this study upholds academic integrity by accurately and honestly citing and referencing all sources in accordance with scientific writing standards, without any manipulation, distortion, or fabrication of data. The source selection process was conducted transparently through the application of the

inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined earlier, to ensure the objectivity and accountability of the study. There were no conflicts of interest – whether financial or non-financial – in the writing of this article.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Performance Assessment

Definition of Performance Assessment

Performance assessment is a form of evaluation that requires students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and attitudes through the completion of tasks or the creation of products that are meaningful and relevant to real-life situations. [Nurgiyantoro \(2020\)](#) defines performance assessment as an evaluation procedure that requires students to display or produce something that can be directly observed and assessed by the teacher. In this context, assessment focuses not only on the final outcome but also on the process students undergo to achieve that outcome.

[Sani \(2021\)](#) asserts that performance assessment is an integral part of authentic assessment. Authentic assessment is designed to evaluate students' competencies in real and meaningful contexts, so that the assessment results can reflect students' actual abilities more validly than conventional written tests. This concept aligns with the views of [Arifin \(2022\)](#), who states that modern learning evaluation must be able to measure competencies holistically, covering the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in an integrated manner.

Characteristics of Performance Assessment

Performance assessment has several characteristics that distinguish it from traditional forms of assessment. First, performance assessment evaluates both the process and the outcome simultaneously. Teachers do not merely assess the final product produced by students but also observe how students carry out the task. Second, performance assessment is based on authentic tasks designed to reflect activities relevant to daily life or professional contexts. Third, performance-based assessment measures complex skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—skills that cannot be measured through multiple-choice tests ([Kemendikbudristek, 2022](#)).

Fourth, performance assessments use evaluation rubrics as the primary tool to ensure objectivity and consistency in evaluation. Rubrics provide clear criteria and indicators so that evaluations can be conducted in a structured and accountable manner. [Ma'arif et al. \(2025\)](#) emphasize the importance of analytical rubrics in

assessing writing skills in elementary school as a tool capable of providing specific and detailed feedback to students.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Performance-Based Assessment

Performance-based assessment has several significant advantages. Its authentic nature allows the assessment to reflect students' actual ability to apply knowledge. The contextual nature of performance-based assessment motivates students more because the tasks assigned feel meaningful and relevant. Furthermore, performance-based assessment fosters the development of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) because students are required to analyze, evaluate, and create something, rather than merely recalling facts ([Sani, 2021](#); [Ayuni et al., 2022](#)).

On the other hand, performance-based assessments also have a number of drawbacks that need to be anticipated. Their implementation takes longer than written tests, especially when the number of students in a class is quite large. The risk of subjectivity in assessment also poses a challenge, given that teachers may have different interpretations of the same criteria. The complexity of assessment – including the need to develop valid and reliable instruments – also poses a barrier for teachers who have not received adequate training ([Hakim & Purba, 2023](#)).

Implementation of Performance Assessment in Indonesian Language Learning

Performance-Based Assessment of Writing Skills

Writing skills are one of the main domains in Indonesian language learning that are well-suited for assessment through performance-based assessment. [Priyanto \(2023\)](#) and [Hakim & Purba \(2023\)](#), in their research on the application of performance-based assessment in expository text writing instruction, found that students demonstrated a significant improvement in the quality of their writing when the writing process was assessed in stages using an analytical rubric. Assessment is not limited to the final product but also includes the planning, drafting, revision, and publication stages.

Writing assignments commonly used in performance-based assessment include writing short stories, argumentative texts, descriptive texts, and various other text types appropriate for the educational level. [Aulia et al. \(2024\)](#) in their study on the reconstruction of formative assessment in descriptive text teaching modules demonstrated that performance-based formative assessment in the Merdeka Belajar era can significantly improve the quality of the learning process for junior high school students. Collaborative writing projects, such as creating a class magazine or a short story anthology, are also examples of performance-based assessments that integrate various aspects of language proficiency.

Performance-Based Assessment of Speaking Skills

Speaking skills are the most natural domain for performance-based assessment, given their inherently performative nature. Various forms of speaking tasks that can be assessed through performance-based assessment include presentations, persuasive speeches, group discussions, and storytelling activities. Assessment covers various aspects such as fluency, accuracy of language structure, use of intonation and gestures, and the ability to respond to audience questions.

In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, performance-based assessment of speaking skills is increasingly taking on a strategic role. [Febianti and Ariffin \(2025\)](#) demonstrate that text-based Indonesian language learning using a scientific approach requires students to actively present and discuss the texts they study, making performance-based assessment of speaking an integral component of the learning process. A comprehensive speaking assessment rubric should include indicators for content, organization, fluency, language, and gestures or eye contact.

Performance Assessment in Literature Instruction

Literature instruction in Indonesian offers rich opportunities for implementing performance-based assessment. Tasks such as poetry dramatization, poetry musicalization, and drama performances require assessments that cannot be conducted through written tests alone. Performance-based assessment in literature education requires students to interpret, internalize, and express literary works through tangible performances that can be observed by teachers and peers.

[Susanti Try Apriliani et al. \(2023\)](#), in their study of the Merdeka Curriculum's assessment practices in the textbook *Cerdas Cergas Berbahasa dan Bersastra Indonesia*, found that the textbook already includes various forms of performance-based assessment for literature education, although its implementation in the classroom still needs improvement. Performance-based assessment in literature education can also integrate the values of the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly the dimensions of faith, global diversity, cooperation, and critical thinking.

The Use of Rubrics in Performance-Based Assessment

Rubrics are essential tools for conducting valid and reliable performance assessments. There are two types of rubrics commonly used in Indonesian language instruction: holistic rubrics and analytical rubrics. Holistic rubrics provide an overall assessment of the quality of student performance without detailing each aspect separately, making them more practical but less informative for students. In contrast, analytical rubrics evaluate each aspect separately with clear descriptors for each performance level.

[Ma'arif et al. \(2025\)](#), in a study developing an analytic rubric for assessing narrative writing skills, found that an analytic rubric developed with clear indicators and measurable criteria can enhance the objectivity of assessment and provide more meaningful feedback to students. The results of this study confirm that investing time in developing high-quality rubrics is a strategic step that can improve the overall effectiveness of performance assessment.

The Relevance of Performance Assessment to the Merdeka Curriculum

Authentic Assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum explicitly positions authentic assessment as a key pillar of the evaluation system. [Kemendikbudristek \(2022\)](#), in its Learning and Assessment Guidelines, emphasizes that assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum must be holistic, continuous, and oriented toward the development of students' competencies. Student-centered learning –which is the essence of the Merdeka Curriculum–requires assessments capable of comprehensively revealing students' learning processes and potential, rather than merely measuring cognitive achievements at the end of the semester.

[Mujiburrahman et al. \(2023\)](#) emphasize that learning assessments in the Merdeka Curriculum encompass three main types: diagnostic assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments. Performance-based assessments can be applied to all three types of assessment in accordance with learning objectives and context. [Kemendikbudristek \(2023\)](#) has also published guidelines for end-of-year and end-of-level summative assessments that accommodate the use of various forms of authentic assessment, including performance-based assessments.

Strengthening HOTS and the Pancasila Student Profile

One of the main objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum is to shape the Pancasila Student Profile, which encompasses six dimensions: faith and piety toward God the Almighty, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity. Performance-based assessments align closely with efforts to develop the Pancasila Student Profile because authentic performance tasks naturally encourage students to think critically, innovate, and collaborate.

[Ainun Oktaviani et al. \(2024\)](#), in their study on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum on Indonesian language learning outcomes, found that a learning approach oriented toward the Pancasila Student Profile positively contributes to improving students' language proficiency. Performance assessments designed to measure the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile—such as

collaborative tasks or creative projects—can develop the 21st-century skills that students need.

Differentiated Instruction

The concept of differentiated instruction—one of the hallmarks of the Merdeka Curriculum—requires flexibility in the implementation of assessments. Students in a single class have varying ability levels, learning styles, and learning paces; therefore, a one-size-fits-all assessment cannot optimally accommodate this diversity. Performance-based assessment, with its flexibility in adapting task types and evaluation criteria, offers a relevant solution for the context of differentiated learning.

[Adnyana \(2023\)](#), in his study on Indonesian language assessment within the Merdeka Curriculum, argues that assessment oriented toward individual learning needs (personalized assessment) represents a direction for assessment development that is highly aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Through differentiated performance-based assessment, teachers can provide opportunities for each student to demonstrate their competencies in accordance with their individual abilities and interests, thereby allowing each student's potential to develop optimally.

Challenges in Implementing Performance-Based Assessment

Teacher Competencies

Teachers' competencies in designing and conducting performance-based assessments are the most critical factor in the success of their implementation. [Yunita and Sukenti \(2024\)](#), in their study on the implementation of performance-based assessment in Indonesian language instruction at junior high schools, found that most teachers struggled to develop valid performance assessment instruments, particularly in determining indicators and descriptors on assessment rubrics. A lack of understanding regarding the differences between holistic and analytic rubrics, as well as how to assign weights to each assessment aspect, is a common obstacle encountered in the field.

[Nathasia and Abadi \(2022\)](#), in their analysis of Indonesian language teachers' strategies for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMKN 11 Malang, found that teachers require intensive and ongoing guidance to develop assessment instruments that meet the requirements of the Merdeka Curriculum. The lack of training focused on the development of performance-based assessments, particularly in the context of Indonesian language learning, is one of the root causes of the problem that needs to be addressed immediately.

Time Constraints

Time constraints are a practical challenge frequently cited by teachers as a major obstacle to conducting performance-based assessments. A comprehensive performance assessment process takes significantly longer than written tests, as teachers must observe and evaluate each student individually while they complete tasks. [Eny Sihite et al. \(2025\)](#) in their study of rural schools found that limited instructional time is one of the biggest obstacles to the overall implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, including in the area of assessment.

With a relatively large number of students in a single class – often reaching 30 to 40 students – conducting individual performance assessments during a single learning session becomes extremely challenging. [Ningsi et al. \(2024\)](#) identified that efficient time management in conducting performance assessments requires specific strategies, such as group rotation, peer assessment, or the use of video recordings as assessment materials that can be reviewed outside of class hours.

Subjectivity in Assessment

The risk of subjectivity in performance assessments is a common concern among educators. Differences in interpretation among teachers regarding the same criteria can result in varying scores for performances that are actually equivalent. This can lead to inconsistencies in assessment, which ultimately impacts the fairness and validity of the assessment. [Ayuni et al. \(2022\)](#), in their study on the application of authentic assessment for writing anecdotal texts, found that teachers need to calibrate their assessments periodically to ensure consistency in the use of rubrics.

Teachers' Digital Literacy

In the digital age, the use of technology in conducting performance-based assessments opens up tremendous opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of assessment. However, teachers' lack of digital literacy poses a significant obstacle. [Ningsi et al. \(2024\)](#) note that many teachers have not yet taken advantage of available digital assessment applications and platforms, so the potential of technology to facilitate the implementation of performance-based assessments has not been fully realized.

Strategies for Implementing Performance Assessments

Development of Analytical Rubrics

The development of comprehensive analytical rubrics is the most fundamental strategic step in optimizing the implementation of performance assessments. A good analytical rubric must have clear indicators, measurable criteria, and descriptors that

clearly distinguish one performance level from another. [Ma'arif et al. \(2025\)](#) recommend that rubric development be conducted collaboratively among teachers and involve assessment experts to ensure its validity and reliability.

The systematic process of developing a rubric includes the following steps: (1) identifying the competencies to be assessed based on Learning Outcomes (LO) and Learning Objectives (LO); (2) determining the aspects or dimensions of assessment; (3) establishing a scale and performance levels; (4) writing descriptors for each level; and (5) piloting and revising the rubric based on feedback from other teachers and students. Rubrics developed through a standardized process will be far more effective in minimizing assessment subjectivity.

Utilization of Technology and Digital Assessment

The use of information and communication technology offers concrete solutions to overcome time constraints and improve the efficiency of performance assessment implementation. Various digital platforms such as Google Classroom, Quizizz, Google Forms, and e-portfolios can be integrated into the assessment system to facilitate the documentation, collection, and analysis of assessment data. [Febianti and Ariffin \(2025\)](#) emphasize that the use of technology in text-based Indonesian language learning can improve the quality and efficiency of both the learning process and the assessment.

E-portfolios, in particular, are a highly relevant innovation in the context of Indonesian language performance assessment. Through e-portfolios, students can systematically document the process and development of their language skills over time, allowing teachers to assess them based on concrete evidence of authentic learning progress. [Darwin \(2023\)](#) argues that portfolio-based assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum provides a more comprehensive picture of students' language competency development compared to conventional tests.

Integration of AI in Assessment

Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) open up new opportunities for more efficient and personalized performance assessments. AI can help teachers provide automated feedback on students' writing, analyze patterns of language errors, and offer personalized learning recommendations. AI systems for automated essay scoring (AES) and speech analysis have begun to be developed and implemented in various educational contexts.

However, the integration of AI into assessment also presents its own challenges, including issues of assessment accuracy, limitations in capturing the nuances of creativity and expression, and concerns about student data privacy.

Teachers continue to play a central role as the final decision-makers in assessment, while AI serves as a tool that can enhance the efficiency and consistency of the assessment process. Teachers' ability to critically understand and utilize AI has become a new competency that needs to be developed.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Enhancing teachers' competencies in performance assessment is the most fundamental long-term strategy. Training programs focused on developing assessment instruments, using rubrics, and leveraging assessment technology need to be conducted systematically and continuously. [Eny Sihite et al. \(2025\)](#) and [Nathasia & Abadi \(2022\)](#) all emphasize the importance of training and mentoring that is contextual and aligned with the real-world needs of teachers in the field.

Teacher Learning Communities (TLC) or Learning Communities (Kombel), as promoted in the Merdeka Curriculum, serve as effective platforms for continuous professional development. Through Kombel, teachers can share experiences, collaborate on developing assessment instruments, and engage in collective reflection to improve the quality of assessment practices in their respective classrooms. [Ningsi et al. \(2024\)](#) affirm that professional teacher communities are one of the most effective strategies for addressing the various challenges of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review conducted, it can be concluded that performance-based assessment is a highly relevant and strategic assessment tool in Indonesian language learning in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum. This relevance lies in the alignment between the principles of performance assessment and the values promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum, including student-centered learning, the development of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), the formation of the Pancasila Student Profile, and differentiated instruction.

The implementation of performance-based assessment in Indonesian language instruction can be realized through various forms of authentic tasks in the skills of writing, speaking, and literary appreciation. The use of rubrics—both holistic and analytical—is a key instrument that must be systematically developed to ensure the objectivity and validity of assessments. However, the implementation of performance-based assessment still faces several major challenges, namely limited teacher competence in developing assessment instruments, time constraints, the risk of subjective evaluation, and low digital literacy among teachers.

To address these challenges, several implementation strategies that can be

applied include: the development of comprehensive analytical rubrics, the utilization of digital assessment technology platforms, the integration of AI as a tool for providing feedback, and the organization of ongoing teacher training and learning communities.

In practical terms, the findings of this study have several implications for various education stakeholders. For teachers, these findings can serve as a reference for developing more structured analytical rubrics and selecting performance assessment strategies that align with the characteristics of the writing, speaking, and literary skills being evaluated. For schools and principals, these findings underscore the importance of internal policies that support the regular implementation of performance assessment training and the provision of technological tools to support assessment. For the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), the results of this study can serve as input for refining assessment guidelines, particularly regarding the development of rubric instruments and the use of digital technology that is more practical for teachers in the field. As for Teacher Education Institutions (LPTK), these findings suggest the need for a more in-depth integration of performance assessment materials into the curriculum's for prospective teachers, so that authentic assessment competencies are developed from the very start of their professional education.

In addition to these practical implications, this study also opens up several avenues for further research that need to be explored. First, experimental research is needed to empirically test the effectiveness of analytical rubrics compared to holistic rubrics in terms of the objectivity and validity of language skills assessment. Second, longitudinal studies are important to uncover the long-term impact of performance-based assessment on students' learning outcomes and language skills development. Third, given the potential as well as the challenges of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into assessment – which have been touched upon in this study – future research should specifically examine the effectiveness, accuracy, and ethical implications of using AI in Indonesian language performance assessment. Fourth, further research is also recommended to empirically examine the effectiveness of these various implementation strategies in diverse school contexts, including comparative studies between urban and rural schools, particularly in remote areas with limited technological infrastructure.

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