

Online Language Assessment the Exception, Not the Rule: For Inclusive Language Learning

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Abstract

The study investigates teachers' perceptions of the use of online language assessment (OLA) using technology and examines the scope of using online applications to validate the mode of assessment. It looks for EFL teachers' opinions of OLA to comprehend the many worries associated with the issues and improve the online assessment tools. The researchers included the teachers who taught and assessed their students online using the Blackboard application at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. The study was descriptive, using an online survey for data collection. Participants were from different colleges and nationalities teaching English to students enrolled in the preparatory course. Descriptive analysis of the open-ended questionnaire and interview data illustrated the salient features of the online assessment were instant feedback, randomized question order, statistical description of the exam, and immediate scores on exam completion. Teachers reported the effectiveness of the online assessment system but with some remedial actions to further improve the online assessment systems. Also, quality prospects, in pandemic-like situations, should not be thought of as offline teaching and challenges in various domains like language assessment security, time limitation, internet accessibility, ethical aspects, digital literacy and expertise, technological failures, and learning outcomes. Finally, the article offers a roadmap for planning, developing, implementing, evaluating, and carrying on research in online language assessment in new and in crisis contexts.

Keywords: Computer-aided assessment, computer-assisted language learning, language skills, motivation, online assessment, online tests

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Introduction

Every person passes through some examination at any point in time in life. Alike, the students attend their reviews to achieve tangible performance improvement. Besides, it also helps teachers get and introspect their plan of action if it worked out well to achieve the desired learning outcomes, or needs some modification. Therefore, it involves both teachers and students where teachers evaluate their teaching methods, strategies, approaches, and students know how far they have learned the topic or subject. But over time, academia is witnessing tremendous growth and development in technology that has pros and cons when executed in teaching and learning. These technological advancements also contributed immensely to teaching and learning, which has assisted academia since the pandemic affected us and brought in a paradigm shift to adopt a technology-based system of examinations.

Furthermore, it also reduces space among students, teachers, and administrators, and they all can exchange their ideas from anywhere across the world. The use of technology in academia has been the focus of many research projects since the previous decade of the last century, but it has gained momentum in this century. Alike, numerous studies underscored the pros and cons of technology-mediated instruction in the teaching-learning milieu. However, little has been researched and available to date on teachers' views of technology-based language assessment, mainly based on more complex interactions offered during pandemics. Since some of the researchers had concerns about the prevalence of computer anxiety among students; therefore, the use of technology for language assessment still has been open to question.

The study is based on the experience of online assessment teachers teaching on a virtual platform using online tools called Blackboard and WhatsApp, a primarily used social media application. Emphasizing the online assessment, Bodmann and Robinson (2004) stated that technology-based assessment offers opportunities to measure a complex form of knowledge and reasoning, which is impossible to engage and assess through offline methods. Sharma (2019) opines that learners are updated with the latest technologies, and the best can be seen in students' move with social media to complement and supplement classroom language instructions. Its usage facilitates learners easy to access it at any time and at any place. WhatsApp usage keeps interaction alive to exchange ideas instantly and easily with the teacher and allows students to share their concerns, issues, assignments, and essays. Many studies found that its uses bring up both teachers and students on the same platform, facilitating effective academic communication resulting in timely and positively obtaining intended learning outcomes. Teachers and students can share study materials, announcements, assignments, worksheets, instructions, evaluation reports, and academic-related issues without constrictions of time or location. In terms of Online Language Assessment (hereafter, will be written as OLA), we find this term appearing in many forms, like Online Assessment, Web-Based assessment, Computer-based Testing (CBT), Computer-Aided Assessment (CAA), Computer Assisted Testing (CAT), E-Assessment and to name a few. Conole and Warburton (2005) described that computer-assisted testing items test particular ability levels since they usually deliver more accurate and reliable results than traditional tests.

The salient feature that was observed in online learning is the new form of academic discourse, peer and collaborative work, and students' participation that builds trust, care, and confidence, keeping students motivated and engaged when there were reported cases of anxiety,

frustration, loneliness, and depression in students due to pandemic crisis. Luppicini (2007) reviewed several studies and found the main emphasis on online courses and networks, learning processes, course and program evaluations, group dynamics, peer evaluations, group decision-making, problem-solving, writing, individual decision-making, argumentation, teaching practice effects, technology integration, teacher styles and characteristics, socio-cultural factors, and professional development effects. Mixed findings were found for the impacts of computer-mediated instructions, but hardly any study dealt with teachers' perceptions of OLA.

The world witnessed one of its worst times due to the Covid pandemic last year that impacted every nook and corner of society, and education is no exception. All educational institutions' doors were shut entirely, and learning moved to virtual online mode. Multiple problems occurred during the process, and one of the grave challenges language teachers encountered was the language testing and assessment. The prevailing situation inspired various practical, creative, and innovative methods to simplify language assessment procedures and solve limitations imposed by the pandemic. This article dealt with teachers' perceptions of using OLA methods on *Blackboard*. The findings present a few challenges and opportunities language teachers struggled with during this unprecedented time, supported by the latest developments in the domain. The assessment and testing method created by working teachers was put to use in the tertiary education contexts. The process is dynamic and evolving to tackle some critical issues by modifying the assessments according to the volatile situations provoked by the pandemic. The language assessment contexts described herein range from regional to international standards level tests.

The present study explores a new area of technology-mediated language assessment using the *Blackboard* application. The users are students and teachers at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia, who use *Blackboard* Learn application for online teaching, learning, and knowledge sharing. The University facilitates its teachers and students to use this for teaching online courses because Blackboard Learn is open, flexible, and centered on student achievement. The study aims to examine the perceptions of teachers received online from different colleges and nationalities, and analyze their content. The findings of the present study will help teachers, course and program coordinators, and administrators understand students' academic and future needs, areas that need to be taken into consideration in OLA, assessment and teaching methodology, online assessment training, and student counseling.

The explanation above, and unavoidable circumstances have engulfed English language assessments profoundly, making it a complex task for language teachers at all levels and education settings. Teachers undertook the daunting task of switching to online learning to mitigate student problems but struggled to develop appropriate and suitable language assessment tests for students. It is aimed at the existing students to know how much they learned in terms of learning outcomes and for new students who seek admissions in various streams, programs, and colleges at local, regional, national, or abroad. The students, if not given these language tests, would fail to promote to the next level, and teachers would not be able to carry on with their assessments but all left in the lurch. Universities need valid language proficiency results from prospective students to ensure access to English-medium programs. Therefore, teachers were forced to develop language tests to provide students obtain reliable, legal, and effective indications of English academic proficiency.

Sharma (2018) claims that it needs motivation and consistent support for teachers and equal consideration to assist students with language support, new testing criteria, testing methods, etc., to make the pre-and-post admission process easy and stress-free. Ockey and Baghestani (2020) argue that educational institutions commonly use standardized test scores not only to determine whether a prospective student can be accepted but also to identify language support needs after a student has been accepted to a particular program of study. All these factors had a cumulative effect on language teachers to prepare for placement, diagnostic, and pre-and-post placement tests. The teachers provoked multiple similar constrictions faced by the language teachers delivering high-quality standardized placement, admission, formative, summative, and process tests.

We looked into teacher attitudes toward OLA using the following study questions to comprehend the many concerns connected to the issues listed above and to help improve the online assessment tools.

RQ1 What is your opinion on Online EFL Assessment for our students?

RQ2 Please specify the support you have received from your department before and during the online language assessment.

RQ3 What are the difficulties you have encountered during the online assessment?

RQ4 What are the most prominent features/benefits of the online assessment system?

RQ5 Do you prefer online language assessment? If YES, and if NO, why?

RQ6 What would you suggest to improve the OLA system?

Literature Review

During the pandemic, many educational institutions transitioned to an online virtual environment, which required teachers to adapt to novel instructional settings to assure students' continuous learning. However, during the teaching and learning process, language teachers face numerous difficulties due to language testing and assessment. The findings, supported by the most recent developments in the field, indicate some of the opportunities and challenges that language teachers encountered during this historical period.

Since COVID and restrictions by health experts and governments at their peak, assessments also had evolved into new or modified assessment practices using technology. Chappelle (2020) considered it a 'watershed moment' in language assessment since the pandemic had prompted test providers and seekers to seek a wide range of alternatives to conventional approaches (Plough & Raquel, 2020). The coronavirus is now mostly under control worldwide, returning academia to its new normal. The stakeholders have experienced significant relief with the return of offline classes; however, academics must continue with online learning and offline sessions to minimize future issues. A serious concern for educators is the difference in results between an online exam and a conventional evaluation. The topic at hand investigates the potential for using online apps to validate the form of assessment and seeks to understand teachers' perspectives on the usage of online language assessment using technology. Numerous research asserted a causal relationship between students' assessments and language teaching and learning using online resources and assessment systems (Daniels et al., 2019; Doculan, 2016).

Since the concept of online learning and assessment is not new to explore, a number of studies (Becker, Cummins & Freeman, 2017; Norton & Cakitaki, 2016) underscored the vitality

and relevance of digital education using online platforms, infrastructure, and approaches in educational instructions. Alike, considerable research has been conducted to show the integration of digital technology in EFL/ESL contexts (Hafner & Miller, 2011; Mompean, 2010; Ros et al., 2010). However, despite the ubiquitous use of technology, the currently accessible online management systems are still underdeveloped, and they struggle to produce assessments that align with the learning objectives of academic courses (Helfaya & O' Neil, 2019). Besides, these systems in language learning contexts bring in many barriers in practices (Hedayati & Marandi, 2014; Jahanban-Isfahan et al., 2017). Alike, the study in a Saudi EFL context during the pandemic, Abduh (2021) also looked into how teachers perceived the assessment techniques employed in full-time e-learning, which indicated that the teachers' attitudes toward e-assessment were conflicted. According to Xu and Liu (2018), the impact of assessment can be either favorable or unfavorable. It states when a well-designed test accurately measures the intended outcomes, a good effect occurs. Besides other reasons, a complex of social, psychological, political, technological, and data-driven accountability variables entrenched in evaluation and instruction have a detrimental impact on language teaching (Ali and Hamid, 2020; Furaidah et al., 2015).

Despite numerous studies, Montelongo & Eaton (2019) believed that educational strategies in teaching and learning entirely online or in hybrid form seem to be in little supply, and a few studies have taken up the challenges teachers face in OLA since several assessment procedures have been established to counter-check various challenges (Adnan, et al., 2020). Since the epidemic has highlighted numerous issues with the necessity and accessibility of language evaluation, we also consider how high-stakes online testing techniques may change over time. This work aims to fill this gap and provides a pathway for organizing, creating, putting into practice, and assessing online language testing in novel and emergency circumstances. The article highlights research methods, data gathering from teachers' responses, and discussion to arrive at some conclusions and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of online learning assessments.

Methods

The descriptive study used online surveys for data collection. In comparison to other quantitative techniques, descriptive analysis is thought to be more thorough and present a more comprehensive view of an event or phenomenon. To obtain information about the teachers' perceptions of OLA, an open-ended questionnaire was designed and developed. The responses were sought on conducting the formative and summative assessments on the blackboard. To achieve the objectives of the study, this research takes a qualitative method. It focuses on feedback on assessment for learning from teachers to improve their teaching strategies, and for students to increase their learning strategies. The language program teachers provided the information. After knowing the teachers' attitudes regarding the online assessment, all stakeholders should be able to use the study's findings as a basis for improving their teaching, learning, and evaluation processes.

Participants

Participants were seven teachers from different age groups and nationalities selected randomly teaching various language courses in the preparatory colleges of Computer science, Science, Medical, and Engineering. We used simple random sampling since such sampling ensures that the sample and population distributions are identical on all measured and unmeasured variables within the limits of sampling error (Shadish et al., 2020). All the teachers were taken

consent to respond to the research questions voluntarily, and out of seven, one teacher did not send his response. In the study, all teachers showed a strong willingness to participate in the research. The sample data comprised 57.14% male and 42.86% female participants. Thirty percent of the sample were aged up to 30 years old (young teachers), 42.72% each were between 31 and 40 years old and between 41 and 50 years old (middle-aged teachers) respectively, and 14.28% were more than 51 years old (senior teachers). All teachers were full-time employees in the academic year 2021 at English Language Institute in Jazan University, Saudi Arabia.

Research Instruments

The researchers included the teachers who taught and assessed their students online using the Blackboard application at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. The study was descriptive, using an online survey for data collection. An open-ended online questionnaire was used to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the OLA. This questionnaire was designed to obtain information from the teachers' open-ended responses on OLA, online assessment experience, and their evaluation of specific components such as benefits, the difficulties and issues they encountered during the online assessment, and suggestions to improve the OLA system.

Reliability

The researchers took the utmost care to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire to bring unbiased and transparent findings. Five teachers randomly selected from the different college teachers were chosen for a pilot study. Accordingly, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated from the results of this pilot study, and the resulting scores were at least 0.8. The questionnaire was revised and improvised based on information received from the open-ended responses. Then, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also assessed for the actual study responses, and all scores were at least 0.8, showing that the reliability level of this research was consistently high.

Data Collection and Analysis

The evaluation survey was conducted one and a half years since the pandemic caused the closure of institutions. The questionnaire was distributed individually online and on WhatsApp to get responses from randomly selected teachers who taught and conducted OLAs for their courses. The responses were collated and given coding to describe their responses anonymously to answer the research questions through analysis and discussion.

Research Procedures

In addition to examining the potential for using online applications to validate the form of assessment, this study intends to understand how teachers perceive the use of online language assessment during COVID periods. To achieve the objectives of the study, this research takes a qualitative method and focuses on feedback from teachers who assessed their students in the last two-semester in the academic year 2020-21 to improve their teaching strategies and for students to increase their learning strategies. The information was gathered from the responses provided by the teachers of the preparatory language learning course after they were given an open-ended questionnaire. After knowing the teachers' attitudes regarding the online assessment, we anticipate that the stakeholders in academia will be able to use the study's findings as a basis for improving their teaching and learning processes.

Findings

RQ1 What is your opinion on Online EFL Assessment for our students?

The purpose of this question was to obtain the teachers' views, and knowledge on OLA administered in the university-facilitated Blackboard Learning technology-based programs since the knowledge and skills required to work with different functions of Blackboard is a prerequisite for using the technology-mediated assessment program. The responses obtained are:

T1: Assessment is a powerful tool that provides evidence of the students' learning and guides teachers to alter or improve their teaching and learning methods.

T2: We live in a digital era, and students prefer online learning. I have learned English mainly through technology, but one of the missing things back then was the assessment part, and there was no way to know and check whether what I was doing was correct or not. Nowadays, we have Learning Management Systems (LMS), which genuinely revolutionized the way learners are assessed.

T3: The online assessment is scientific, well-planned, and occurs at regular intervals. It takes into account all skills and encompasses a wholesome approach.

So, all have good opinions about OLA for students since its systematic and improves teaching and learning. However, the other teachers didn't submit their responses but disclosed that they have positive opinions about the OLA since it is the best way to assess students in critical situations.

RQ2 Please specify the support you have received from your department before and during the online language assessment.

It is always essential not only to gain knowledge but also to get help to execute any new technique or method of assessment effectively to accomplish the desired objectives. The teachers have expressed the department's support before, during, and after the assessment, which is given below.

T1: I have received immense support from my coordinator and colleagues in framing and setting the most appropriate questions to judge students' subject acquisition. The department strives to bring the best outcomes for the assessments done online.

T2: The institute equipped staff members with laptops, quiz manuals (how to prepare and deploy tests), and question pools, which facilitated teachers' jobs in online assessment.

T3: The department seeks to set up a framework of parameters for evaluating the OLA. It focuses on the executional aspect too. It has served as a reference point. All the guidelines have been issued to the teachers, and a detailed follow-up has been taken. The support is present throughout the semester.

T6: The institute provided detailed guidelines about pools and test creation. In addition, they offered assistance in finding result statistics and dealing with plagiarism cases.

T7: Pre-test and Post-test conducted by the institute help the teachers to evaluate the achievement of Course Learning Outcomes of each student. The Teaching and Learning Unit of the institute maintains the uniformity of exams by the date, type of questions, and difficulty levels.

Data analysis of the results is done at multiple stages and through various committees, and the institute gives remedial classes to weak students focusing on the areas they need to improve. Logistics like laptops, internet facilities, etc., are provided to the teachers to make the process smooth.

RQ3 What are the difficulties you have encountered during the online assessment?

No system in any discipline functions without glitches or problems when the system is put into real situations. Thus, the implementer needs training on the skills required to ensure the uninterrupted functioning of the system. These are the difficulties teachers encountered conducting the OLA.

T1: The main difficulty being encountered is the questionable truthful approach by students in attempting the online tests. This is followed by erratic internet connection in remote areas where students find it challenging to try online tests.

T2: Internet connection issues are prevalent in online teaching/learning. Students feel very overwhelmed when it comes to tests, especially those who live in remote places. They will need to go to other villages/cities only to attend the quiz without worrying about the internet.

T3: The aspect that the invigilator is not physically present for the supervision takes a lot of my attention. This ethical aspect keeps me under constant threat. Any online assessment is the build-up of human elements and a solid technical support system. It's unpredictable to control unforeseen reasons for technological failures. The student preparedness might hamper due to power failures, etc.

T5: Online assessment does not measure the exact level of the students because of the external circumstances interference, e.g., the internet speed/connection, time limitation for each question, and MCQs can be misleading sometimes (I mean by this, the nature of the question phrasing). As stated, external circumstances may affect the quality of answering and hinder the students from responding accurately or even misunderstanding the question. The backtracking function in the online exam is strictly enforced, which prevents pupils from revising in regular exams.

The system had a few unanticipated and unavoidable problems; some solved instantly by experts, others through initial or online training, except for a few technical glitches that were beyond the institution's scope.

RQ4 What are the most prominent features/benefits of the online assessment system?

Every institution adopts a system that benefits maximum to increase its efficiency and productivity. Sudden closure due to pandemics had left no option but to choose the best option available to ensure uninterrupted learning. Teachers expressed their genuine opinion illustrating the following merits.

T1: It saves a lot of planning required to conduct classroom tests. The assessment can be done with a limited workforce. The students are benefitted extensively, too, as they can score much better compared to the traditional method of testing.

T2: From my practical experience, online assessment is more effective and valid as the

correction process is done electronically and without human intervention. On the other hand, when teachers finish conducting onsite quizzes/exams and start checking, they may make mistakes while checking students' papers if they are turbulent, drowsy, or stressed due to the various burdens. I have also noticed that some faculty members do not accurately re-check specific questions, such as multiple choices or true and false, as they assume the checker teacher had already done their part.

T3: Online assessment system is flexible and student-friendly. It provides a short, stipulated, and crisp platform. More minor manual corrections keep the online assessment system very objective and hassle-free. The students not only accept marks but also approach the trainers to improve.

T7: Accessibility to hinterlands and far-fetched areas, the benefit of tailored time slots, reduced administrative involvement, speedy, error-free, objective evaluation, accessibility to data, and analysis of course learning outcomes (CLOs), environment Friendly, and lesser resources needed.

The number of benefits explicitly describes the effectiveness of OLA, and it helps all stakeholders to get results accurately and timely.

RQ5 Do you prefer online language assessment? If YES, and if NO, why?

The perceptions varied a bit while answering this question, and a few feel it should prevail. The others want both online and offline assessment for students; however, one teacher expressed his concern about rejecting the OLA for students. One didn't respond to this question and left it blank.

T1: I do not prefer online assessments. The main aim of review in education is to alter the teaching methods and improve student performances based on the results. Online assessment may not allow teachers to judge the actual outcome as the online assessment system is unreliable.

T2: Yes, I do. I prefer OLA as it makes my job easier. Students will also feel satisfied with whatever mark they get as they already know that the system automatically corrects their answers.

T3: Yes, It's global and the need of the hour. My students would be able to accomplish much more.

No, technological hazards snatch away the primary role of a teacher in language assessment. Non-verbal communication (body language) is absent, and as a teacher, my strength lies in assessing both, especially for speaking skills.

T5: I prefer to have both online and traditional exams on which the marks(grades) are divided between both kinds of exams.

T6: I will prefer it for the quizzes only. PT and Final exams must be done on campus to avoid the problems of connection and authenticity.

This explains the teachers' position on the issue, but the majority favor the OLA for multiple reasons; nevertheless, a few teachers have concerns.

RQ6 What would you suggest to improve the online language assessment system?

Getting lessons from past experiences makes the system easy to operate, and teachers have suggested many measures that can upgrade and improve the online language process. The

valuable inputs to rectify the snags and flaws are appended herewith.

T1: *Any assessment should be fair and truthful and bring out the actual results to decide a future course of action. Hence, the assessment methods could be revised. The suggested amendment could include 'online assessments with video on.' When the students know they are being monitored, the assessment outcomes will be fair and truthful.*

T2: *One of the suggestions is to extend the availability of tests to students as this will give them extra time to take the quiz conveniently, leading to better marks. Another suggestion is regarding the question patterns; instead of having only multiple-choice and true or false questions, we can give open-ended questions for the reading. I have also noticed that students will be asked to write a paragraph in PT and final, but there is nothing related to this in online quizzes. It will be better to give some short writing tasks in quizzes to prepare them for PT and final exams.*

T5: *It can be improved once it is guaranteed that the technical glitches can be avoided, and the exam can vary and come in different forms other than MCQs and true or false. It can be improved when it can be phrased to measure the actual level of the students.*

T6: *Some training sessions for teachers and students at the start of each semester. Face recognition and movement detection tools to create more valid results.*

T7: *The stem of the question should be clear and brief. To assess high-level students, the question's stem should have more information to focus on analysis, synthesis, or evaluation. Avoid meaningless details in the question. Responses should be written in a manner that must not help answer the question. All response options (the correct answer and distractors) are consistent in length and style. The objective is to minimize the 'guesswork' to find the correct answer. There must not be any spelling or grammatical errors. Avoid double negatives. Some categorical terms are often used by exam writers, such as 'always' or 'never'. These are giveaways. They must be avoided. Correct tools must be used to evaluate skills.*

The suggested measures illustrate clarity on the online assessment process that needs revisit, redesign, and improvisation to make it more effective, reliable, and friendly.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of the use of OLA. Teachers used the Blackboard Learning application for formative and summative assessment of students from seven different preparatory year language courses at Jazan University.

Descriptive analysis of the answers to the questionnaire showed that because of the closure of the university, the current on-campus language assessment procedure was not feasible during the pandemic, the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) at English Language Institute (ELI), Jazan University, Saudi Arabia decided to create and conduct a new language assessment exam online using University facilitated *Blackboard* Learning Application. In addition, the TLU, with coordinators, and faculty members, planned and deliberated on different possible questions, a quiz manual, a framework of parameters for evaluation for the OLA, and procedures for administering assessment tasks on Blackboard. The in-depth analysis also exhibits that the most prominent features of the online language system were immediate feedback, tailored time slots, randomized question order, reduced administrative involvement, speedy, error-free and objective evaluation, quick accessibility to data, and analysis of the course learning objectives,

environment-friendly, lesser resources needed, item analysis of the questions, statistical analysis of each group, error-free evaluation, and instant scoring on completion of the exam. By and large, teachers agreed on the effectiveness of the OLA system.

Conversely, participants expressed their grave concerns about many aspects of the online assessment process in language learning contexts, which are aligned with several barriers to practices (Hedayati & Marandi, 2014; Jahanban-Isfahan et al., 2017). Firstly, in the online test, students get one question or a few questions on a computer screen, contrary to hard sheets of paper. Addressing this concern, Haas and Hayes (1986) found that computer administration yielded lower scores than paper-and-pencil administration if a text passage associated with a test item required more than one page because of the difficulty of reading the extended text on-screen. However, in offline assessment, students can easily refer to the questions they feel to read by turning pages backward or forward. Secondly, students faced problems getting questions in a randomized order which needs excellent focus, concentration, and high language proficiency since Clariana (1997) feels that the difference probably leads to greater focus and closure with each computer-based item, and items on display may increase transition time and memory load with a tighter focus on and closure of each item. On questions on-screen in a randomized order, Beaton and Zwick (1990) reported that a question or item in a test displayed in a randomized order, especially multiple-choice response options, can affect the performance of an item. Abduh (2020) discovered that teachers encountered significant difficulties evaluating students online. Todd (2020) demonstrated that although teachers initially faced numerous important issues, they eventually came up with solutions to address them. They also discussed issues with finding appropriate, exciting activities and evaluating the work that still needed to be completed by the students.

The other grave areas include: unethical practices and questionable truthful approaches by students in online assessment, erratic internet connection, especially in remote places, technological failures, the time limitation for each question, question phrasing, etc., which may affect the quality of answering, hinder the students from responding accurately or even misunderstood the question. The students, in offline assessment, have the privilege to revise, which they are deprived of in the online exam because of the strict use of the backtracking feature. Khatoony and Nezhadmehr (2020) examined multiple challenges Iranian teachers encountered using technology in online classes during the COVID-19 outbreak, and the results revealed many issues, including a lack of appropriate resources, lack of students' interest and motivation in online learning, a lack of funding, and support for language schools.

Multiple challenges came along while developing language tests for online assessment and, in-home delivery, including technical glitches, internet connectivity, contained zones, lockdown areas, test security, and effective conduct on various virtual online or offline platforms. Students complained about the timings, testing attempts, limited power supply, weak or no internet issues (Wagner & Krylova, 2021), availability or malfunctioning of electronic gadgets, and students' lack of digital literacy to take tests in online applications. On a few occasions, the confidentiality of tests was also compromised, cheating cases in regions where on-camera exams were not allowed, and limited teachers' computer knowledge to upload and administer the tests are of utmost significance, especially in the case of assessing the four

language skills assessment, which was later on alleviated time to time by dedicated experts. Turnbull et al. (2021) also indicated challenges regarding academic dishonesty, privacy, and confidentiality in the online assessment. Additionally, students weren't ready to disclose their personal information to prove their identity leading them to lose access to the online test. Also, in some cases, students cheated in the exams without a camera, which further raises concerns over the validity and accuracy of obtained results meeting the learning objectives. The marks obtained didn't match with the actual performance in an offline class of many students. The assessment tests were carried out online. Later, when the situation improved in May last year, the summative exam was conducted face-to-face environment at the campus, but on a reduced syllabus and less duration of the exam. Xu and Liu (2018) claimed that the impact of assessment could be either favorable or unfavorable. Similarly, the teachers had a callous time catering to the limited seating capacity following the government guidelines on health safety, social distancing, classroom sanitization, wearing of masks, etc., resulting in increase in their working hours. A few colleges adopted at-home assessments synchronously delivered to students through video-mediated computer technology like WhatsApp, emails, etc. Ghanbari & Nowroozi (2021) stated that the experience during COVID prepared the faculty for a blended learning approach and increased their awareness of global and future challenges. Likewise, there are enormous challenges both learners and teachers experience related to at-home video-mediated online test delivery and also in the face-to-face environment.

Conclusion

The stated descriptive analysis, findings, discussion, observations, facts, and information on language assessment in COVID-19 explicitly define that the crisis has shown our flaws, weaknesses, and unpreparedness in many areas; nevertheless, its brought many opportunities as well in the field of language assessment. In addition to examining the potential for using online apps to validate the style of assessment, the findings have proved how teachers perceive the use of online language assessment using technology. The teachers' perceptions also claimed that the unforeseen situation forced the language assessment developers to be thoughtful, creative, innovative, and daring in their methods, providing a safe testing milieu without conceding the authenticity, legality, and validity of the decisions based on their assessments. We conclude that assessing students' language skills need a timely revisit, redesign, and revision of assessment techniques to compromise construct representation. This challenge needs further development as the situation demands either audio or video-mediated online or proceeding to at-home online assessment delivery but always with caution. The given explanation revealed that the OLA facilitates the accomplishment of learning objectives comparable to that hitherto developed in offline classrooms, and the language learners also concede and adapt the efficacy of these online courses for learning a language. This guides teachers to plan, develop and evolve the traditional assessment system to conduct online exams for better interpretation of learning outcomes, curriculum, teaching practices, and preparedness to deal with such catastrophic situations in the future to realize further that we may adapt and show resilience in a pressing need by making requisite changes more swiftly than anticipated. Furthermore, the online tests used to deliver construct-representative assessments, despite the given challenges, will indubitably facilitate shuttle in a new age of technology-mediated language assessments. The effect of language assessment conducted entirely online in different assessments on course materials designed and developed by the language teachers is still open for further investigation. Likewise, it is hoped

that this study on the assessment approaches, significant challenges, and successes of delivering language assessments online in times of COVID-19 will help all stakeholders as they navigate these new and unanticipated waters.

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