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### **Challenges In Implementing Online Assessment Strategies To Improve EFL Students' Proficiency "If We Wish To Discover The Truth About An Educational System, We Just Look Into Its Assessment Procedures." (Rowntree, 1977, P. 1)**

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#### **Abstract**

Teachers must make use of a range of technological tools to evaluate students' learning skill. This is as a result of the pandemic condition, where online learning has taken preference over other learning activities. Consequently, teachers need to be more knowledgeable about how to use various communication tools, perform effective assessment methods, and conduct learning procedures. In this study, a qualitative research design was paired with descriptive analysis. We conducted interviews for this investigation. This study revealed that online teachers used three different online assessment strategies to raise their students' learning proficiency during the Covid-19 pandemic. These techniques include portfolio management, self-assessment, and online test administration. Teachers encountered a number of difficulties while attempting to conduct classroom assessments using online systems, including a slow internet connection, high internet quota costs, limited access to computers and smartphones, insufficient digital technology proficiency, and difficulty. The study infers that educators should become more proficient in communication technology and adhere to the administrative requirements of online assessment methodologies.

**Keywords:** qualitative, online assessment, online learning, Pandemic, portfolio management, platform.

#### **Introduction**

To monitor students' progress toward learning objectives, instructors who design online courses might develop assessments. When combined with thoughtfully created learning objectives, assessment techniques can seal the feedback loop and generate excellent artifacts for programmatic, campus-wide, and course assessments. This study aims to provide instructors new to online education with an overview of the creation and use of assessment systems. Teachers must also have the necessary skills in order to instruct, advise, motivate, and direct students to have remarkable, determined, and noble characters. The task at hand for the teachers is difficult. Several skills and competencies need to be strengthened in order for instructors to be of the highest caliber (Mantra et al., 2019). As a result, teachers nowadays face a variety of challenges in carrying out their jobs. Teachers must also be competent in conducting tests that can be used to determine if students possess the abilities needed to function in a 21st-century society (Ma & Gao, 2010). Therefore, in order to assist their students in reaching higher levels of cognition, teachers must possess higher levels of competence.

High-quality assessments can encourage students to reflect more thoroughly on the material (Baleni, 2015). It may be stated that pupils can more easily enhance their higher-order thinking abilities through examination of those abilities. Assessments should therefore be carried out to guarantee increases in cognitive ability and learning capacity. Furthermore, in a broader sense, teachers are expected to always keep up with the advancements in the educational system. As assessment methods, science and technology must be mastered to meet the students' present demands (Wang, 2018). This suggests that educators need to have a technical mindset. In order

to promote the learning process, the 21st century is characterized by the availability of numerous types of online tools and facilities in the educational sector (Alruwais, Wills, & Wald, 2018).

Technology is crucial in the transition from traditional learning to technology-based learning. According to Alruwais, Wills, and Wald (2018), technological advancements can alter a person's ability to learn and present knowledge in a good and complex way. Technology can help teachers create more effective online tests. In order to help teachers, make better decisions and enhance the learning process moving forward, assessment is a procedure or an endeavor to gather as much information as possible regarding students' growth during learning activities. Activities that support teaching and learning must include assessment (Robles & Braathen, 2002).

Information regarding the accomplishment of outcomes from students' learning processes by specified goals must be gathered for an assessment of learning outcomes. Additionally, by implementing the assessment, teachers can give feedback to students to help them become more competent. In fact, assessment is the procedure of collecting data and analyzing data to gauge students' learning outcomes (Kearns, 2012). Besides, it is used to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the learning process in order to form the basis for adjusting learning strategies to make the subsequent learning process more efficient. Under typical circumstances, teachers do not need to acquire any specific techniques for the assessment process. However, because the assessment process is done informally or online during the present pandemic, teachers must have the ability to develop acceptable assessment process tactics (Gamage, et.al, 2020). To avoid having to interact directly with their students, teachers are compelled to administer exams online. Teachers use remote assessment techniques or distance assessment practices to do home assessments (Sewell, Frith & Colvin, 2010). Therefore, the capability of assessment technology is also required, in addition to appropriate assessment strategies and good and well-planned assessment systems (Cakiroglu et al., 2017a). Due to the quick development and improvement of technology nowadays, teachers may now teach more creatively through the accessibility of communication technology. Moreover, it is now simpler to conduct online assessments using the internet network (Timmis et al., 2016).

Teachers can examine and evaluate online learning results by using media application that is connected to the internet network. However, certain issues with implementing online assessments are simply due to inadequate internet connection, limited accessibility, or unavailable online networks. The education community made a variety of measures to overcome these challenges, ensuring that assessment activities were given properly by making sure that all students had access to technology and internet networks equally, and that teachers were more proficient in the use of online tools (Cakiroglu et al., 2017a).

Understanding the many issues associated with using online platforms to administer tests could assist teachers in being aware of the difficulties in learning and teaching process. This study was undertaken primarily to answer the following research questions: (1) What online assessment methods are used by EFL teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic? (2) What difficulties do EFL teachers encounter while administering online tests during the COVID-19 pandemic?

## Methods

This study combined descriptive analysis with a qualitative research design. For the purposes of this study, interviews for three university instructors from different private universities were conducted to gather information about the implementation of and difficulties in carrying out the online assessment. Moreover, descriptive analysis was used to process the data in order to look at the phenomena that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic's learning process. We conducted interviews for some teachers who use Zoom and Google Meet classes. By completing a cross-analysis of all the data gathered through interviews, all data were triangulated to confirm the data's dependability.

## Results and Discussion

During the Coronavirus pandemic, teachers used a variety of online assessment tools, which were the sole focus of this study. Furthermore, this study aimed to shed light on the difficulties teachers faced when administering the assessment. This study concentrated on thoroughly examining the

methods utilized for conducting online tests during the COVID 19 epidemic, as well as the difficulties EFL teachers ran into. The following Table 1 displays the research's findings.

**TABLE 1 |** Result of the Study

Teacher	Online assessment Strategy	Challenges	Platform
Instructor 1	Online test administration self-evaluation	Slow internet network, expensive internet quota prices, limited access to computer and smartphone devices, poor ability in using digital technology	Zoom, Google Classroom
Instructor 2	online test administration, portfolio	Slow internet network, expensive internet quota prices, limited access to computer and smartphone devices, poor ability in using digital technology	WhatsApp, Google Classroom
Instructor 3	online test administration, portfolio	A lack of access to computers and smartphones, a slow internet connection, high internet quota prices, a lack of digital technology proficiency, and difficulty interacting effectively online	WhatsApp, Google Classroom,
Instructor 4	online test administration, portfolio	<p>Online Exams: Not all students are able to access the assessment due to technical issues in their devices, or they might start the quiz but cannot submit it because a technical problem happened in the browser. Sometimes, the system kicks the student out while taking the quiz. As a result, the student has to retake the exam.</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> When submitting assignments, the percentage of similarity might appear very high, especially when writing about a common topic.</p> <p>Online Quiz (self-assessment): If a self-assessment activity is assigned during the lecture, some students have to leave the session to do the activity because their devices do not support the format of the assessment. This issue might affect their attendance record.</p> <p>Creating Online Exam: while creating online exams, if teachers copy the questions from an internet source, the font used might differ from one device to another.</p>	Moodle
Instructor 5	Online test administration, portfolio	<p>Online Tests: Technical difficulties with online platforms.</p> <p>Self-assessment: Lack of student engagement and self-reflection.</p> <p>Portfolio management: Difficulty in tracking and managing student work.</p> <p>Online Quizzes: Technical difficulties with online platforms.</p> <p>Projects: Lack of student engagement.</p>	Zoom /Collaboration ultra
Instructor 6	Online test administration, portfolio	<p>Online Quiz: Appropriate use of Lockdown Browser.</p> <p>Assignment: Encourage Learners to submit original work. Interaction with peers and instructor.</p> <p>Virtual Lab Activity: Ensure Learners develop the required skills by doing the activity on their own. Encourage more interaction among peers and with instructors during self-paced sessions.</p>	Respondus Lockdown Browser.  Smart Campus  Smart Campus

Moreover, throughout the interviews, the majority of the teachers described how they ran into the same difficulties, which were primarily related to their students' inadequate digital skills, slow internet connections, and overpriced internet quota costs. The difficulties faced by the teachers varied in degree but were similar in nature. These factors included geographic location, economic background, and prior technological knowledge.

*"Well, the online learning and teaching approach is fairly new to me. We live in a remote area. I mostly use Zoom to teach and grade my students. The tests are sent to my pupils via the university App, and they reply with their responses. The prices associated with my students' online quotas are overpriced, and the internet connection is quite inconsistent that students always complain from having power cut. (teacher 1)*

*"The major difficulty I face is assessing and teaching my students online. It can be difficult to monitor my pupils, however; periodically, I post assessments through Google Classroom, university App and occasionally using WhatsApp. I ask my students to submit me all of their assignments at once each week that are compiled in a portfolio, however, it is hard to know if this is their actual work or not that affect genuine evaluation. (Teacher 2).*

*"I teach my students using Google Classroom and WhatsApp. As a result, when I deliver my students' comments via Google Classroom, it makes it easier for me to analyze them. I periodically send tests in Google Form style via WhatsApp. I prepared a portfolio from the assignments my students submitted. The major issue is the credibility of the assessments' results as the assessments are not monitored and I suppose that it is their efforts, however, it might be not (Teacher 3).*

*"In online exams assessment: Not all students are able to access the assessment due to technical issues in their devices, or they might start the quiz but cannot submit it because a technical problem happened in the browser. Sometimes, the system kicks the student out while taking the quiz. As a result, the student must retake the exam. But, in assignments: When submitting assignments, the percentage of similarity might appear very high, especially when writing about a common topic. In online quiz (self-assessment): If a self-assessment activity is assigned during the lecture, some students have to leave the session to do the activity because their devices do not support the format of the assessment. This issue might affect their attendance record. While creating online exams, if teachers copy the questions from an internet source, the font used might differ from one device to another. (Teacher 4).*

*"In online tests: technical difficulties with online platforms. In self-assessment: lack of student engagement and self-reflection. Portfolio management: difficulty in tracking and managing student work. While in online quizzes: technical difficulties with online platforms. In projects: lack of student engagement. (Teachers 5).*

*"In online quiz: appropriate use of Lockdown Browser. In assignment: encourage learners to submit original work. interaction with peers and instructor. In virtual lab activity: ensure learners develop the required skills by doing the activity on their own. Encourage more interaction among peers and with instructors during self-paced sessions". (Teachers 6).*

Also, it was discovered that teachers mostly used six types of assessment strategies, including the administration of online tests, portfolios, Moodle, Collaboration ultra, Respondus Lockdown Browser and self-assessment or reflection. Google Meet, Zoom Meeting, WhatsApp, and Google Classroom were the online platforms that were employed in the meantime. Due to the platforms' challenging internet connections, usage of them varied.

In a larger sense, this study attempted to shed light on a number of ideas and recommendations for enhancing online learning and online assessment administration. This study revealed that the instructors who participated in it were aware that both traditional and online exams served only to gauge students' learning progress. Assessment is presented in this context as though it were a distinct activity from the learning process (Widiastuti et al., 2019).

Some teachers are increasingly aware of the fact that assessments aren't just meant to gauge students' mastery of subject matter; they can also be used to increase students' competency in the learning process (Frunza, 2014). As a result, three methods must be used to conduct the assessment, namely: (1) assessment as learning, (2) assessment for learning, and (3) assessment of learning. The purpose of learning assessments is to gauge how well students have mastered predetermined competencies. While assessment as learning enables students to view their learning achievements and progress to set learning goals, assessment for learning enables

teachers to use information on students' conditions to improve learning (Jordan, 2009). As a result, assessment of learning and assessment for learning are crucial types of evaluation for enhancing students' competency (Hargreaves, 2005).

Three assessment methods were used in this study by teachers: (1) online test administration; (2) self-evaluation; and (3) portfolio. Online test administration is an assessment method that involves sending tests using programs like WhatsApp, Google Forms, and Google Classroom. Following the learning process, students were required to complete assessments that the teachers provided. Since teachers were unable to physically observe the assessment activity, there was very little supervision because students completed the assessment at home and sent their answers to their teachers afterward. To ensure that students reach a greater level of competency, this suggests that teachers should be able to implement a variety of assessment procedures. (Arend, 2019).

Another assessment that teachers use when students are learning online is a portfolio. A portfolio is a collection of student work that has been systematically organized and arranged as a result of the learning efforts the student has made over a specific period of time. For instance, teachers may place the students' assignments into folders to demonstrate the students' learning progress over time. As a result, it can be claimed that a portfolio assessment is an ongoing assessment based on a collection of data that demonstrates how students' competencies have changed over time (Karimi and Shafiee, 2014).

According to the interviews, the instructors said that when evaluating students, they should take into account the following factors: (1) The assessments conducted by the instructors should not only be assessments of learning but also assessments for learning and assessments as learning; (2) assessments are intended to examine the attainment of fundamental competencies related to core competencies; and (3) assessment makes use of the reference criterion, which is an assessment that contrasts students' accomplishments with fulfill the required competency requirements (Mantra, Astawa, & Widiastuti, 2018). Additionally, the assessment results should be compared to the mastery of certain competencies rather than the outcomes of other students. During this corona outbreak, teachers must navigate a number of technical difficulties when delivering online examinations. The use of online systems, which require specialized knowledge to create and run the assessment using communication technology, has presented challenges for teachers (Alruwais, Wills, & Wald, 2018).

Furthermore, students had to deal with a variety of internet access issues that made the learning process and assessment difficult for them (Timmis et al., 2016). When performing online learning and assessment, the teacher faced a variety of difficulties. During the Covid-19 pandemic, most teachers primarily encountered the following difficulties when conducting classroom assessments: a slow internet connection, high internet quota costs, limited access to computers and smartphones, inadequate proficiency with digital technology, and difficulty conducting productive interactions. Giving students feedback on their evaluation outcomes is another challenge that teachers face as it is crucial to provide feedback to students in order to improve their capacity to acquire the predetermined learning competence specified in the learning program (Widiastuti et al., 2019).

## **Conclusion**

During the Covid-19 epidemic, the online learning process used in all educational institutions mandates that instructors execute a variety of assessment models that are acceptable and encourage internet education. Online-based assessments, and portfolio assessments are only a few of the assessment techniques used in online learning. To effectively complete the learning exercise, the instructors faced new hurdles as a result of the online assessment they completed during the Covid-19 epidemic. Furthermore, due to the difficulties faced, instructors had trouble conducting efficient online assessments represented in quizzes, virtual lab activities; hence, instructors should therefore be able to adapt their traditional teaching methods to online learning. Students should adjust their learning strategies constantly to keep up with the learning materials provided by the instructors via internet communication technology. According to a study, instructors should receive adequate training in online assessment and information technology so they can carry out the assessment effectively and meet the predefined assessment goals and

assessment objectives. It is also recommended that additional academics carry out more thorough research on the implementation of online assessment and the difficulties faced by the instructors.

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