

Online Assessment amidst COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring EFL Lecturers' Practices and Perception

*Sylvia Wenny J.*¹

¹ Corresponding Author, Management Department, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Muhammadiyah Jambi, Indonesia; sylviawenny@gmail.com

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Abstract

Assessment is a part of everyday life in education, and it takes many forms for many different aims and levels. Measuring the students' progress, competency, and accountability was necessary during the learning process. This study aims to learn about lecturers' opinions and practices about using online assessment during Covid-19 in the context of ELT classrooms. The research method used is qualitative research with a case study approach. It was conducted in the Economics and Business Faculty of the University of Muhammadiyah Jambi. Participatory observation and interviews are used to acquire data. It found some crucial points; online media used by lecturers to assess students and the positive and negative sides of lecturers' online assessment practices. They choose online text messages like Whats App Group and Telegram Group for interactive assessment. For neat task submission, they chose Google Classroom. And for assessing speaking, Tiktok, Instagram and Youtube became alternative platforms. There are benefits and drawbacks that lecturers have encountered, such as effectiveness and efficiency in correcting students' tasks as its benefits, plagiarism, student cheating, and extending submission tasks as its drawbacks.

Keywords: *online assessment, teachers' perspectives, teachers' practices*

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1. Introduction

The fast spread of the 2019 coronavirus (Covid-19) has compelled several nations, including Indonesia, to implement new regulations. Indonesia has ever taken PSBB to reduce the effect of Covid 19 by limiting society activities and warning them to stay in their house only. On the education side, students were allowed to study online. It happens till amidst Covid 19. As a result, the university must perform the learning process online, and the lecturer must also train the students through online education. Then, the lecturer should provide an online assessment to determine the students' perception of the lesson.

Assessment is a part of everyday life in education, and it comes in various forms, for various objectives, and at multiple levels. It needed to assess the students' progress, competence, and accountability during the learning process. When the result of the assessment comes out, lecturers are able to know how their students achieve the learning process. Then, it encourages students to study by providing feedback on their progress, measuring their success, and defining the curriculum's natural development.

Numerous research has emphasized the numerous advantages and problems of online evaluation. The advantage that is most common to find is its flexibility. Sarah Khan and Rashid Azim Khan (2018) reported that additional flexibility in the exam's location and timing is provided through online assessments. Consider how it gives students more freedom to choose where and when to complete their assignments, giving them more flexibility overall. On the other hand, the online assessment also gives some problems, and the most common is cheating or dishonesty. Based on observation, some factors may make this assessment biased. Bajinath and Singh (2019) examined numerous works on research on cheating activities in Higher Education from around 14 nations (HE). Moreover, they acknowledged that cheating is a global issue, with technology as one of its primary enablers. Then, King, Guyette, and Piotrowski (2009) found that most students believed that cheating happens more frequently and is more straightforward in online courses than in traditional ones. It happens since lecturers cannot directly monitor what students do when assessed. Based on those previous studies, it is necessary to know and analyze how online assessment practices are conducted by lecturers at the University of Muhammadiyah Jambi, especially for English subjects, and how they perceive the practice.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

1.1.1 Online Learning

Online learning has become a familiar word nowadays since the pandemic came. It allows the learning process is done virtually, without face to face. Online learning takes place remotely, and learners can access learning materials anytime and from any location using an internet connection (Albernathy, 2020). The lecturer may teach students somewhere, and so do students. Estevez et al. (2015) state that online learning is becoming a more popular

educational option for students who cannot attend face-to-face sessions at university or senior high school due to time and space issues. By using online learning, the learning process is almost similar to offline learning; lecturers may give presentations with supported programs. Yee (2011) mentioned that students might study in a web-based learning environment where course materials are available online. Students could talk with their classmates and teachers using a learning communication platform.

Since online learning has become more popular, there are a plethora of platforms that provide ways and support online learning. A learning platform, often known as a learning management system, is used in online learning (LMS). A learning management system (LMS) is a web-based software platform that offers an interactive online learning environment while automating the administration, organization, distribution, and reporting of educational material and student outcomes.

There are some models of LMS that educators commonly use. The first is the Zoom meeting, a highly beneficial alternative for virtual meetings that may suit learning demands in today's digital world by facilitating communication with many people without establishing direct touch (Pratiwi, Afandi, & Wahyuni, 2019). It supports lecturers or teachers in conducting online classes, especially in English. Some Zoom capabilities enable English lecturers to present and test four language skills via complete interactions with medical students and communicate the substance of material in various methods (Guzacheva, 2020). Then, Google Classroom is a platform that allows students and teachers to collaborate more easily; also, teachers may create and deliver tasks to students in an online classroom. The next is Edmodo. It is an educational website that adopts the concepts of a social network and modifies them for use in the school. Students and instructors may use Edmodo to engage with one another by sharing ideas, issues, and helpful hints. On Edmodo, a teacher may assign and grade work, and students can seek help from their classmates. And there are still many models of LMS.

Those platforms offer interesting ways of having online learning quickly. They have a flexible and easy manner through the internet that promotes individual learning or corporate performance goals. (Clark & Mayer, 2011, Maqableh et al., 2015). To sum up, although the conditions for teaching and learning are not ideal, this does not rule out the possibility of teaching and learning. There are several options on how to carry out the procedure.

1.1.2 Online Assessment

To quantify the success of a learning system managed by a teacher, assessment or evaluation in teaching and learning activities, whether online or offline, is required. Assessment is critical in language teaching and learning. Cheng and Fox (2017) define it as the daily classroom evaluation and large-scale testing for students that is planned and organized externally. In general, assessment is critical in education. It is necessary to increase the

quality of education and the learning process. It also encourages students to study by providing feedback on their progress, measuring their success, and defining the curriculum's real development. In online learning, the assessment must be done online and offline learning. Lecturers can track learners' progress and provide more content by administering frequent tests. During the Covid-19 epidemic, however, the evaluation process was altered from conventional to online assessments.

Online assessment is a process of evaluating learners' studying process done through the internet. As Abdulghani (2020) states, an online assessment is a web-based evaluation of a person's abilities, behaviors, and traits that takes place over the internet. Then Mayotte (2012) completes that online assessment is a new discipline that uses technology in a networked setting to improve the quality and efficiency of evaluating students' knowledge, skills, and talents. Based on those theories, it has been clear that online assessment and traditional assessment is differed only in how that assessment takes place.

There are various advances in assessment; they are related to technology and influence delivery efficiency. Online assessment includes more or less instantaneous results and diagnostic feedback, interaction with virtual characters such as avatars, comprehensive online training for raters of writing or speech tests, and automated rating of prolonged material. Alan and Tamas (2018) state that online assessments are examples of online assessments: binary choice, pairing, multiple choice, fill in the gaps, short answer, performance, conferences, portfolio, and self-assessment.

The effectiveness of online assessment is in line with the effectiveness of online learning. These are emphasized regarding administration, ease, efficiency, and cost savings. Then, instant feedback is one of the many advantages of online assessment since it offers learners a feel of how well they have performed right away (Noradila, Nishantini & Nur, 2021). It differs from the traditional assessment that needs more time to wait while the lecturers check and grade the students' work. In scoring learners, the lecturers are effortless since many applications/software offer easy scoring of learners' work. Alruwais, Wills, and Wald (2018) also argue that online assessments are especially well suited to closed questions and a large number of students since they provide a simple scoring procedure with minimum work on the teacher's behalf. Moreover, Aminudin and Susilo (2019) add that the online assessment can help minimize deforestation by lowering paper usage as a type of environmental stewardship. It's simply that instead of paper, they utilize smartphones or computers (software) to link the test application to students and the server over a computer network.

Although the advantages of online assessment were obvious at the time, the online assessment might be a severe issue that should be explored, particularly at the higher education level. The common problem is the capability internet and its speed. It may differ for each learner. The next issue is cheating and plagiarism. Hasan and Khan (2018) state that

because of the Internet, technology, and other readily available gadgets, it is now quite simple to obtain information or materials on any topic of interest, whether in written, visual, or audio format. It implies that students may use the Internet to access a wealth of resources and copy the material required to complete their assignments. Giving a particular project as an authentic assessment to the learners can minimize this issue to overcome this issue. The other issue is identity verification (Byrd & Lott, 2003). In giving online assessments to the learners, lecturers cannot see whether learners do it by themselves or not. Sometimes it could be expected that students will ask a friend, family, or paid person to administer the exam during the online assessment. It is suggested that the lecturer conduct the test using video calls like zoom.

2. Method

The research method used is qualitative research with Yin's case study approach. It was conducted in the Economics and Business Faculty of the University of Muhammadiyah Jambi. It was intended to determine the teachers' practice of implementing an online assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, three English lecturers taught English I in this faculty, all of which were samples in this research. Before interviewing them, they were informed that their information would be analyzed and reported on this research. The following table is the demography of the research participants.

Table 1. The Demography of the Research Participants

Lecturer	Gender	Background Study	Teaching Experience
1	Female	English Education	11 years
2	Male	English Education	8 years
3	Female	English Education	8 years

The questions that would be asked to the participants are related to the online assessment they did in their class, for instance, how did they do the online assessment, how online assessment gives advantages to the evaluation, and what problems were found in handling online assessment, etc. Participatory observation and interviews are used to acquire data. In contrast, the data analysis approach used in the current study is (1) Data reduction, which entails reducing the data collected in the field during interviews, observation, and recording. (2) Present data, e.g., by classifying and grouping data collected in the field. This is accomplished by discussing the preparation and implementation of an online-based evaluation in this scenario. (3) Concluding. Triangulation procedures, chats with friends, an

extension of observations, using reference materials, performing member checks, and auditing the research process were all used to assess the validity of the data.

3. Finding and Discussion

After collecting the data of lecturers' online assessments, some crucial points were found; online media is used to assess students' positive and negative sides of lecturers' online assessment practices.

3.1 Online Media Used in Assessing Students

During the pandemic, the whole education community faced significant problems in furthering students' education by shifting to online education, including online assessment, and utilizing all available technologies (Afiqah & Naing, 2020). The University of Muhammadiyah Jambi lecturers also faced those problems, including three lecturers who taught English in Economics and Business Faculty. On the other hand, focus on having online assessment; each had different ways of assessing learners. They also used several platforms to support their online assessment, such as Whats App, Google Forms, Google Classroom (GC), Quizzes, Telegram, and Zoom.

“In assessing students through a pandemic, I used WAG and google classroom. Students were asked to submit the tasks on these platforms. The tasks could be in the form of video, audio, and essay. I also used Google Form for a simple quiz.” (Lect. 1).

“I used WAG in assessing students online. All the tasks were submitted on this platform. I also used google forms to make several questions related to the materials given. It helped me to know learners score if it in the multiple choice form.” (Lect. 2).

“I used Telegram Group (TG) to assess learners. It is more interactive when I gave them quizzes as a part of the assessment. For giving tasks such as essays or multiple choice, I used google form. Besides, I also used Tiktok, Instagram, and Youtube platforms to submit students' speaking video tasks.” (Lect.3)

Based on those responses, there were variations in choosing a medium for assessment. They prefer online text messages like WAG and TG for interactive evaluation. WA was a basic, straightforward, and quick communication method familiar to all pupils. It enabled low-cost real-time messaging to individuals or groups at any time and location and facilitated collaborative learning (Cetinkaya, 2017). WA also provided for establishing groups of up to 256 contacts to whom communications in texts, videos, or audios may be transmitted simultaneously. Practical videos might be uploaded and transmitted simultaneously. Its capacity to provide fresh learning opportunities when geographical or temporal restrictions made “face-to-face meetings impossible” might also be utilized for evaluation.

Besides WA, there is also Telegram that lecturers use as an online assessment tool. The telegram contains Bots that may access information with the teacher. Bots are essentially Telegram accounts run by software rather than humans and frequently have all functionalities (Omidi, 2015). They can teach, play, search, broadcast, remembers, connect, interact with other services, and even send orders to the Internet of Things. And having online assessment could be done by using one kind of those bots in telegram.

And for neat task submission, they chose Google Classroom. They use it to establish courses, distribute assignments, grade them, offer comments, and see everything in one spot. The instructor thought it was a more effective social networking tool to promote online assessments than others.

Then, Tiktok, Instagram, and Youtube became alternative platforms for assessing speaking. The TikTok application may also make it easier for lecturers and learners to access information, and students can feel pleased studying since they are learning English in an unusual method. It is almost similar to Instagram. Because of their popularity, when students were asked to use TikTok or Instagram for the speaking test, their motivation increased, and they prepared well for their speaking. And for a longer video, the lecturer would ask to use Youtube. To analyze and grade students' speaking skills, lecturers only asked for students' video links.

Every platform they chose has been considered well for assessing the students. It is in line with Sanaky (2013), who states that the medium must help lecturers achieve learning objectives. It is helpful for the students but has positive effects on them, such as their motivation, awareness, etc.

3.2 Benefits and Drawbacks Side of Online Assessment Practice

3.2.1 The Benefits

Online assessments might influence learning progress. There are benefits and drawbacks that lecturers have encountered. The first benefits of online assessment are efficiency in correcting student task. Alruwais et al. (2016) state that compared to traditional assessment techniques, online assessment offers several advantages, such as reducing the time for teachers to correct papers. In line with Seifert and Feliks (2019), who state that it saves paper and time spent printing assignments. It reduces the constraints for evaluating student performance in class. It could be helpful in reading skills and other tasks written in the form of multiple choice, matching, etc. They chose Google Form to help them in doing it.

“In having quiz or task, I typed it in Google Form; then I set it so I could get their score immediately, it helped me to save my time.” (Lecturer 2)

“I also did not need to maintain students when conducting the assessment; I just sent the link or materials of task or exam and let them finish it while I could do another activity besides that.” (Lecturer 3).

It also happens for assessing specific skills. In assessing speaking skills, lecturers asked students to make a conversation video and then asked them to submit it to some platforms such as TikTok, Youtube, or Instagram. They might not take it down before they get love signs or comments from the lecturer as a sign it had scored. In this case, it still helps the lecturers to assess students' work every time and everywhere. As Seifert and Feliks (2019) states, the online assessment system would allow teachers to evaluate students at any time and location, and they would be able to track their progress later.

3.2.2 The Drawbacks

Besides the effectiveness and efficiency of online assessment, there were also some drawbacks that the lecturer encountered. First, almost all of the lecturers interviewed expressed concerns about plagiarism, cheating, and verifying the identities of individuals administering assessments. It happens because the Internet, technology, and others are readily available gadgets; it is now relatively simple to obtain information or materials on any topic of interest, whether in written, visual, or oral form (Hasan & Khan, 2018). The majority of lecturers expressed concern that online tests permitted students to cheat on one other or from internet sources.

“I wonder when reading their writing the task or essay. I know their original diction and language style. It was so different when they write in the task or essay; they are like a pro in writing.” (Lecturer 3)

“I also feel bad, when I gave task or essay to them, strangely almost half of them have similar answer or essay. They only changed their name, or changed few words” (Lecturer 1).

Among the various dishonest behaviors of students include exam cheating and plagiarism of work. To boost student trustworthiness in online assessment, the assessment exams' focus should be changed to inspire students to reason and reflection rather than content memorization. Moreover, learning assessment (Jordan, 2009) could be applied to minimize these problems. Assessment of learning here means that students' skills are assessed based on its skill. For instance, if it is needed to assess speaking, it is better to ask them to record their speaking, not change it into written forms. Then, Jordan (2009) also suggests having an assessment for learning. It enables lecturers to use information about students' situations to improve education. In this case, it is better for the lecturers not to focus on the result of the

assessment only because of dishonest behavior. Their progress in learning could be the consideration of how their learning result. Hargreaves (2005) states that assessment of learning and assessment for education are critical forms for improving students' competency. Also, by having these two steps, assessment as learning is running automatically. Assessment as understanding helps students recognize their learning successes and progress to set learning goals (Jordan, 2009). And, for the assessment that needs to be written, it is better to bear the students in mind that copying their friends' tasks will be known and decrease their grades. And, if they finish their work creatively, there is also effective to their degree.

The next problem is extending the submission task. For different reasons, many students frequently inquire about extending the submission of exams/assignments.

"I also ever feel, they do not really focus on my subject, or my subject is not important for them, that's why they always said, "mam, permit me to submit my task one hour more, I got trouble in my house / in my office." And they succeeded to make me believe then say O.K" (Lecturer 2).

Other lecturers also face this problem. It affects the evaluation time process that needs to extend. To cope with this problem, it is better to give a little bit of pressure and warning, such as degrading their score when they are late in submitting. Besides student issues, the case also occurred in recapitulating student scores. Sometimes lecturers are not in good preparation in recording the score of one task; they document it in one paper and then forget to keep it neatly. When they need to recap, they have to look for it, which takes more time.

To sum up, every way to assess students must have benefits and drawbacks. For the benefits, it could be maximized. While for the drawbacks, there must be a consideration to minimize them or handle them. Those may come by discussing with other lecturers or finding some information.

4. Conclusion

The pandemic of COVID-19 has caused institutions worldwide to suspend classes. Universities have adapted quickly, with creative techniques and the rapid adoption of new kinds of teaching and evaluation. Universities have transitioned from face-to-face to online assessment due to the coronavirus outbreak. The debate highlighted that English lecturers at the University of Muhammadiyah Jambi employed various methods while selecting an online platform for teaching using Covid 19. They had some concerns about operating a particular media. Although they examined the pluses and minuses in selecting the platform, they virtually had comparable minuses in utilizing the platform, such as students' lack of attention and plagiarism in completing projects and others.

Essentially, the findings of this study have added to our knowledge about online assessment. For the English lecturers who conduct the online check, it will be better to

consider the benefits and drawbacks of online evaluations, and its solution is given. Additional in-depth research should be done to understand better how online assessment can reflect student achievement. Then, further research is also needed to find out more about minimizing the drawbacks and maximizing the benefits.

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