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## Exploring students' perspectives on misalignment in English summative assessment practices

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### ABSTRACT

*Keywords:*

*english language, islamic boarding school, perceived misalignment, summative assessment,*

This qualitative case study explores students' perspectives on the misalignment between English summative assessments and classroom instruction in an Islamic senior high school (Madrasah Aliyah) EFL context in Indonesia. Data were collected from ten students and one teacher through semi-structured interviews, followed by document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed that students consistently perceived a gap between classroom instruction and tested competencies. Document analysis confirmed that several skills assessed in the exam were not adequately covered during instruction. Students reported confusion, anxiety, perceived unfairness, and declining motivation when facing unfamiliar test items. These experiences also reduced self-confidence and academic engagement in English learning. In response, students used coping strategies such as guessing answers and relying on peers, while teachers attempted limited instructional adjustments despite restricted control over test design. The study concludes that assessment misalignment affects both test validity and students' emotional and behavioral engagement, highlighting the need for stronger alignment and increased teacher involvement in assessment design.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context is primarily learned as a school subject rather than used for daily communication. In Indonesia, particularly within Islamic senior high schools (Madrasah Aliyah), students often rely heavily on classroom instruction as their primary source of English exposure and language practice. Consequently, classroom teaching plays an essential role in helping students develop English competencies. Within this context, formative and summative assessments are two common approaches that teachers use to evaluate students' learning (Basori & Mubarak, 2022). Formative assessment is typically employed to monitor students' progress and provide ongoing feedback, helping teachers adjust instruction as needed. Summative assessment, on the other hand, is used to evaluate students' achievement after a period of instruction, making it an essential tool in measuring learning outcomes (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Ideally, English summative assessments should reflect the learning objectives, instructional materials, and language skills taught during classroom activities. However, in many EFL classrooms, students encounter examination materials that do not fully correspond with what they have learned in class. Such conditions may create confusion and limit students' opportunities to demonstrate their actual English proficiency. Furthermore, assessments

provide information that is fundamental in helping teachers determine what to teach and how to teach it (Mu'ammalatun & Wahyuni, 2025), ensuring that instruction can be adjusted to meet students' actual learning needs.

The importance of alignment between instruction and assessment is emphasized in the concept of curriculum and assessment alignment proposed by (Akhtar et al., 2022). According to this perspective, effective learning outcomes depend on consistency between curriculum objectives, instructional practices, and assessment content. This principle is also closely related to Constructive Alignment Theory proposed by (Biggs et al., 2022), which stresses coherence between learning objectives, teaching activities, and assessment tasks. In English language learning, students should therefore be assessed based on competencies and materials that have been sufficiently taught and practiced during classroom instruction. In addition, (Tiana & Maruf, 2024) explain that English summative assessments require strong content validity because assessment tasks should accurately represent the language competencies taught in class. When examination content substantially differs from classroom instruction, the fairness and validity of assessment practices may be weakened.

Concerns regarding misalignment in English summative assessment practices have been reported in various developing EFL contexts. Previous studies conducted in Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Morocco indicate that inconsistencies between classroom instruction and examination materials may reduce assessment validity and weaken the accuracy of evaluating students' learning (Akhtar et al., 2022; Baddane, 2025; Veeran & Mohamad, 2024). In EFL settings, where students depend heavily on classroom instruction as their primary source of language exposure, alignment between instructional materials and assessment tasks becomes particularly important.

Existing studies have predominantly examined assessment practices from institutional, curricular, and teacher-centered perspectives. Several studies focused on assessment literacy, curriculum implementation, and challenges in assessment design during curriculum transition processes (Ghotafani et al., 2023; Hilden et al., 2022). Other studies emphasized the importance of content validity and instructional alignment in ensuring fair and meaningful English language assessment practices (Akhtar et al., 2022; Tiana & Maruf, 2024). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that assessment misalignment remains a recurring issue within contemporary EFL education.

In Indonesia, concerns regarding English assessment alignment have become increasingly visible during the transition from Kurikulum 2013 (K-13) to Kurikulum Merdeka. Although Kurikulum Merdeka promotes flexible and student-centered learning, assessment implementation in many schools remains relatively standardized and examination-oriented (Ghotafani et al., 2023). Consequently, students may encounter English summative assessments that do not fully correspond with the instructional materials covered during classroom learning. (Priawasana & Subiyantoro, 2024) further explain that the coexistence of K-13 and Kurikulum Merdeka has created adjustment challenges in instructional planning and assessment implementation across Indonesian educational institutions.

These challenges may become more complex within Islamic senior high schools (Madrasah Aliyah), particularly in rural or pesantren-based educational settings. Such schools frequently encounter limitations related to English learning exposure, instructional resources, and professional assessment training (Fitria et al., 2024). In many pesantren-based schools, English often receives less instructional emphasis than religious subjects, although students are still expected to achieve standardized academic targets in English assessment. Consequently, students

may experience greater difficulty when English summative assessments include unfamiliar materials or competencies insufficiently discussed during classroom instruction.

Beyond issues of validity and curriculum alignment, previous studies also suggest that assessment practices may influence students' emotional experiences and learning behaviour. (Winarti & Nurhasanah, 2021) found that summative assessments may generate negative washback effects on students' motivation and classroom engagement. Similarly, (Ismail et al., 2022) reported that assessment practices perceived as unpredictable or disconnected from instruction may increase students' anxiety and reduce self-confidence in learning. These findings indicate that assessment misalignment may affect not only academic performance but also students' psychological engagement in English learning.

Despite the growing body of research on assessment alignment, limited studies have specifically explored students' perspectives on misalignment in English summative assessment practices within Islamic senior high school EFL contexts. Previous studies have largely emphasized institutional policies, curriculum implementation, and teacher-related issues rather than students' lived experiences of assessment misalignment. Consequently, little is known about how students in pesantren-based EFL classrooms perceive, emotionally respond to, and cope with English summative assessments that they consider inconsistent with classroom instruction. This gap is significant because students are the primary individuals directly affected by English classroom assessment practices. Therefore, investigating students' perspectives is important for understanding how assessment misalignment is experienced within real EFL classroom settings, particularly in under-resourced Islamic educational environments.

To address this gap, this study focuses on MA Daarul Falah, an Islamic senior high school (Madrasah Aliyah) in Indonesia, as the case study of English summative assessment practices in a pesantren-based EFL learning environment. MA Daarul Falah integrates formal academic education with Islamic boarding school traditions, where students simultaneously participate in academic and religious learning activities. Initial informal observations and discussions with students and teachers indicated that many students experienced difficulties in English summative assessments because several examination materials did not fully correspond with the instructional content delivered during classroom learning. Teachers also acknowledged that certain English assessment materials differed from the materials taught throughout the semester. These conditions suggest the possibility of misalignment between classroom instruction and English summative assessment practices within the school context.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore students' perspectives on misalignment in English summative assessment practices at MA Daarul Falah. This study employs a qualitative case study approach informed by narrative inquiry perspectives to investigate how students experience, interpret, and respond to English summative assessments that they perceive as inconsistent with classroom instruction. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do students perceive and experience misaligned English summative assessments?
2. In what ways are English summative assessments misaligned with classroom instruction and learning objectives?
3. What emotional and academic impacts do these misaligned assessments have on students?
4. What strategies do students and teachers employ to cope with these assessment practices?

By foregrounding students' voices, this study seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions regarding fairness, validity, and alignment in English language assessment practices. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and educational institutions in designing more transparent, student-centered, and pedagogically

aligned English summative assessments, particularly within under-resourced Islamic educational contexts.

## **2. METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore students' experiences and perceptions regarding the misalignment between English summative assessments and classroom instruction. The case study approach considered appropriate because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, interpretations, and emotional responses toward English summative assessment practices within a specific educational environment (Creswell & Poth, 2016). It also enabled the researcher to investigate assessment practices and classroom experiences within their real-life context. Narrative inquiry perspectives were also used to support the interpretation of how students described and understood their experiences with English summative assessments. The study was taken place in MA Daarul Falah, an Islamic senior high school (Madrasah Aliyah) located in Careng, Banten, Indonesia, as a single bounded educational setting within a pesantren-based EFL context. It was selected because preliminary observations indicated potential inconsistencies between classroom instruction and English summative assessment practices. In addition, the school represents a pesantren-based educational environment in which students rely heavily on classroom instruction as their primary source of English exposure and language practice.

### **Data Collection**

This study employed two primary data collection methods: semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Both methods were used to explore students' experiences and perceptions regarding misalignment between English summative assessments and classroom instruction within a qualitative case study informed by narrative inquiry perspectives.

For the semi-structured interviews, ten students from various grade levels (XI) at MA Daarul Falah, an Islamic senior high school located in Careng, Banten, were involved. These students were purposefully selected based on two key criteria: (1) active participation in English learning activities such as speaking clubs, English extracurricular programs, or high engagement during classroom instruction, and (2) summative English assessment scores below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). Including students from different year levels allowed the study to capture a broader range of experiences and perceptions regarding the misalignment between instructional content and assessment tasks. Additionally, one English teacher was interviewed to provide pedagogical insights and to contextualise the students' responses within the instructional and assessment framework implemented at the school.

The interviews were conducted individually in a quiet room at the school to ensure privacy and minimise distractions. Each interview lasted approximately 15–20 minutes and was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia using open-ended questions. This interview format allowed participants to describe their experiences, emotional responses, and coping strategies related to English summative assessments. Interviews with the English teacher focused on instructional coverage, assessment preparation, and the alignment between classroom teaching and assessment practices. Due to ethical considerations and participants' comfort, the interviews were documented through detailed note-taking rather than audio recording. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that participation was voluntary and confidential.

### Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted to examine the extent of alignment between the materials taught in class and the content of the English summative assessment. Three key sources were reviewed: (1) the official English textbook used by students during the semester, (2) teacher-reported instructional coverage and documented lesson progress, and (3) the actual summative test administered at the end of the term.

The textbook served as the primary reference for classroom instruction, while teacher records and interviews provided additional clarity on which units were covered prior to the exam. This information was then compared to the content and structure of the summative assessment, with a particular focus on the essay section.

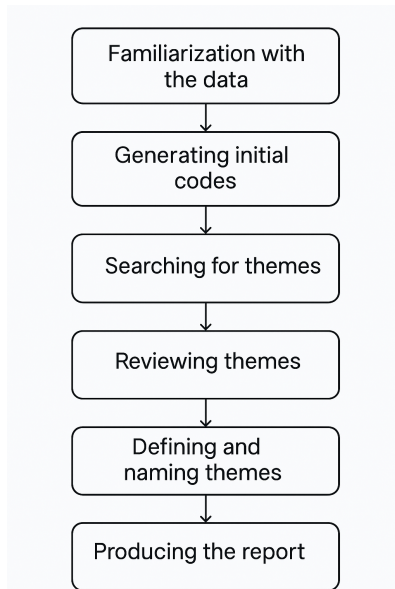
The analysis followed (Bowen, 2009) Framework, which treats documents as contextual sources that help clarify institutional practices. In this study, document triangulation played a crucial role in confirming the gap between classroom realities and assessment expectations.

### Data Analysis

The data obtained from interviews and document analysis were analysed using thematic analysis following (Braun & Clarke, 2021) six-phase procedure. This approach was selected because it allows researchers to systematically identify, organise, and interpret recurring patterns within qualitative data.

The analysis involved several stages, including data familiarisation, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report writing. Interview data were analysed to identify recurring patterns related to students' perceptions, emotional experiences, and coping strategies regarding misaligned English summative assessments. Meanwhile, document analysis focused on identifying inconsistencies between instructional materials, classroom learning content, and assessment tasks.

The findings from interviews and document analysis were triangulated to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Narrative inquiry perspectives were used to support the interpretation of how students described and understood their experiences with English summative assessment practices within their EFL classroom context.



**Figure 1.** Thematic Analysis Process Based on Braun & Clarke (2021).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Students' Perceptions and Experiences of Misaligned Assessments

The findings revealed that students perceived the English summative assessments as misaligned with the instructional materials delivered during classroom learning. Based on the thematic analysis of interview data, three major themes emerged: content misalignment, perceived unfairness, and declining learning motivation. Table 1 presents representative excerpts from students' narratives.

**Table 1.** Students' Perceptions of Misaligned English Summative Assessments

Theme	Students' Narratives
<b>Content Misalignment</b>	"I was confused because the test was different from our material." "I studied hard about passive voice, but it did not appear in the test." "I was confident before the test, but the questions were different from what we learned."
<b>Perceived Unfairness</b>	"I knew our teacher did not design the test." "It was not fair because the topics we studied were not included in the exam." "The test should match our skills and classroom materials."
<b>Declining Motivation</b>	"I felt like studying was useless." "I preferred to relax because the test was always different." "I did not want to study hard anymore because the exam was unpredictable."

The first theme concerned students' perceptions of a disconnect between classroom instruction and assessment content. Most participants reported confusion because several examination items did not correspond with the materials discussed during English lessons. Students explained that they had prepared extensively for grammatical topics taught in class, particularly passive voice, yet the examination assessed different competencies and unfamiliar materials. Some students initially felt confident before taking the examination but later became uncertain after encountering test items unrelated to their classroom learning experiences.

These findings suggest that students perceived a substantial gap between instructional preparation and assessment expectations. Within EFL classrooms, where students depend heavily on classroom instruction as their primary source of language exposure, such inconsistency may weaken students' understanding of what competencies are actually expected during assessment activities. This condition reflects a breakdown of instructional alignment, where assessment tasks fail to adequately represent the competencies developed during classroom learning.

This finding supports (Akhtar et al., 2022), who emphasize that effective assessment practices require consistency between curriculum objectives, instructional activities, and assessment content. Similarly, (Tiana & Maruf, 2024) argue that summative assessments should demonstrate strong content validity by accurately reflecting the materials and competencies taught during instruction. In the present study, the absence of alignment appeared to reduce students' confidence in the credibility and relevance of English summative assessments.

The second theme involved students' perceptions of assessment inequity. Many participants considered the examination unfair because they were assessed on materials insufficiently discussed during classroom learning. Several students also recognized that the English teacher did not fully design the test, leading them to perceive the assessment process as institutionally disconnected from their classroom experiences. As a result, students

associated fairness not only with scoring procedures but also with whether examination content appropriately reflected instructional activities.

These findings indicate that students evaluated fairness through their direct learning experiences in the classroom. When examination tasks assessed unfamiliar materials, students perceived that their preparation efforts were not meaningfully acknowledged through assessment outcomes. Such conditions appeared to weaken students' trust in the assessment process itself.

This finding aligns with (Baddane, 2025), who explains that balanced and appropriate assessment practices contribute significantly to students' learning motivation and engagement. Likewise, (Winarti & Nurhasanah, 2021) found that assessment practices perceived as unfair may generate negative washback effects on students' attitudes toward English learning. Within the present study, perceptions of unfairness emerged primarily because students believed that examination materials failed to represent what had actually been taught during instructional activities.

The third theme concerned academic disengagement resulting from repeated experiences with unpredictable examinations. Several students reported losing motivation to study English seriously because they believed that classroom preparation would not necessarily help them during examinations. Some participants stated that they preferred to "relax" rather than study intensively because the examination content frequently differed from the materials discussed during classroom learning.

These findings suggest that assessment misalignment may gradually influence students' academic engagement and learning behaviour. When students repeatedly encounter inconsistency between effort and assessment outcomes, they may begin questioning the usefulness of classroom learning itself. This condition may encourage passive learning behaviours, reduced preparation, and lower emotional investment in English learning activities.

This finding is consistent with (Ismail et al., 2022) who reported that inappropriate assessment practices may negatively influence students' motivation, anxiety, and self-regulation. The findings also reflect the concept of negative washback proposed by (Winarti & Nurhasanah, 2021), where assessment practices indirectly shape students' attitudes and learning behaviours. In the present study, repeated experiences with unpredictable examinations appeared to contribute to declining academic engagement within the EFL learning environment.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students perceived misaligned English summative assessments as confusing, inequitable, and demotivating. More importantly, the findings suggest that assessment misalignment extends beyond technical issues of test construction and validity. Within EFL classrooms, particularly in under-resourced Islamic educational settings, assessment misalignment may also influence students' emotional engagement, trust in instructional processes, and willingness to participate actively in English learning. These findings reinforce the importance of strengthening alignment between curriculum objectives, classroom instruction, and assessment practices to support fair and meaningful English language learning experiences.

### **3.2. Misalignment Between Instruction and Assessment**

To further examine students' perceptions regarding assessment inconsistency, document analysis was conducted by comparing the English summative assessment with the instructional

materials used during classroom learning. The analysis focused on three primary sources: the English textbook used throughout the semester, teacher-reported instructional coverage, and the actual summative test administered to students. The findings revealed substantial misalignment between the competencies taught during classroom instruction and the materials assessed in the examination.

**Table 2.** Misalignment Between Instructional Materials and Summative Assessment Content

Summative Assessment Content	Instructional Material Covered in Class	Alignment Status
Analytical exposition text about smoking	Cause-and-effect text	Misaligned
Reading comprehension on procedural texts	Cause-and-effect and report texts	Misaligned
Comparative and superlative degree	Passive voice	Misaligned
Imperative sentence construction	Passive voice	Misaligned
Procedural writing task	No procedural writing instruction identified	Misaligned

The document analysis indicated that several examination components assessed competencies and topics that had not been sufficiently discussed during classroom instruction. For example, students reported learning passive voice during English lessons, yet the examination primarily assessed comparative and superlative structures as well as imperative sentences. Similarly, reading comprehension tasks focused on procedural texts and analytical exposition materials, although these topics were not emphasized in the instructional materials covered during the semester.

In addition, writing tasks included procedural and argumentative topics that students stated had not been practiced extensively during classroom learning. Although a small number of examination items partially reflected textbook materials, most assessment tasks appeared disconnected from the competencies emphasized during instruction. These findings support students' perceptions that the examination content differed substantially from their classroom learning experiences.

The findings indicate a significant issue related to content validity and instructional alignment within English summative assessment practices. According to (G. T. L. Brown et al., 2019) language assessments should accurately represent the learning objectives and competencies developed during instructional activities. Similarly, (Tiana & Maruf, 2024) explain that summative assessments require strong content validity because assessment tasks should reflect the materials taught in the classroom. When assessments evaluate competencies insufficiently taught during instruction, the validity and fairness of the assessment process may be weakened.

The findings also reflect the concept of curriculum and assessment alignment proposed by (Akhtar et al., 2022), which emphasizes the importance of consistency between curriculum objectives, instructional implementation, and assessment content. In the present study, this alignment appeared weakened because students were assessed on competencies beyond their classroom instructional experiences. Consequently, the examination may not have functioned as an accurate indicator of students' actual English learning achievement.

Another important finding concerns the institutional context influencing assessment practices. Based on teacher interviews, the English summative assessment was not fully designed

by the classroom teacher but partially developed through institutional or external coordination processes. One teacher explained:

“The test did not fully come from our classroom material because some questions were prepared centrally. Sometimes I also feel confused when students complain that the topics are different from what we studied.”

This finding suggests that the misalignment was influenced not only by classroom instructional issues but also by broader institutional assessment procedures. The coexistence of Kurikulum 2013 (K-13) and Kurikulum Merdeka may have further complicated assessment planning because schools were simultaneously adapting to curriculum transition processes. As explained by (Priawasana & Subiyantoro, 2024) curriculum transitions in Indonesia have created challenges in maintaining consistency between instructional implementation and assessment design across educational institutions.

Within the context of Islamic senior high schools (Madrasah Aliyah), these challenges may become more complex due to limited instructional resources, uneven assessment training, and restricted English learning exposure. In pesantren-based educational settings, English instruction frequently receives less classroom allocation compared to religious subjects, although students are still expected to meet standardized English assessment demands. Consequently, students may encounter difficulties when assessments evaluate competencies insufficiently developed during classroom instruction.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the English summative assessment at MA Daarul Falah showed substantial misalignment with classroom instructional content. This misalignment appeared to weaken content validity, reduce students’ perceptions of fairness, and create uncertainty regarding assessment expectations. The findings therefore reinforce the importance of strengthening coordination between instructional planning and assessment development to ensure that English summative assessments function as fair and meaningful measures of students’ learning achievement within EFL classrooms.

### 3.3. Emotional and Academic Impacts of Misaligned English Summative Assessments

The findings further revealed that misalignment between classroom instruction and English summative assessment produced significant emotional and academic consequences for students. Based on the thematic analysis of interview data, three interconnected impacts emerged: anxiety and confusion, declining self-confidence, and reduced academic engagement. These findings indicate that assessment misalignment affected not only students’ examination performance but also their emotional experiences and attitudes toward English learning. Table 3 presents representative excerpts from students’ narratives regarding the emotional and academic impacts of misaligned assessments.

**Table 3.** Emotional and Academic Impacts of Misaligned English Summative Assessments

Theme	Students’ Narratives
Anxiety and Confusion	“I was confused and just guessed the answers.”
	“I felt anxious because I did not understand the questions.”
	“The questions were unexpected, so I did not know how to manage my time.”
Declining Self-Confidence	“I already knew my score would be bad.”
	“I was confident before the test, but the exam destroyed my confidence.”
	“I just wanted to finish quickly and leave the classroom.”

Theme	Students' Narratives
Reduced Academic Engagement	"I studied until midnight because the test was unpredictable."
	"What I studied did not appear in the exam."
	"I became tired of studying English seriously."

### 3.4 Students' and Teachers' Responses to Assessment Misalignment

The findings also revealed that both students and teachers developed various strategies to respond to the misalignment between classroom instruction and English summative assessment practices. Although these responses differed in form, they generally reflected attempts to cope with uncertainty, unfamiliar examination materials, and limited institutional control over assessment design. Based on the thematic analysis, two major patterns emerged: students' adaptive coping strategies and teachers' instructional adjustment efforts.

Table 4 presents representative excerpts from students' and teachers' narratives regarding their responses to assessment misalignment.

**Table 4.** Students' and Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Assessment Misalignment.

Theme	Participants' Narratives
Students' Adaptive Coping Strategies	"I just guessed the answers if the questions looked unfamiliar."
	"I relied on keywords that I remembered from class."
	"Sometimes I asked my friends about possible test topics."
Teachers' Instructional Adjustment Efforts	"Before the test, I reviewed the basic materials again."
	"I gave additional exercises because I was worried the test would be different."
	"Sometimes I also felt confused because the exam did not fully reflect what we studied."

The first theme concerned students' adaptive coping strategies during examinations. Many participants explained that they relied on guessing, intuition, or partial understanding when encountering unfamiliar test items. Several students attempted to identify keywords from classroom materials to help them answer questions, even when the topics differed from what had been taught. Others reported depending on peer discussions and informal information-sharing regarding possible examination topics.

These findings indicate that students attempted to adapt pragmatically to unpredictable assessment conditions. However, the coping strategies identified in this study were generally reactive rather than academically constructive. Instead of demonstrating deeper understanding of English competencies, students focused on survival-oriented examination strategies designed to minimize failure during assessment activities.

This condition reflects Gebril (2021) who describes it as surface-level learning behaviour resulting from assessment uncertainty. When students perceive assessments as disconnected from instructional experiences, they may prioritize guessing strategies, memorization, and short-term preparation rather than meaningful language development. In the present study, students' responses suggest that repeated assessment unpredictability may gradually shift learning orientation away from genuine competency development toward examination survival strategies.

The second theme involved teachers' instructional adjustment efforts in responding to the assessment situation. Although teachers acknowledged limited control over examination design, they still attempted to help students prepare for the summative assessment. Several teachers reported reviewing previously taught materials, providing additional exercises, and offering

supplementary guidance before examinations. These efforts were intended to reduce students' confusion and help them cope with potentially unfamiliar examination content.

At the same time, teachers also expressed uncertainty and ethical concern regarding the fairness of the assessment process. One teacher explained:

“Sometimes I also feel confused because the test does not fully match the materials we studied in class.”

Another teacher stated:

“I reviewed the basic materials again because I was worried the students would not understand the examination questions.”

These findings suggest that teachers were also affected by the misalignment between instruction and assessment. Although they attempted to support students through additional preparation activities, they remained constrained by institutional assessment procedures beyond their direct control. Consequently, teachers functioned not only as instructional facilitators but also as mediators attempting to bridge the gap between classroom learning and examination demands.

This finding relates to the concept of teacher agency discussed by (Koro & Hagger-Vaughan, 2025), which emphasizes teachers' efforts to act meaningfully within institutional limitations. In the present study, teachers attempted to reduce the negative impact of assessment misalignment despite having limited authority over examination construction. However, these responses remained temporary and reactive because the underlying issue of instructional and assessment inconsistency was not structurally resolved.

The findings also indicate that the coexistence of curriculum transition processes and centralized assessment practices may contribute to uncertainty within EFL classrooms. As schools continue adapting to curriculum changes, teachers may experience difficulties ensuring that classroom instruction, learning objectives, and assessment practices remain fully aligned. This situation appears particularly challenging within under-resourced Islamic educational settings, where English instructional exposure and professional assessment support may already be limited.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that both students and teachers actively attempted to manage the consequences of assessment misalignment through various coping and adjustment strategies. Nevertheless, these responses primarily addressed the symptoms of misalignment rather than the structural causes underlying the problem. The findings therefore highlight the importance of strengthening teacher involvement in assessment planning, improving coordination between instructional and assessment practices, and ensuring that English summative assessments accurately reflect classroom learning experiences. Without stronger alignment mechanisms, assessment uncertainty may continue influencing students' learning behaviour, emotional engagement, and perceptions of fairness within EFL educational contexts.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perspectives on misalignment in English summative assessment practices within an Islamic senior high school (Madrasah Aliyah) EFL context. The findings revealed that many students perceived the English summative assessments as insufficiently aligned with the instructional materials and competencies taught during classroom learning. Students consistently reported experiences of confusion, perceived unfairness, declining

motivation, anxiety, and reduced self-confidence when examination content differed from what had been discussed during English lessons.

The document analysis further confirmed substantial discrepancies between classroom instructional materials and the content assessed in the summative examination. Several examination topics and grammatical competencies assessed during the test had not been sufficiently covered during classroom instruction. These findings indicate that the summative assessment demonstrated limited instructional alignment and weakened content validity. Within EFL learning environments, where students depend heavily on classroom instruction as their primary source of English exposure, such inconsistencies may significantly affect students' opportunities to demonstrate their actual language competencies.

The findings also showed that assessment misalignment influenced students not only academically but also emotionally and psychologically. Students described experiences of stress, uncertainty, disappointment, and disengagement resulting from repeated encounters with unpredictable assessment practices. In response, students developed coping strategies such as guessing answers, relying on peers, and reducing preparation effort. Teachers likewise attempted to minimize the effects of misalignment through additional instructional support and review activities, although they remained constrained by institutional assessment procedures and limited involvement in test design.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the importance of curriculum and assessment alignment, constructive alignment, and content validity within English language assessment practices. The findings suggest that assessment alignment should not be understood merely as a technical issue of test construction. Rather, alignment also plays a significant role in shaping students' emotional engagement, academic confidence, and perceptions of fairness within EFL classrooms.

Practically, the study highlights the importance of involving classroom teachers more actively in assessment development processes, particularly during curriculum transition periods such as the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka. Schools and educational institutions should strengthen coordination between instructional planning and assessment design to ensure that English summative assessments accurately reflect classroom learning experiences and learning objectives. Greater attention should also be given to assessment fairness within under-resourced Islamic educational settings, where students may have more limited English learning exposure compared to general educational contexts.

This study was limited to one Islamic senior high school context and involved a relatively small number of participants. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all EFL educational settings in Indonesia. Future research may explore assessment misalignment across broader educational contexts, compare perceptions across different school types, or investigate the relationship between assessment alignment and students' long-term English learning achievement. Further studies may also examine institutional assessment policies and teachers' roles in assessment decision-making processes within curriculum transition contexts.

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