

Indonesian EFL lecturers' positive perceptions and adaptive strategies in implementing authentic assessment for sustainable education: Mixed-methods study

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Abstract

Authentic assessment (AuA) is emerging as an alternative that has its own appeal, especially in the context of sustainability education. Although numerous studies have investigated how authentic assessment is perceived and practiced in EFL higher education within Indonesia, studies which connects AuA practices with sustainability education are still underrepresented. AuA practices can promote students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills and is increasingly recognized for its potentials to promote meaningful and effective learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. This study investigates two key questions: (1) how EFL lecturers perceive and address the challenges of implementing authentic assessment in sustainability education; and (2) what instructional strategies lecturers can use to implement authentic assessment in sustainability education. Using a mixed-methods approach, survey data and follow-up interviews were collected from 30 English lecturers of various universities in Indonesia. The quantitative data shows that lecturers view authentic assessment as a relevant and effective tool. However, the data highlighted two key challenges: limited time and pressure from institutional expectations. Qualitative results further reveal how lecturers design assessment tasks, reflect on their practice, and integrate sustainability values into their teaching, while pointing to the need for institutional support. Overall, the study highlights lecturers' positive perceptions and emphasizes the importance of external support to ensure authentic assessment effectively promotes context-relevant learning and sustainability education.

Keywords: authentic assessment, EFL lectures, sustainability education, higher education

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In an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world, education must cultivate learners who are not only linguistically competent but also capable of critical thinking, creativity, and social responsibility. This global demand has prompted a pedagogical shift in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education towards assessment approaches that are more authentic, meaningful, and transformative. Authentic assessment (AuA) has thus gained prominence as a pedagogical approach designed to foster twenty-first-century skills such as critical inquiry, real-world problem-solving, and active participation in learning (Leong & Rethinasamy, 2023; Pinner, 2022).

Traditionally, assessment has been viewed as a final stage of teaching – a means of measuring learning outcomes. However, contemporary scholarship recognises that assessment shapes the entire teaching-learning process and significantly influences its quality and direction (Yan & Cheng, 2015). In communicative language learning contexts, where creativity, collaboration, and intercultural understanding are central, conventional assessment methods often fail to represent learners' abilities comprehensively (Rahimi & Zhang, 2015). Authentic assessment, in contrast, offers performance-based, learner-centred approaches such as portfolios, projects, and real-life tasks that align with the competencies demanded by twenty-first-century education (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021; Wals & Corcoran, 2023).

Higher education institutions are now challenged to produce graduates who not only demonstrate linguistic proficiency but also exhibit critical thinking, collaboration, and an awareness of sustainability. Consequently, authentic assessment has emerged as a viable and effective alternative to traditional testing methods. Unlike standardised examinations or rote learning, AuA emphasises performance-based evaluation through meaningful tasks that mirror real-world contexts (Sokhanvar et al., 2021). This approach aligns naturally with the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which aims to cultivate learners capable of making informed decisions, assuming environmental responsibility, and contributing to social justice (Rieckmann, 2017). Through authentic assessment, students not only demonstrate language competence but also develop values, attitudes, and awareness related to sustainability in their communities.

Authentic assessment requires learners to apply their knowledge and skills in practical, situated contexts. Unlike traditional assessment methods that often isolate language components, AuA promotes the meaningful use of language

through activities such as oral presentations, reflective writing, portfolios, and problem-solving projects (Sokhanvar et al., 2021). In EFL higher education, these tasks provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate communicative competence in authentic academic, professional, and intercultural situations. Despite its pedagogical benefits, however, implementing AuA remains challenging. Previous studies identify barriers such as time constraints, large class sizes, low assessment literacy, and insufficient institutional support (Rahimi & Zhang, 2015; Vong & Wong, 2021). Furthermore, although educational policy increasingly advocates innovative assessment, many lecturers still lack professional development and practical guidance in applying such methods (Yan & Cheng, 2015; Leong & Rethinasamy, 2023). These limitations often hinder the integration of authentic assessment with sustainability-oriented learning.

Importantly, AuA offers educators a powerful framework to embed sustainability principles within EFL instruction. By designing tasks that require learners to engage critically with real-world challenges, communicate solutions, and reflect on their learning processes, lecturers can connect language learning to broader goals of sustainable development (Pinner, 2022). Nevertheless, despite growing policy support and scholarly discussion, the implementation of authentic assessment in higher education—particularly in EFL teaching—remains uneven and underexplored (Bolarinwa & Aremu, 2020). Many educators continue to rely on traditional evaluation forms such as written examinations or grammar-based tests, which have limited impact on developing the skills and dispositions necessary for sustainable learning (Alemani, 2024).

Multiple factors contribute to this uneven adoption. These include limited assessment literacy among lecturers, insufficient training, lack of institutional and technological support, large student cohorts, and resistance to pedagogical change (Vong, 2021). Although policy documents often highlight the importance of authentic assessment, lecturers rarely receive structured support in designing and integrating such tasks effectively (Gulikers & Baartman, 2017; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024). Furthermore, rigid curriculum structures and summative testing traditions continue to prioritise accountability over formative, student-centred learning (Ismail et al., 2022). As Bourn (2016) notes, educators must develop forms of assessment that go beyond linguistic measurement to promote global citizenship, cross-cultural communication, and critical reflection. Achieving this transformation requires innovative, adaptive, and context-sensitive assessment practices supported by institutional structures that encourage experimentation and reflective pedagogy.

Despite increasing scholarly interest, empirical research examining how EFL lecturers in higher education design and implement authentic assessment in the context of sustainability remains limited. This gap—particularly regarding strategies that address lecturers' challenges in enacting AuA effectively and sustainably—constitutes the central focus of the present study. While theoretical and policy frameworks for authentic assessment in EFL are well documented,

little is known about how lecturers operationalise these approaches within higher education, especially in Indonesia. Previous studies have largely focused either on EFL assessment in general (Rahimi & Zhang, 2015) or on sustainability education as a separate field (Rieckmann, 2017; Pinner, 2022). This research therefore makes a novel contribution by explicitly integrating AuA and ESD within the Indonesian higher education context to explore lecturers' perceptions, instructional strategies, and challenges.

Addressing this gap is vital because lecturers serve as the principal agents of curriculum enactment. Without effective strategies and institutional support, attempts to integrate authentic assessment will remain inconsistent. In an era that demands not only linguistic competence but also higher-order thinking and responsible citizenship (Manjet, 2019), understanding lecturers' experiences and pedagogical strategies becomes essential. This study thus seeks to provide a comprehensive and practice-oriented understanding of how authentic assessment can be meaningfully implemented to advance sustainability-oriented language education.

Accordingly, the study aims to investigate EFL lecturers' perceptions, implementation strategies, and the challenges they face when applying authentic assessment within continuing education. Specifically, it addresses two key research questions: (1) how EFL lecturers perceive and address the challenges of implementing authentic assessment in sustainability education; and (2) what instructional strategies lecturers employ to implement authentic assessment in sustainability education.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to explore how EFL lecturers implement and address challenges in applying authentic assessment (AuA) within sustainability education. Integrating both data strands strengthened the study statistically and descriptively, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. By merging quantitative and qualitative insights, the research aimed not only to measure but also to interpret how EFL lecturers enact authentic assessment to advance sustainability-oriented education (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

This research was aligned with one of the sub-targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely "increasing the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills for future roles in society" (Rieckmann, 2017). Quantitative data were used to identify general trends, whereas qualitative data offered deeper insights into lecturers' strategies, experiences, and contextual challenges.

Participants

Questionnaires were distributed to EFL lecturers from nine universities across Indonesia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who had previously used, or were currently using, authentic assessment in their teaching (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This approach ensured that data were directly relevant to the research focus.

A total of 30 lecturers completed the questionnaire. Subsequently, five lecturers were invited for follow-up semi-structured interviews based on their expressed willingness to participate. This combination of quantitative and qualitative data provided both breadth and depth in understanding lecturers' perspectives and practices (Pregoner, 2024).

The diversity of participating institutions, lecturer qualifications, and teaching experiences offered a valuable cross-section of the Indonesian EFL higher education context. This variety also allowed for a nuanced understanding of how contextual factors—such as institutional support, geographic disparities, and professional development opportunities—influence lecturers' perceptions and implementation of authentic assessment for sustainability education.

Demography

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 30 EFL lecturers who participated in this study, representing nine higher education institutions across different Indonesian regions. The distribution highlights a diverse participant profile in terms of gender, academic qualification, and teaching experience. Notably, a considerable proportion of participants are female lecturers holding doctoral degrees, indicating a strong representation of experienced academics actively engaged in professional and pedagogical development. Most lecturers reported between six and ten years of teaching experience, suggesting that the participants possess sufficient classroom exposure to provide informed insights into assessment practices.

Table 1. Participants Demographic Characteristics

Institutions	Gender		Education		T. E.	
Institut Teknologi Sepuluh November Surabaya	M	1	S2	2	<5 Y	2
	F	2	S3	1	6 - 10 Y	1
					>10 Y	0
Universitas Negeri Surabaya	M	3	S2	2	<5 Y	1
	F	2	S3	3	6 - 10 Y	3
					>10 Y	1
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya	M	2	S2	2	<5 Y	0
	F	1	S3	1	6 - 10 Y	3
					>10 Y	0
STKIP Pelita Bangsa North Sumatera	M	1	S2	1	<5 Y	1
	F	1	S3	1	6 - 10 Y	1
					>10 Y	0

Universitas North Sumatera	M	1	S2	0	<5 Y	0
	F	2	S3	3	6 – 10 Y	2
					>10 Y	1
Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematang Siantar	M	1	S2	0	<5 Y	0
	F	2	S3	3	6 – 10 Y	1
					>10 Y	2
Universitas Persatuan Guru 1945 East Nusa Tenggara	M	3	S2	2	<5 Y	2
	F	1	S3	2	6 – 10 Y	1
					>10 Y	1
Universitas Kristen Indonesia	M	3	S2	0	<5 Y	1
	F	0	S3	3	6 – 10 Y	2
					>10 Y	0
Universitas Sam Ratulangi Manado	M	2	S2	1	<5 Y	1
	F	2	S3	3	6 – 10 Y	2
					>10 Y	1

T. E. – Teaching Experience, M – Male, F – Female, Y – Years

This diversity across institutions, qualifications, and experience levels offers a valuable cross-section of the Indonesian EFL higher education landscape. It also allows for more nuanced understanding of how contextual factors—such as institutional support, geographic disparities, and professional training—shape lecturers' perceptions and implementation of authentic assessment in sustainability education.

Instruments

The researchers created a questionnaire consisting of 12 closed questions and 2 open questions. Then, 5 interview questions were used to find out more about the understanding and experiences of the participants, who were EFL.

Table 2. Close-Ended Questionnaire Questions

Close-Ended Questionnaire	
1.	Understanding of concepts through AuA compared to traditional evaluation methods.
2.	Integration of communicative competence and real-world language tasks in assessment practices.
3.	Design of performance-based assessments such as role plays, debates, and projects.
4.	Development of students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills through the implementation of AuA.
5.	Promotion of learner autonomy by AuA.
6.	Difficulties in designing AuA due to limited institutional support.
7.	Challenges in implementing AuA in large class sizes.
8.	The time-consuming nature of AuA tasks requires extensive feedback.
9.	Adequate institutional support (e.g., training or policies) for effective implementation of AuA.
10.	Support from curriculum guidelines (syllabus/RPS format) for integrating AuA.
11.	Use of digital tools (e.g., online portfolios, video assessments) in AuA.
12.	Increase in students' knowledge and skills for future societal roles (e.g., social interaction, employment, entrepreneurship) through AuA implementation.

lecturers. This study used an explanatory research approach because it aimed to explain the relationship between the implementation of authentic assessment by EFL lecturers and its contribution to education for sustainable development (Minc et al., 2022). Thus, explanatory research helps to uncover how and why.

Table 3. Open-Ended Questionnaire Questions

Open-Ended Questionnaire
1. Design and implementation of AuA in the classroom, considering challenges and opportunities within the Indonesian education system
2. Support, resources, and policy changes needed to enhance the effectiveness of AuA in ELT in Indonesia

authentic assessment practices support the development of relevant skills for students in the context of sustainability. Here (Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4) are the questionnaires and interviews questions.

Table 4. Interview Questions

Interview Questions
1. Identification of courses that optimally apply AuA and examples of its application in the classroom
2. Main challenges faced and strategies to overcome obstacles in implementing AuA in the classroom
3. Perceptions of how AuA contributes to sustainability education
4. Views on the impact of AuA on student engagement and motivation in the era of sustainability
5. Institutional measures to better support lecturers in the implementation of AuA.

Ethical Measures

In this study, the researcher was also concerned with ethical measures. All participants were provided with detailed information regarding the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and risks of the study. Their consent was obtained in both written (questionnaire) and digital (interview) forms. Participation in the questionnaires and interviews was entirely voluntary, without coercion or influence from internal or external parties, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time if they objected to participating in the study. The personal identities of participants were not disclosed in any reports or publications in order to maintain the confidentiality of participants who contributed significantly to this research. Researchers also avoided sensitive questions by providing optional choices to ensure the comfort of participating contributors.

Data Analysis Procedure

Researchers used methodological triangulation to ensure the credibility and validity of the research findings, which involved analyzing data from

quantitative and qualitative sources. The triangulation process was conducted in three main stages (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The study analyzed quantitative data using descriptive statistics to identify patterns in the application of authentic assessment by teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL). Furthermore, qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed thematically through a coding process. Then, findings from both data sets were compared and integrated to identify points. Results from the questionnaires served to support or contrast with insights gained from the interviews. In addition, the researcher used one AI (Artificial Intelligence) namely ChatGPT, OpenAI, 2025 to assist in organizing codes and identifying initial themes from the qualitative data. The AI-generated suggestions were not taken as final but were cross-checked manually by the researcher to ensure accuracy, consistency, and credibility of the data analysis. This dual process of AI assistance and manual verification enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings.

FINDINGS

Quantitative Data Presentation

The questionnaire (see Table 2) that has been distributed by researchers consists of 12 closed-ended questions using a Likert scale. Most of the mean scores were in the range of 4.0 and above (see Figure 1), indicating that respondents strongly agreed on the importance and application of authentic assessment. This means that EFL lecturers have a positive attitude towards authentic assessment, both in terms of its benefits to students and its application in teaching practice. Researchers have calculated and obtained the following results.

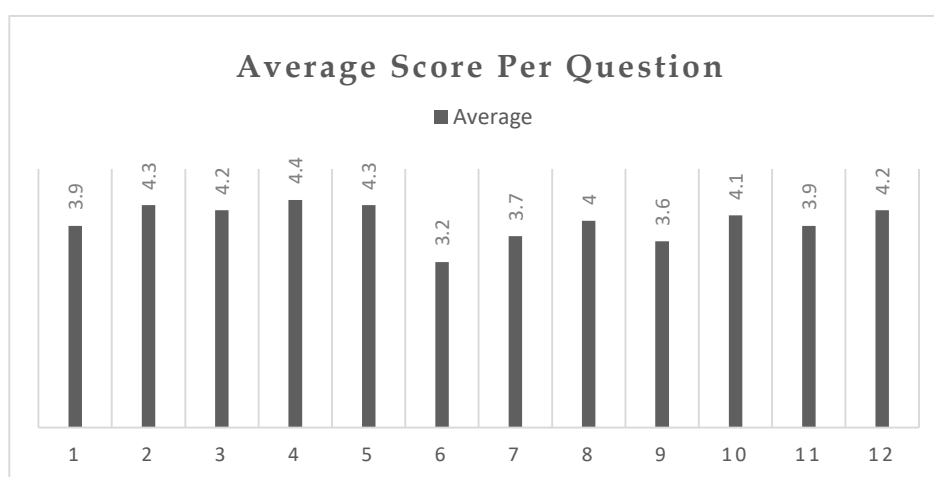


Figure 1. Average Score per Questions

From the figure above, the statements with the highest average scores are (1) "Authentic assessment improves students' critical thinking and problem-

solving skills” with an average of 4.4. (2) “Authentic assessment encourages students' learning independence” with an average of 4.3-4.4, and (3) “Authentic assessment improves students' knowledge and skills for future roles” with an average of 4.2. These results demonstrate that respondents fully understand the main purpose of authentic assessment, which is to develop students' real competencies. The statement about using digital tools scored 3.9, meaning that most lecturers have started using technology, but there is still room for improvement.

Furthermore, the statements with low scores are (1) “I have difficulty in designing authentic assessments due to limited institutional support” with an average of 3.2, (2) “The large number of students makes it difficult to implement authentic assessments” with an average of 3.7, and (3) “I have adequate support from the institution (e.g. training or policies)” with an average of 3.6. This may indicate that institutional support and workload are significant challenges. Although lecturers support authentic assessment, they face practical obstacles in its implementation.

It can be tentatively concluded that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) lecturers in Indonesia generally show a strong understanding and positive attitude towards the application of authentic assessment in the learning process. They not only understand the concept of authentic assessment, but also recognize the value and strategic benefits of this approach in improving students' competencies, both in terms of cognitive, affective, and 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and learning independence. The high average score given by respondents to the statements in the questionnaire indicates an acceptance and belief that authentic assessment can replace or complement traditional evaluations that tend to focus on memorization and repetition.

Most lecturers recognize that through contextualized and real-world task-oriented assessments, students are better able to demonstrate their full conceptual understanding. Based on the results of an open-ended questionnaire (see Table 3), they feel that tasks such as projects, presentations, portfolios, and reflections reflect students' true abilities more than conventional written exams. However, while attitudes towards authentic assessment tend to be positive, its implementation in the field still faces a number of significant structural challenges. Many lecturers state that they experience time constraints, high workloads, and a lack of institutional support in the form of adequate training, policies, and resources. In addition, the large number of students in a class is also an obstacle in providing in-depth assessment and quality feedback on authentic tasks.

This condition creates a gap between conceptual understanding and practical implementation in the field. Although lecturers are motivated and have good intentions to implement authentic assessment, external factors beyond their control make this process difficult to optimize. Therefore, to encourage more

effective and sustainable use of authentic assessment, systemic support from higher education institutions is needed, both through policies, professional training, and allocation of resources that support meaningful learning practices.

Qualitative Data Presentation

The qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews (see Table 4 above) with five EFL lecturers from diverse educational settings across

Table 5. Interview Results

Theme	Summary of Findings	Excerpt
Role of Authentic Assessment	AuA bridges language learning with real-world competencies aligned with Education for Sustainable Development.	"Authentic assessment turns English from a subject into a tool for real social change." (INT1)
Courses Suitable for AuA	Academic Writing, Public Speaking, ESP, and Integrated Skills foster context-rich, sustainability-related tasks.	"In Academic Writing, students write op-eds on climate change that connect language with real issues." (INT3)
Design and Implementation	Aligning course objectives with sustainability goals; adaptive strategies address systemic challenges.	"We design tasks like community interviews or SDG presentations that reflect both language and social issues." (INT2)
Challenges in Implementation	Time-consuming tasks, rigid curricula, lack of training, and infrastructural limitations in rural areas.	"Large classes and limited internet access make it hard to fully implement authentic assessments." (INT4)
Adaptive Strategies	Collaborative rubric development, phased integration, scaffolding, and low-tech alternatives.	"We use handwritten reports and mobile audio recordings where technology is limited." (INT5)
Impact on Student Engagement	Increased motivation and ownership when assessments connect to real-life purposes and audiences.	"Students become more enthusiastic when they know their work matters beyond the classroom." (INT4)
Need for Institutional Support	Calls for professional development, digital resources, flexible policies, and collaborative platforms.	"We need more training and policies that support creativity, plus spaces to share and showcase student work." (INT 5)
Suggestions for Improvement	Professional development on sustainability assessment, reduced admin workload, and investment in infrastructure.	"Providing sustainability fairs or online exhibitions would help students see the real impact of their learning." (INT3)

Indonesia, ranging from public and private universities to faith-based institutions and vocational polytechnics, highlight the significant role of authentic assessment (AuA) in fostering sustainability education. Below is a table summarizing the excerpt, highlighting the main ideas related to authentic assessment (AuA) in sustainability education (See Table 5).

From the summary table above, it can be concluded that all participants agreed that the existence of authentic assessment provides a meaningful link between language teaching and the development of real-world competencies aligned with the goals of Education for Sustainable Development as stated by the informant below.

"It's very noticeable. Students are more enthusiastic because they know their work has a real audience. For example, when someone's work is published in the campus newsletter, the class's enthusiasm immediately increases. They feel that learning the language is useful for social change" (INT1).

In particular, AuA encourages students to engage directly with pressing global issues through their English language skills, so that they are able to position English not only as an academic and linguistic subject, but as a practical tool or medium for meaningful change in their environment. Respondents stated that courses such as Academic Writing, Public Speaking, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), critical reading and Integrated Skills are very supportive for the implementation of authentic assessment. In these courses, students are tasked to produce a variety of outputs, including their opinions on global issues (Sustainable Development Goals/SDGs) (INT1). These tasks are deliberately designed to mimic or directly act in real-world contexts, such as community outreach. As a result, students not only deepen their English language skills, but also deepen their awareness of sustainability issues both locally and globally.

Based on the interviews, Participant 2 remarked the importance of combining AuA with the learning outcomes.

"... My strategy is to integrate authentic tasks into existing learning outcomes. For example, when the RPS requires a report, I direct the report to be relevant to the SDGs" (INT2).

EFL lecturers in Indonesia design and implement authentic assessment by aligning course objectives with real-world tasks that reflect students' linguistic needs and sustainability goals, despite systemic challenges. They create context-rich tasks such as environmental awareness, and it is not uncommon for some students to relate their presentations to the SDGs. To overcome institutional constraints, such as large class sizes, lack of training, and rigid curriculum implementation, lecturers certainly use adaptive strategies that are considered effective to assist the learning process like stated by Participant 4 as follows, "...I divide students into small groups. Assessment can still be carried out using a detailed rubric" (INT4). Opportunities in the Indonesian education system, such

as the increasing emphasis on skills and incorporating fundamental principles, were utilized to substantiate and reinforce the usefulness of authentic assessment. Overall, the lecturers demonstrated strength and creativity in crafting assessments that are not only academically rigorous, but also globally relevant.

Despite the clear value of implementing AuA, participants also raised some challenges in its implementation. One of the main challenges encountered is the short time and effort required to design and assess individualized, project-based tasks that are language-rich and relevant as stated by Participant 3, excerpted in INT3 below.

"The number of students is too large. If there are 40 students in a class, assessing each presentation individually takes a long time. Moreover, campus facilities are sometimes limited, such as presentation rooms or internet access..." (INT3).

It is pointed to comprehensive constraints, such as institutionalized alternatives to standardized assessments and curriculum arrangements that seem rigid and may not be able to fully accommodate innovative and relevant assessment practices. In addition, lecturers teaching in rural or under-resourced areas highlighted infrastructure limitations, including unstable internet access and limited availability of technology, which hindered the smooth running of the teaching and learning process. Student-related challenges also emerged, mainly related to students' lack of confidence in using English for open-ended and creative tasks and their ignorance of non-traditional forms of assessment.

To overcome some of these challenges, respondents utilized a variety of adaptive strategies in the form of rubric design with collaboration among colleagues. Besides, they designed gradual integration of AuA into the syllabus to make it easier for students to understand the setting and subsequently utilized low-tech alternatives (e.g., handwritten reports or audio recordings via mobile) in environments with low or limited resources and infrastructure (INT5). The lecturers emphasized the importance of flexibility and creativity in ensuring that assessments remain authentic and accessible to all students. Most importantly, the implementation of authentic assessment was found to have a substantial positive role on student engagement and motivation. According to respondents, in implementing AuA, students showed higher levels of enthusiasm and excitement when given assessment tasks related to their goals and surrounding environment. Students tended to be more active in managing their learning and showed a higher sense of responsibility (INT4). This is in line with the goal of sustainable education, which emphasizes efforts to facilitate students to become active contributors in the community for sustainability.

The interview results show that EFL lecturers in Indonesia are actually aware of the urgent need for stronger institutional support, adequate resources and infrastructure, and the need for regulatory reform to improve the

effectiveness of authentic assessment in English language teaching in the classroom. The need for institutional support was expressed by Participant 4 in the interview as excerpted in INT4

“We need infrastructure support, such as exhibition space, servers for uploading student work, and training for lecturers on sustainability-oriented assessment” (INT4).

The importance of continuous professional development programs focused on assessment design, equitable access to digital tools and infrastructure, and reducing the administrative burden that hinders pedagogical innovation was highlighted by lecturers in the interview results. They also emphasized the need for more adaptive curriculum policies that allow for the transformation and integration of sustainability themes and real-world tasks into student assessment practices. An important strategy for building a culture that values assessment can be achieved by providing collaborative spaces for EFL lecturers to share designed practices and developing platforms for students to showcase their work publicly (INT1). Overall, these suggestions reflect the calls and pleas of EFL lecturers in Indonesia for major changes that will enable authentic assessment to flourish as a core element of English language education in Indonesia.

To further strengthen the implementation of authentic assessment, the lecturers proposed several forms of institutional support, as stated in INT5.

“In my opinion, institutions need to provide special training that focuses on how lecturers can design clearer, more measurable, and fairer assessment rubrics, especially for authentic assignments that are often complex. Until now, many lecturers still rely on simple rubrics that only assess language aspects. In addition to training, I think campuses also need to provide online forums or digital platforms where students' work can be published and shared. With such a space, students will not only feel that their assignments are simply collected by lecturers, but that they are truly appreciated by a wider audience, including fellow students, lecturers from other departments, and the general public” (INT5).

These include providing regular professional development opportunities that focus on assessment for sustainability, hence, reducing the burden of being a lecturer. Such opportunities would allow more time to design and implement innovative pedagogies, developing in digital infrastructure and classroom technology, and encouraging interdepartmental collaboration to design interdisciplinary projects. Next, they also suggested platforms for students to showcase their work, as expressed by Participant 3 (INT3), such as through sustainability exhibitions, online showcases, or community collaborations, as a way to confirm students' efforts and reinforce the real-world values of their learning.

DISCUSSION

Overcoming Challenges in Implementing AuA for Sustainability Education

Integrating AuA into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching within Indonesian higher education—particularly in relation to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)—presents both innovative and complex pedagogical challenges. This aligns with the broader discourse on equitable education, which positions authentic assessment as a transformative tool capable of developing the critical competencies students require to address sustainability-related issues (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024; Suwartono & Zulehah, 2024). Such integration is crucial for ESD, which aims to prepare students not only in linguistic proficiency but also in the ability to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts (Rieckmann, 2017). These findings are consistent with previous research that emphasises cognitive and metacognitive development facilitated through relevant, reflective assessment rather than rote memorisation (Umam et al., 2024).

Qualitative insights indicate that lecturers conceptualise AuA not merely as an assessment instrument but as a pedagogical strategy for embedding sustainability values into language learning. Tasks such as writing climate change opinion pieces, producing sustainability podcasts, and delivering SDG-based presentations demonstrate the intersection of language learning and sustainability awareness. This reinforces the argument that language education should not only promote linguistic accuracy but also cultivate intercultural understanding and social responsibility. Furthermore, students with low self-confidence or language anxiety benefit from appropriate support strategies, including the use of authentic assessment (Lumintang & Bram, 2024).

Nevertheless, lecturers face significant institutional and practical barriers that complicate the implementation of AuA. Quantitative data reveal moderate to low satisfaction concerning institutional support, resources, and logistics. These findings mirror global research showing that institutional frameworks often lag behind pedagogical innovation, resulting in a gap between ideal practices and classroom realities (Brown et al., 2022; Syukri & Nst, 2023). Lecturers' testimonies regarding heavy workloads, rigid assessment policies, and limited training opportunities echo concerns expressed by Radnasari and Fatonah (2025), who argue that systemic factors frequently hinder the realisation of student-centred assessment reforms (Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022).

Despite these challenges, lecturers demonstrated notable resilience and creativity. They adopted adaptive strategies such as collaboratively designing rubrics, gradually introducing authentic tasks, and tailoring instruction to contextual needs. This practice reflects sociocultural theory, which emphasises scaffolding to support learners' developmental readiness (Akbari et al., 2022). The application of differentiated instruction further illustrates how lecturers

balance pedagogical ideals with contextual limitations to maintain inclusivity and objectivity (Ajjawi et al., 2024). These strategies signify a commitment to equitable education, ensuring that assessment remains meaningful and accessible even with limited systemic support.

Importantly, lecturers reported that authentic assessment enhanced student motivation and engagement. The alignment of assessment tasks with real-life contexts fostered a sense of relevance and ownership, consistent with self-determination theory. This intrinsic motivation supports the lifelong learning orientation central to ESD (Ajjawi et al., 2024). When students perceive tasks as meaningful beyond the classroom—such as through community projects or sustainability-focused initiatives—their learning becomes more sustained and transformative. This transition from passive acceptance to active participation aligns with transformative learning theory, which highlights critical reflection and awareness as drivers of personal and social change (Ismail et al., 2022).

At the institutional level, the findings emphasise the urgent need for systemic reform to support the effective implementation of AuA. Lecturers advocated for increased professional development focused on formative assessment, reduced administrative burdens, greater access to digital technologies, and enhanced interdepartmental collaboration. These recommendations are consistent with the concept of continuous assessment, which promotes a cultural shift within higher education towards reflective, ongoing, and student-centred evaluation practices (Vahed et al., 2023). Similarly, Radnasari and Fatonah (2025) stress the importance of policy alignment and institutional support to transform assessment from an administrative requirement into a meaningful learning experience. Addressing these institutional dimensions is therefore essential for embedding AuA as a sustainable practice within Indonesian higher education.

Alongside institutional improvements, lecturers' creativity in designing contextually relevant, sustainability-oriented language tasks reflects a growing pedagogical culture that prioritises social responsibility alongside academic achievement (Ismail et al., 2022). However, their reliance on institutional support confirms that pedagogical innovation cannot flourish without systemic backing. Consequently, this study affirms that the successful implementation of AuA depends on two interrelated dimensions: lecturer capability and institutional readiness. Only through the alignment of these two factors can a transformative assessment culture be developed—one that advances EFL learning while promoting the objectives of ESD.

Instructional Strategies to Implement AuA in Sustainability Education

Lecturers employed a range of teaching strategies to integrate authentic assessment into EFL courses, aligning language learning outcomes with the goals of continuing and sustainable education. Courses such as Academic Writing,

Public Speaking, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Integrated Skills were deemed particularly suitable for the implementation of AuA, as they focus on practical and context-based learning tasks. This aligns with the view that authentic assessment is most effective when embedded in meaningful, discipline-relevant activities (Rachmawati & Hastari, 2022; Sokhanvar et al., 2021). Such curricular adaptations foster not only language development but also sustainability competencies by engaging students in authentic communicative situations.

Assignments designed with real-world relevance—such as writing on global issues, conducting community-based projects, or presenting sustainability-themed research—illustrate the integration of linguistic and sustainability objectives. These tasks encourage students to engage critically and creatively with global challenges, consistent with the notion of language education as a medium for intercultural dialogue and social action (Arief Muhsin, 2024). Since sustainability education is inherently interdisciplinary and value-oriented, it equips students with the competencies necessary to contribute effectively to their communities (Purnamasari et al., 2023).

In response to institutional constraints, lecturers implemented flexible, context-responsive strategies. These included gradually introducing authentic tasks to facilitate student adaptation, providing differentiated scaffolding for diverse proficiency levels, and employing low-technology solutions to overcome infrastructure limitations in rural or under-resourced areas. Such approaches reflect the principles of differentiated instruction (Handoyo et al., 2024) and formative assessment, which emphasise continuous feedback and tailored support to optimise learning outcomes. Furthermore, peer collaboration in rubric development underscores the importance of transparency and shared understanding of assessment criteria, reinforcing fairness and clarity (Leong & Rethinasamy, 2023).

A key outcome of these approaches was a marked increase in student engagement and motivation. By linking assessment to authentic audiences and socially relevant issues, lecturers fostered student autonomy and ownership, consistent with self-determination theory (Lopez et al., 2025). This learner-centred approach promotes deeper cognitive and emotional engagement, both of which are essential to the transformative learning experiences described by Brooks et al. (2024). Engaged learners are more likely to develop the critical awareness and collaborative skills necessary for active participation in sustainability-related contexts.

Moreover, lecturers emphasised the importance of providing platforms for students to showcase their authentic work publicly – through exhibitions, digital portfolios, or community-based projects. Such public assessment opportunities not only enhance motivation but also situate learning within a broader sociocultural framework (Chaerunnisa & Bachtar, 2025). Other studies further support the idea that public presentation of student work promotes

transparency, accountability, and meaningful feedback, thereby contributing to a more holistic and integrated assessment culture (Gray et al., 2025).

In summary, the instructional strategies identified in this study exemplify the effective integration of language pedagogy with sustainability principles. These practices demonstrate that authentic assessment serves as a powerful pedagogical tool for fostering linguistic proficiency, social awareness, and critical engagement. Encouraging the continued development of flexible, contextually sensitive, and equity-oriented models of authentic assessment across diverse educational settings remains a significant contribution of this research.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study explored Indonesian EFL lecturers' perceptions, strategies, and challenges in implementing authentic assessment (AuA) within the framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Using a mixed-methods approach, the findings revealed two major insights. First, lecturers demonstrated strong pedagogical awareness and positive perceptions of AuA as a transformative approach that supports critical thinking, creativity, and social responsibility among students (Leong & Rethinasamy, 2023; Pinner, 2022). Second, despite this awareness, implementation remains constrained by structural barriers—limited institutional support, high teaching loads, and inadequate professional development opportunities (Rahimi & Zhang, 2015; Vong & Wong, 2021).

Regarding instructional strategies, lecturers employed adaptive and context-sensitive methods to integrate authentic assessment into their EFL classrooms. These included project-based tasks, sustainability-focused writing, and community engagement activities that link language learning with real-world environmental and social issues (Handoyo et al., 2024; Arief Muhsin, 2024). Through scaffolding, collaborative rubrics, and reflective assessment, they successfully fostered learner agency and sustainability-oriented competencies (Rieckmann, 2017; Sokhanvar et al., 2021). These findings affirm that when thoughtfully implemented, authentic assessment serves as a pedagogical bridge between linguistic development and sustainability education.

However, for the full potential of AuA to be realized in higher education, systemic support and policy commitment are essential. Institutions should strengthen continuous professional development programs for lecturers, simplify administrative requirements, and invest in technological and material infrastructure to enable equitable implementation (Radnasari & Fatonah, 2025; Ajjawi et al., 2024). Building communities of practice among EFL educators would also enhance knowledge exchange and foster innovation in assessment design (Gulikers & Baartman, 2017).

For future research, several directions are recommended. First, further studies should include students' perspectives to examine how authentic assessment shapes learning motivation, sustainability values, and long-term skill

development. Second, longitudinal and comparative research across institutions would help clarify how contextual factors—such as institutional policy and digital access—affect the sustainability of assessment reform. Finally, integrating curriculum analysis (e.g., syllabus mapping) could reveal how institutional structures align with or hinder authentic assessment practices.

In conclusion, this study underscores that authentic assessment, when supported by institutional commitment and professional learning, can transform EFL education into a more sustainable, empowering, and socially responsive practice. By bridging language learning and sustainability, educators can cultivate graduates who are not only linguistically competent but also critically aware and prepared to contribute meaningfully to a sustainable future.

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