

Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) in Indonesian EFL Classrooms From Kurikulum 2013 to Merdeka

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Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi implementasi Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) pada transisi Kurikulum 2013 (K-13) menuju Kurikulum Merdeka di Indonesia. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami bagaimana filosofi penilaian dalam pendidikan Indonesia telah bergeser dan bagaimana prinsip-prinsip LOA diterapkan oleh para guru EFL di Kolaka, Sulawesi Tenggara. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif dengan melibatkan guru EFL dari tiga SMP negeri di Kolaka yang aktif menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka. Metode pengumpulan data meliputi wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi kelas, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya pergeseran filosofi penilaian yang signifikan dari penilaian sumatif dan berbasis hasil di K-13 menuju penilaian formatif, diagnostik, dan autentik di Kurikulum Merdeka. Meskipun para guru memahami prinsip dasar LOA, implementasi yang konsisten masih terbatas, terutama dalam aspek penilaian sebagai pembelajaran (assessment as learning). Penggunaan CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) dalam penilaian juga teridentifikasi, meskipun penerapannya belum optimal. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun terdapat perubahan positif dalam praktik penilaian, masih ada tantangan besar dalam pelaksanaan LOA secara menyeluruh dan integrasi penuh dengan CEFR dalam konteks pendidikan EFL di Indonesia.

Keywords: penilaian berorientasi pembelajaran (LOA); kurikulum merdeka; CEFR; assessment

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Introduction

The shift in assessment philosophy in Indonesian education has become increasingly significant during the transition from Kurikulum 2013 (K-13) to Kurikulum Merdeka, marking a national move from content-driven, summative assessment toward a more formative, diagnostic, and student-centered orientation. Under K-13, assessment largely emphasized reporting outcomes and demonstrating mastery of competencies, whereas Merdeka Belajar positions assessment as a tool for continuous learning. Lubis and Syawalina (2024) emphasize that the Merdeka Curriculum frames assessment in three interconnected forms—diagnostic, formative, and summative—to support instructional adaptation and provide substantive feedback to learners. This transformation aligns Indonesia with global trends toward integrating assessment as an essential component of pedagogy rather than a separate evaluative process.

Within this landscape, Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) has emerged as a powerful framework for connecting teaching, assessment, and learning. LOA positions assessment tasks as learning tasks, foregrounds self-assessment and peer-assessment, and emphasizes feedback for development rather than judgment (Carless, 2007, as elaborated in Carless, 2015). Empirical studies have shown LOA's effectiveness in improving language learning outcomes in EFL contexts. For example, Estaji (2023) found that LOA practices such as guided self-evaluation and structured feedback significantly enhanced the argumentative writing skills of EFL learners. Likewise, Çakmak, Ismail, and Karami (2023) demonstrated that self-assessment, motivation, and academic resilience

play critical roles in students' development when LOA is implemented systematically. In line with this, Heydarnejad (2023) showed that LOA in online learning environments supports student engagement, enjoyment, and achievement, reinforcing the framework's flexibility across modalities. Gebril (2022) further underscores LOA as part of a broader global trend to align language assessment practices with authentic, learning-centered approaches.

Parallel to the development of LOA, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has increasingly informed Indonesian language teaching and assessment reforms. Although CEFR is not formally adopted as a national policy, its influence is evident in school-level curriculum design, assessment instruments, and English proficiency standards. Novawan, Tosalem, Binarkaheni, and Mariana (2023) note that CEFR's action-oriented descriptors have guided teachers in formulating communicative learning outcomes. Nonetheless, challenges persist: Rasyid et al. (2024) reveal gaps in teachers' assessment literacy and difficulties aligning CEFR-based descriptors with Indonesian classroom realities. This reflects broader constraints in CEFR adaptation that include contextual, cultural, and administrative factors.

At the school level, studies on assessment reform show both progress and challenges. Ghotafani, Herdiawan, and Syarifah (2023) report that EFL teachers in vocational schools employ formative and summative assessments consistently, yet struggle with time for providing deep feedback—an essential element of LOA. Similarly, Noning, Felix, and Bera (2023) found that junior secondary EFL teachers implementing the Merdeka Curriculum often misunderstand key principles of formative interpretation, feedback, and learning progressions. Complementarily, Pujiyanto (2023) highlights the ongoing need for strengthened assessment frameworks and teacher proficiency standards as Indonesia continues aligning local assessment practices with global frameworks such as CEFR.

Although research on formative assessment, Merdeka Curriculum implementation, and EFL assessment practices in Indonesia is growing, a clear gap remains. There is a lack of empirical studies that directly examine how LOA is conceptualized and enacted in Indonesian EFL classrooms during the transition from K-13 to Merdeka, particularly in relation to CEFR-aligned learning goals. Existing studies typically focus on teacher perceptions or isolated assessment challenges, rather than systematically analyzing how learning-oriented assessment principles can be integrated into curriculum transformation.

Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap by investigating (1) how assessment philosophy has shifted in Indonesian EFL practice from K-13 to Merdeka; (2) how LOA principles assessment for, as, and of learning are understood and implemented by EFL teachers in SMP Negeri in Kolaka; and (3) how LOA practices interact with CEFR in English learning in SMP Negeri in Kolaka. This research lies in its integrated analysis of LOA, CEFR, and Indonesian curriculum reforms, offering a comprehensive and context-specific contribution to the field of language assessment and providing actionable insights for policy, teacher training, and classroom implementation.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers implement Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) within the transition from Kurikulum 2013 to Kurikulum Merdeka. The case study approach was selected because LOA practices—such as the design of assessment tasks, feedback provision, and alignment with CEFR descriptors—are deeply situated in classroom realities and require in-depth, context-sensitive understanding. The research was carried out in Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, involving EFL teachers from three public junior high schools, namely SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka, SMP Negeri 1 Samaturu, and SMP Negeri 1 Tanggetada. These sites were chosen purposefully based on their active implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the engagement of their teachers with CEFR-aligned instruction and assessment.

The participants consisted of EFL teachers from the three schools, representing varied teaching experience and exposure to curriculum and assessment reforms. They served as both the sources of data and the objects of analysis, particularly regarding how they interpret, design, and apply LOA-oriented tasks, feedback cycles, and assessment instruments. Data were collected over several weeks using three complementary techniques: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The interviews aimed to capture teachers' beliefs, understanding, and experiences regarding LOA, CEFR integration, and assessment practices under Kurikulum Merdeka. Classroom observations were conducted to document how LOA-aligned tasks were implemented in real-time instructional contexts, including how feedback was delivered, how students engaged in assessment activities, and how teachers scaffolded learning during task performance. In addition, a wide range of documents such as lesson plans, assessment rubrics, CEFR descriptors, student worksheets, feedback samples, and school-level assessment guidelines were reviewed to understand how assessment principles are enacted in planning, task design, and evaluation.

To support systematic data collection, the study utilized validated instruments including an interview guide, a structured observation checklist, and a document analysis form. These instruments helped ensure consistency across cases when identifying features of LOA such as authenticity of tasks, opportunities for self- and peer-assessment, progression of difficulty, and the quality of teacher feedback. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following iterative coding and theme development to identify meaningful patterns across interviews, observations, and documents. The analysis began with familiarization through repeated reading and transcription, followed by generating initial codes that captured key ideas related to LOA implementation, assessment alignment, and teacher challenges. These codes were then organized into broader themes that reflected the core issues of the study, such as teachers' interpretations of LOA principles, the nature of LOA-aligned tasks they designed, their feedback practices, the extent of CEFR alignment, and the challenges they encountered during curriculum transition.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the analysis incorporated triangulation across data sources and methods, member checking with participating teachers, peer debriefing with experts, and maintenance of an audit trail throughout the research process. Through this methodological approach, the study was able to produce a rich, contextually grounded portrayal of how LOA principles are interpreted and enacted by EFL teachers in Kolaka during the shift from Kurikulum 2013 to Kurikulum Merdeka.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of interview data, classroom observations, and document reviews conducted at three public junior high schools in Kolaka Regency SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka, SMP Negeri 1 Samaturu, and SMP Negeri 1 Tanggetada produced three major clusters of findings aligned with the research objectives: (1) the shift in assessment philosophy from Kurikulum 2013 to Kurikulum Merdeka, (2) the understanding and implementation of Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) principles by EFL teachers, and (3) the interaction between LOA practices and the use of CEFR in English language learning. These findings offer a comprehensive portrayal of how assessment reform is translated into classroom practices and how teachers negotiate assessment approaches in the midst of curriculum change.

Shift in Assessment Philosophy from K-13 to Merdeka

Findings indicate that all EFL teachers across the three schools recognize a fundamental shift in assessment philosophy as they transition from Kurikulum 2013 to Kurikulum Merdeka. Under K-13, assessment was perceived as more structured, administrative, and outcome-oriented, with strong emphasis on assessment of learning. Teachers at SMPN 1 Kolaka reported that under K-13 they "had to complete extensive documentation for knowledge, skills, and attitude assessment," making evaluation more administrative than pedagogical. Teachers at SMPN 1

Samaturu described K-13 assessment as “score-driven,” with limited space for building learning dialogues.

Conversely, the Merdeka Curriculum introduced a shift toward formative, diagnostic, and authentic assessment, aligning with assessment for learning. Teachers at SMPN 1 Tanggetada explained that they now have the freedom to design assessments based on students’ needs, including contextualized performance tasks and projects. Analysis of ATPs and lesson modules across the three schools showed clear emphasis on continuous assessment and constructive feedback, consistent with Lubis and Syawalina’s (2024) findings on systemic changes in Merdeka Curriculum assessment.

However, although teachers understand the philosophical shift, the implementation varies across schools. Teachers at SMPN 1 Samaturu are less consistent in providing targeted feedback, while teachers at SMPN 1 Kolaka more actively use diagnostic assessment to adjust instruction. These variations highlight that policy changes do not automatically lead to uniform practice, supporting Rasyid et al. (2024), who note significant gaps between policy and assessment practices in Indonesian classrooms.

Understanding and Implementation of LOA (Assessment for, as, and of Learning)

Assessment for Learning

The principle of assessment for learning is relatively strong in all three schools. Teachers utilized checklists, prompting questions, and oral feedback during reading and speaking activities. Observations at SMPN 1 Kolaka showed that teachers provided real-time feedback on pronunciation and intonation while encouraging students to revise immediately. This aligns with Carless’s (2015) view that feedback is central to LOA.

Assessment as Learning

Assessment as learning is emerging but not yet fully established. Teachers at SMPN 1 Tanggetada experimented with peer-assessment during paired dialogue tasks, although some teachers reported that students “are still reluctant to evaluate their peers.” At SMPN 1 Samaturu, self-assessment remained limited because many students lacked confidence and metacognitive awareness. This corresponds with Noning et al. (2023), who found that junior secondary teachers under the Merdeka Curriculum still struggle to operationalize formative assessment principles in daily practice.

Assessment of Learning

Summative assessments remain consistently used across all sites—written tests, multiple-choice quizzes, and performance tasks. However, teachers have started incorporating authentic assessments such as mini projects, presentations, and role-play dialogues. This suggests attempts to balance administrative requirements with LOA principles, similar to findings by Estaji (2023) and Çakmak et al. (2023), who show that LOA can coexist with mandated summative evaluations when thoughtfully integrated. Overall, EFL teachers in Kolaka demonstrate a foundational understanding of LOA, but full implementation remains gradual, shaped by students’ readiness, teachers’ assessment literacy, and school culture.

Interaction between LOA Practices and CEFR in EFL Learning

The findings reveal that CEFR is not formally institutionalized in the three schools but is used informally in several meaningful ways:

- a) identifying communicative competence targets for lessons,
- b) determining task levels (A1–A2), and

- c) using simplified CEFR descriptors in speaking and writing assessments.

Teachers at SMPN 1 Kolaka demonstrated the most consistent use of CEFR, especially in speaking assessments. They used simplified descriptors such as “can introduce self,” “can ask simple questions,” and “can express likes/dislikes,” adapted from Merdeka teacher training modules. At SMPN 1 Samaturu, teachers recognized CEFR but applied it less explicitly.

The interaction between LOA and CEFR was evident in task design:

- Teachers at SMPN 1 Tanggetada used A1/A2 dialogues as the basis for peer-assessment activities.
- Teachers at SMPN 1 Kolaka used simplified CEFR rubrics to guide speaking evaluations.
- Observations showed that CEFR-based tasks helped students perform self-monitoring, directly supporting *assessment as learning*.

However, CEFR use remains limited by teachers' incomplete understanding of level distinctions and lack of formal training. This confirms Novawan et al. (2023), who note that CEFR adaptation in Indonesia remains teacher-dependent and context-sensitive.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings Across Three Schools

Research Focus	SMPN 1 Kolaka	SMPN 1 Samaturu	SMPN 1 Tanggetada	Cross-case Pattern
Shift in Assessment Philosophy	High	Moderate	Moderate	The change is understood, but practices vary
Assessment for Learning	Strong (actively provides feedback)	Moderate	Moderate-High	Implementation is increasing
Assessment as Learning	Moderate	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Still developing
Assessment of Learning	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent	Still dominant but becoming more balanced
CEFR Use	Explicit (A1-A2 rubrics)	Implicit	Semi-explicit	CEFR used informally
LOA-CEFR Integration	Good	Weak	Moderate	Potential to grow

The findings of this study demonstrate that the shift from Kurikulum 2013 to the Merdeka Curriculum has initiated a substantive transformation in the assessment philosophy adopted by EFL teachers in Kolaka, reflecting broader trends in contemporary assessment research. Teachers' growing emphasis on diagnostic assessment and formative feedback aligns closely with the central principles of Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA), which position assessment as an integral component of learning rather than merely a tool for measurement (Carless, 2015). This philosophical shift also reflects wider movements across Asian EFL contexts, where assessment is increasingly expected to support communicative competence development rather than focus solely on linguistic accuracy or written tests (Widodo, 2020). The study also reveals that assessment of learning remains dominant, even though teachers are increasingly designing more authentic summative tasks that better align with communicative performance goals. This finding is consistent with Wulandari, Asani, and Jaya (2024), who note that although the Merdeka Curriculum encourages diverse assessment forms, many teachers still default to traditional written tests due to familiarity, institutional expectations, and limited time to design authentic tasks. Nonetheless, the gradual integration of project-based

performances, dialogues, and oral presentations in the Kolaka schools suggests movement toward a more balanced assessment ecosystem.

Teachers' use of diagnostic and formative assessment practices—particularly real-time feedback during speaking tasks and the adaptation of assessment activities to students' needs—reflects a shift toward a learning-centered assessment culture. This shift mirrors national-level expectations described by Lubis and Syawalina (2024), who emphasize that Merdeka Curriculum mandates a more flexible and learner-responsive assessment model.

However, the empirical data also revealed significant variation and challenges in putting this philosophy into practice. While teachers showed strong uptake of assessment for learning, the implementation of assessment as learning—particularly peer- and self-assessment—remains inconsistent. This mirrors broader challenges in formative assessment highlighted in global research, where student readiness, classroom norms, and teacher assessment literacy create barriers to reflective learning practices (Çakmak, Ismail, & Karami, 2023). The reluctance of Kolaka students to engage in evaluative dialogue with peers indicates that assessment-as-learning requires not only pedagogical change but also cultural and behavioral adaptation. LOA, while theoretically compelling, depends heavily on teachers' ability to develop students' metacognitive and evaluative skills—an area requiring sustained support.

A particularly instructive dimension of the findings is the interaction between LOA and CEFR in the schools studied. Although CEFR is not formally mandated at the junior secondary level in Indonesia, its influence is evident in how teachers structure communicative tasks and evaluate student performance. The use of simplified CEFR descriptors (A1–A2) in speaking assessments and diagnostic tasks suggests that CEFR functions as a practical framework for making learning expectations explicit and measurable. This aligns with arguments in the literature that CEFR enhances transparency, supports task design, and enables scaffolded progression in language learning (Novawan et al., 2023). Importantly, CEFR's influence strengthens LOA implementation by providing clear learning outcomes that can anchor feedback and enable self-monitoring.

However, as the findings suggest, teachers' understanding of CEFR remains partial and often informal. This creates inconsistencies in application and highlights a need for localized CEFR training and simplified descriptors tailored for Indonesian junior secondary students. This aligns with Naufalin, Anggraeni, and Janah's (2022) findings that teacher readiness—including both conceptual understanding and practical skills—is a central factor in successful formative assessment implementation under the Merdeka Curriculum.

From a broader curricular perspective, the study demonstrates that Merdeka Curriculum's principles—flexibility, contextualization, continuous assessment, and student-centered learning—provide a supportive environment for LOA. Yet, systemic constraints such as teaching load, time availability, and limited professional development influence how thoroughly teachers can enact these principles. Prior scholarship indicates that policy intentions and classroom realities often diverge, especially during curriculum transitions (Rasyid, Safitri, & Apsari, 2024). The findings from Kolaka reinforce these concerns, showing that while teachers are conceptually aligned with Merdeka Curriculum, practical implementation is shaped by school culture, resources, and teacher agency.

Theoretical and practical contributions emerge from this study. Theoretically, it enriches the growing body of LOA literature by providing empirical evidence from lower secondary contexts in Southeast Asia—settings that are often underrepresented in global LOA research. The observed interaction between CEFR descriptors and LOA practices contributes to a novel scholarly understanding of how global frameworks and national policies converge in everyday assessment practice. Practically, the study identifies promising pedagogical strategies already used by teachers—such as task-based assessment, oral feedback loops, and CEFR-aligned diagnostic tasks—that can be strengthened across schools. It also points to areas where targeted

interventions (such as assessment literacy training, CEFR professional development, and metacognitive skill-building for students) could enhance the overall quality of assessment implementation.

Taken together, the findings show that LOA, CEFR, and Merdeka Curriculum principles are highly compatible, but their synergy depends on sustained professional support, institutional commitment, and learning culture development. The study thus offers both scholarly and practical value by identifying not only what teachers are already doing well but also what remains to be developed in the Indonesian secondary EFL assessment landscape.

These findings show that the shift in assessment philosophy has encouraged teachers in Kolaka to move toward LOA practices, though comprehensive implementation requires greater support in teacher training, standardized CEFR-based rubrics, and enhanced student metacognitive skills. This study contributes new insights by showing how LOA and CEFR interact concretely in lower-secondary EFL classrooms—an area with limited empirical research in Indonesia. Previous studies have largely focused on theoretical discussions or teacher perceptions; this study advances the field by documenting actual classroom enactment, the challenges teachers face, and the pedagogical mechanisms through which LOA and CEFR can reinforce each other.

Conclusion

This study shows that EFL teachers in three junior high schools in Kolaka Regency are experiencing a transitional shift in assessment practice as they move from the accountability-oriented model of Kurikulum 2013 to the more flexible, formative assessment philosophy of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers have begun to adopt Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA), particularly through diagnostic checks, formative feedback, and performance-based tasks. However, assessment as learning remains underdeveloped, indicating that students' metacognitive engagement and autonomy are still limited. The integration of CEFR descriptors—especially A1–A2 levels—also demonstrates early promise, with SMP Negeri 1 Kolaka showing the most consistent use of simplified CEFR-based criteria. Across schools, teachers recognize CEFR's usefulness for clarifying learning goals, but its implementation remains partial due to insufficient training and unfamiliarity with descriptor interpretation.

Overall, the findings suggest that LOA, CEFR, and Merdeka Curriculum principles are mutually reinforcing, yet their practical enactment depends heavily on teacher assessment literacy, institutional support, and contextual resources. The study highlights that teachers are progressing toward more learning-centered assessment practices, but their approaches remain fragmented and shaped by habits inherited from Kurikulum 2013.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The focus on three schools within one regency limits broader generalization, and the qualitative design does not measure the direct impact of LOA or CEFR-informed assessment on student outcomes. Furthermore, teacher professional development—identified as a key influence—was not examined longitudinally. Future research should therefore include a wider range of school contexts, adopt mixed-methods or longitudinal approaches, and explore student perspectives on LOA and CEFR-based assessment. Such studies would help deepen understanding of how Indonesia's evolving curriculum reforms can translate into more coherent, equitable, and effective assessment practices in EFL classrooms.

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