

Assessing Students During Online Learning: A Case Study on a Linguistic Subject Teacher's Experience

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Abstract

Online learning has caused major shifts, including the assessment process inside the English Language Teaching classroom. Through a series of in-depth interviews and thorough observations, this study explored a Linguistic Subject teacher's experience in implementing an online assessment using a Learning Media System (LMS) application called Microsoft Teams. The use of the Microsoft Teams Application helped to improve efficiency in uploading the files of students' assignments, correcting and giving feedback to their works. However, based on the interviews, some obstacles were found during the teaching, learning and evaluation process. These include network problems, shorter time of classes and massive collusion among students make the students' performance in doing their assignments do not always reflect their understanding and ability. While network problems and shorter face to face interaction often hinder the teaching and learning process as well as the assessment of students' active participation, the use of blended learning in the school required teachers to be more creative and assertive in the assessment process.

Keywords: Online Assessment, Learning Management System (LMS), Microsoft Teams, Assignments.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning process had a major shift because of the COVID-19 Pandemic that occurred several months ago. Due to this, teachers, students and educational institutions must be able to rapidly change the teaching and learning process from offline to online learning. Concurring to Wong, Baars, Davis, Van Der Zee, Jan-Houben & Paas (2019) online learning can be explained as a medium of learning that takes place online. This type of teaching and learning will allow educators to creatively design innovative teaching and learning; as well as it will assist educators in adapting to unprecedented situations (Mayer, 2019). It will also enable students and educators to minimize the space between the educator and the student through the use of web-based technologies (Lee-Post & Hapke, 2017; Ryan, Kaufman, Greenhouse, She, & Shi, 2016).

The sudden change from offline to online classes has caused many challenges (Gillett-Swan, 2017; Morgan, 2020; Shapiro, 2020). Ali, Uppal and Galiver (2018) stated that there are four major barriers to online learning usage, these being technology, individual, pedagogy and the teacher factors.

Assessment is a method of examining students' knowledge and behaviour during the teaching and learning process (Shaw et al., 2020). Additionally, assessment has the aim of controlling every stage of learning; as well as to objectively measure students during the teaching and learning process (Richmond, Salazar, & Jones, 2019; Yüksel & Gündüz, 2017). This will allow teachers to identify whether students can achieve the learning outcome (Care, Kim, Vista, & Anderson, 2018)

As a teacher, it is a must to have assessment literacy because the language teacher can conduct the assessment process based on their current knowledge, conceptions and skills; as well as teachers can assist students in improving learning and in achieving learning outcomes (Luthfiyyah, Basyari, & Dwiniasih, 2020). There are many ways of assessing students, starting from tests, quiz and other forms of evaluation (Khairil & Mokshein, 2018). Assessments also help students to deepen their understanding, especially the type of assessments that asks analytical questions (Ustun & Tracey, 2019). In creating an assessment, the teacher must consider whether the assessment is accountable and valid. Accountable means that from assessing students, the assessment provides reliable information of students' achievement (Nikmard & Zenouzagh, 2020). Meanwhile, validity is the fairness of the test result (Weideman, 2019). Moreover, the assessment itself has the objectives of learning, for learning and as learning. Assessment of learning refers to using assessment to evaluate students towards the end of an instructional unit. Second, assessment for learning is an assessment to monitor students' progress during the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, assessment as learning is aimed to make students self-assess themselves (Lam, 2020).

The use of technology in the teaching and assessing stage helps teachers during the teaching and learning process, which include online assessment (Novitasari, Wijayati, & Roekhan, 2020). Akimov and Malin (2020) define online assessment as an assessment method that is conducted via an asynchronous and synchronous method. In developing an online assessment, the main challenge was deciding on how to develop online assessment tools to accommodate traditional assessments that were designed based on a curriculum system (Amin et al., 2021). Veena and Mahlawat (2020) asserted that online assessment is important to develop as the teaching and learning process needs to be efficient and provides an accurate analysis of students' tests. To assess students online, there are some global recommendations. First, the assessment should be

continuous and should compromise the whole theory. Second, the teacher ought to make use of the familiar application as it will ease both students, teachers, parents and educators. Last, to prevent plagiarism, the educator is recommended to ask students to submit their work using Microsoft Word and PDF format (García-Peñalvo, Corell, Abella-García, & Grande-de-Prado, 2021).

In assessing students, there are two ways; either through a direct or online assessment. Direct assessment is done through face-to-face observation; whereas online assessment employs technology (Bahari, 2021). Veena and Mahlawat (2020) stated that online assessment advances from direct assessment as it is not limited to the amount of paper usage and create online quiz instantly and can give instant feedback by using online assessment tools. Furthermore, Bahari (2021) said that online assessment offers authenticity, accuracy, reliability and validity, and clarification of our understanding of language skills.

Online assessment tools range from quizzes, discussion boards, video presentations, peer assessments, reports and e-portfolios (Akimov & Malin, 2020). These tools will enable students to build knowledge, solve problems and achieve the appropriate task response (Gunawardena, Moore PhD, Barril, & Thabotharan, 2020). In doing so, there are several applications that the teacher can use to assess students online, such as Google Forms, Kahoot!, Testmoz and Quizzes (Veena & Mahlawat, 2020).

During its application, it is undeniable that there are advantages and disadvantages of utilizing both online and offline assessments. Yilmaz, Ustun and Yilmaz et al. (2020) said that online assessment is beneficial for both students; as well as teachers. For students, online assessments enable students to gain instant key answers and feedbacks. As for teachers, online assessments facilitate teachers to save their time and do other work in regards to teaching and learning (Alruwais, Wills, & Wald, 2018).

Nonetheless, there are also disadvantage of an online assessment. Kocdar, Karadeniz, Peytcheva-Forsyth and Stoeva (2018) underlined

that online assessment cannot ensure whether students do their given assignments individually. This is because there is a high possibility of cheating and plagiarism whilst doing the assignments, especially for Reading and Writing Skills. To successfully conduct an online assessment; both teachers and students must have adequate gadgets and stable internet connections (Alsadoon, 2017; Kocdar et al., 2018).

On the contrary, offline assessment offers some advantages. The teacher can directly observe and conclude students' competence in class, including active participation. Second, students can only take the test items once without the questions being spread by other students (Alsadoon, 2017). Last, it is reachable for all students as they do not need internet access (Alruwais et al., 2018).

Offline assessment is time-consuming for both teachers and students as they have to manually grade and write answers on the answer sheet (Veena & Mahlawat, 2020). Besides that, offline assessment cannot present instant key answers and feedbacks as the teacher have lots of work to grade (Karaoglan-Yilmaz, Ustun, & Yilmaz, 2020).

The objective of this study is to know the Linguistic Subject teacher's experience in conducting online assessment whilst doing teaching and learning process at SMA Negeri Pakusari, Jember, East Java, Indonesia. Moreover, the researcher also wanted to know what difficulties the teacher had while conducting the online assessment process. Here, the researcher focuses on the case of a Linguistic Teacher's online teaching experience at Senior High School Pakusari, Jember because SMAN Pakusari is located in a peri-peri area where the variation of students' socio-demographics background is relatively more heterogeneous compared to that in the city or rural area. It is therefore assumed that their access online is more varied. This variation is important, as the researcher wants to analyse the teacher's experience and portrays the

difficulties faced on assessment during the online teaching and learning process.

Thus, this study proposed 2 research questions:

1. How is the assessment process during the pandemic of COVID-19?
2. What difficulties did the teacher have when assessing their students in the pandemic? How did the teacher overcome it?

This study is expected to have practical and empirical impacts. First, practically, it is expected that this study improved the way the teacher assessed their students through an online platform; as well as overcome the difficulties that the teacher have in online assessment of the upcoming teaching and learning process. Next, empirically, it is hoped that this study identified the perspective of the teacher towards the effectiveness of online assessment and to know the teacher's method to solve the obstacles during an online assessment.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative case study as the design of the study with in-depth interviews with a key informant of a linguistic subject (LS) teacher as the main data source. Interview guideline was used as the main instrument of the study. It is a guideline that ensures the interviewer follows a standard process of designing several related questions before conducting the interviews (Creswell, 2014). In addition to in-depth interviews, to obtain more reliable data, the researcher also observed the online teaching and learning process by joining and observing the learning process and assessment outputs, such as student works and student assessment learning outcomes.

Data from interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's Thematic Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) which comprises of (1) Data Collection; (2) Data Display; (3) Data Condensation; (4) Concluding the Data.

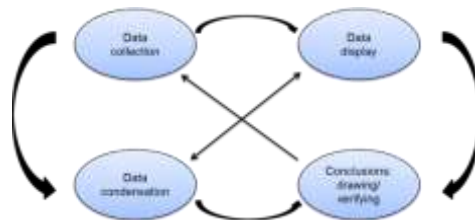


Figure 1. Qualitative Data Analysis Process (Source: Miles and Hubberman, 1994)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interviews with the Linguistic Subject (LS) teacher, it can be inferred that the findings of the first research question: "How is the assessment process during the pandemic of COVID-19?" that since heterogeneity of students' social economics background, SMA Negeri Pakusari, Jember, East Java had given two options of the learning system for students, namely online and offline learning. In the online learning system, the school applied an application-based learning management system (LMS), especially Microsoft Teams Application. Microsoft Teams Application can be accessed from either the website or mobile phone by downloading the application from Android Google Playstore.

According to the Linguistic Subject (LS) teacher's elaboration during the interview, Microsoft Teams Application is an efficient platform for teaching and learning. The reason is that Microsoft Teams Application provides a video-conferencing tool, such as Zoom Video Conference Application that enables students and the LS teacher to lively interact with each other based on the decided schedule. Besides that, Microsoft Teams Application allows the LS teacher to automatically record students' attendance during Linguistic Class. Microsoft Teams Application also supports a commenting section that helps the LS teacher responding to students' questions if they do not understand specific materials.

As for the assessment system, the LS teacher also used some functions or facilities provided by the Microsoft Teams Application. Microsoft Teams can be utilized as a medium to upload the assignments, give several feedbacks to students, and correct students' work without because it

does not require a separate platform, for example from Zoom or Google Meet to Google Classroom or Whats App. According to the teacher, Microsoft Teams Application is a flexible application as it can be used as a video conferencing application, Moodle-like application, and a grading application at the same time. However, as the school provided two options of online and offline choices for students, the teacher needs to be more assertive in combining the online and offline assessments. This is since the students' access to online learning facilities are not equal. According to the LS teacher, students who do not have access to technology and or could not afford to buy internet data or quota tend to choose offline classes. In an extreme situation, there were students who only attend offline classes, so some components of online assessments, such as student active participation in the online class or online presentation tasks, must be replaced by alternative offline assessments.

Meanwhile, for the offline learning system, the school offers a shift scheduling system with a tight protocol with a maximum of 20 students per class and a maximum of 2 hours per session with at least 5 minutes breaks between the classes starts from 10 a.m for the morning session and 2 p.m for the afternoon session. Based on the teacher's statement during the interview, dividing the students into two sessions systems supports the government's decision of social distancing and protects students from getting the virus. Moreover, splitting students into the morning and afternoon let the teachers take a rest and prepare for the next session. He further stated that the 2 hours class is beneficial for the LS teacher and students because it will assist students to review

and study for a longer duration and gain a deeper understanding of the materials.

Nonetheless, during the pandemic, the teacher-student interaction is shorter and far less intense compared with that before the pandemic, especially in terms of time to deliver materials to students. This situation leads to material coverage reduction and thus let students learn themselves and find more information from other sources. Most students use the internet especially Google to get more information and solutions to do their tasks. Some students also use resources from education material or information website providers such as Brainly or Wikipedia.

From the findings of the second research question: "How is the assessment process during the pandemic of COVID-19?" the discussion stated that Senior High School Pakusari, Jember, East Java provides parents with options of online learning, offline learning or blended learning. The choices were given due to the COVID-19 Pandemic that occurred two years ago.

As the school provided two options for students, the LS teacher had to merge and combine online and offline assessments for his students. The LS teacher argued that during the pandemic, teachers are required to be more creative as with blended systems and shift scheduling systems, the teacher needs to make

different questions for each shift to reduce the probability of collusions among students, which otherwise may lead to bias in the assessment process and outcome.

Furthermore, in applying the blended system, the teacher mixed between utilizing Microsoft Teams Application, such as submitting students' assignments and extra sessions of video-conferencing. In doing that, the teacher must be creative in creating supplementary materials. The supplementary materials included PowerPoint, Canva, etc. Not only that, but also the teacher made use of several quiz applications like Quizzes, and Kahoot to assess students' achievement at the end of each session (formative evaluation) and the end semester (summative evaluation).

The LS teacher's creativity engages students' active participation during the Linguistic Class and gains better grades for the subject. As for the offline class sessions, the LS teacher provides students with individual and group projects related to the current material obtained from the Linguistic Subject syllabus and textbook. The details of students' assessment conducted by the LS teacher based on its purpose is described in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Assessments Conducted by the LS Teacher

No.	Assessment Purpose	Online Assessment	Offline Assessment
1	Formative	Student active participation: Q&A, less intense interactions Schoolwork and homework: little or fewer school works, more variations of homework Individual projects: Essays End Session Evaluation: Quizzes and Kahoots (required teacher IT literacy and creativity)	Student active participation: Q&A, more intense interactions Schoolwork and homework: More school works - Based on LKS – students worksheet module End Session Evaluation: Quiz based on the textbook (or LKS – students worksheet module), individual presentation in front of the class (reading and speaking)
2	Illuminative	Group projects: less comprehensive, i.e., PowerPoint presentations, posters	Group projects: more comprehensives, i.e., group discussions, group works such as conversations or performances
3.	Summative	End Semester Exams: Google forms, Quizzes and Kahoots (online assessment – required teacher IT literacy and creativity)	End Semester Exams: Multiple choices tests, Essay Test (Written Exams)

Source: primary data from in-depth interviews, 2020

Furthermore, from the third research question: “What difficulties did the teacher have when assessing their students in the pandemic? How did the teacher overcome it?” The LS teacher said that the difficulties he faced when assessing their students in the pandemic are assessing writing and reading because the teacher cannot confirm whether students were honest in doing their assignments without discussing with their friends, cheating, and to convince or educate them not do so, especially concerning with high degree of plagiarism. Therefore, the teacher must monitor students in doing their assignments. In online assessments, the LS teacher made a regulation for students to use the video-conferencing tool while filling out the Learning Management System (LMS) provided by Microsoft Teams Application. As an example, when assessing writing and reading, students must turn on their video conferencing while writing their essays or other related texts at a particular timeline on a session. As for the reading task, the LS

teacher asked students to read aloud and summarize the content and explain the moral values of the reading text. After the LS teacher implemented such a cheating prevention method, the LS teacher saw the differences in the assessment results, found better variation in the student’s achievement thus he was able to distinguish between high, middle, and low-achiever students eventually.

Nevertheless, given a shorter time allocation for face-to-face interaction in class, based on student’s evaluation results, during the pandemic students’ achievement is generally lower than before the pandemic. According to the LS teacher, it is not surprising given shorter interaction between teachers and their students, unless the student is active in finding information from other sources, the students’ understanding generally tends to be lower since students rarely get feedback from teachers. This situation may lead to learning loss and students’ less understanding in turn. For this

reason, the LS teacher always tries to give some feedback to students, for example by giving them answer keys for their homework. However, he acknowledged that unlike before the pandemic, the feedback he had given to his students is very limited. Especially, for speaking and writing skills, with a very limited time given in the schedule for face-to-face interaction, it is more difficult to give thorough evaluation and feedback.

Our findings are generally consistent with and strengthened by the previous research results. Purwanto, Pramono, Asbari, Wijayanti and Hyun (2020) found out that online classes have several constraints, such as less coverage of materials, lack of technology skills both from students and teachers, limited feedback and higher internet bills. This type of teaching and learning allowed educators to creatively design innovative teaching and learning; as well as it helped to adapt in unprecedented situations (Mayer, 2019). Moreover, online learning is flexible in terms of time and space as it can be done anywhere using some software, such as Microsoft Teams and various activities (Piskurich, 2006; Singh & Thurman, 2019).

As for the assessment and the online classroom, the Linguistic Subject Teacher used Microsoft Teams as it offers flexibility for conducting the assessment processes and video conferencing for the online classroom. This argument is in line with Koceski and Koceska (2013) who believed that video-conferencing is a technological tool during online learning that enables stimulation, a collaboration between the various sites, to support and foster student, educator communication; as well as allow flexible learning.

However, while it is argued that online learning may reduce the cost of education by connecting students and teachers who are indifferent location (Karal, Cebi, & Turgut, 2011), on the contrary, in the situation where technology is still expensive, and people access to online technology is relatively limited, the on-line learning system is perceived to be expensive. As noted above,

some students' reason for not choosing to attend online learning and coming to school for offline classes instead was due to the relatively high cost of the internet data package.

Furthermore, video conferencing may promote a student-centred type of learning as they have to be disciplined in following the class schedule online (Lawson, Comber, Gage, & Cullum-Hanshaw, 2010). Thus, the video encourages flexibility in terms of the schedules and interaction created between students and teachers (Karal et al., 2011). Our findings also show that this technology helps the teacher and student to keep interacting during the pandemic and promote student active learning. However, with a limited time of interaction, teachers found that there has been some learning loss, so students' understanding during the pandemic tended to be lower compared to that before the pandemic.

Meanwhile, for the Learning Management System (LMS), it is an information system that facilitates e-learning by supporting teaching and learning, perform and manage administrative and pedagogical tasks; as well as facilitate communication between teachers and students (Holmes & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2018; Ouadoud, Nejari, Chkouri, & El-Kadiri, 2017). Similarly, our findings show that while this technology could help the students to keep interacting with the teacher and facilitated teaching-learning process, limited schedule of interaction, infrastructure and access to technology had come up with some constraints for the teacher as well as students in the teaching, learning process which may lead to bias in the assessments.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, online assessment is an impressive alternative to assess students whilst unpredictable times. This is because online assessments offer several features, namely Learning Management Systems (LMS) that enable students and teachers to create their accounts, interact with each other via virtual chat rooms, share materials and study autonomously; as well as video-

conferencing applications to continue teaching and learning process virtually. Besides that, online assessments also offer flexibility and reliability as they can be adjusted based on the schedule and they can offer automatic correction.

Nonetheless, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic when online learning is forced by condition and become necessary while infrastructure is often limited or people are not ready yet, there are several challenges of the online learning process and its assessment, namely the facilities, e.g.: gadgets and stable internet connection. Not only that, but the users of online assessment must also be technology-literate as it eased the process of doing and submitting the assignments online. The online assessment also causes some problems as students can perform academic dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarism and teamwork with their friends. As with blended and shift scheduling systems, during the pandemic teachers need to be more creative to create and use multi assessment methods in order to reduce the probability of students' collusion that may lead to biases in evaluation. They also need to be assertive in combining the results of online and offline assessments so that it can guarantee fairness in which the assessment reflects the potential of each student. As a suggestion for future research, it is advised to see the perspective from both students and teachers to result in more complete understandings and judgment of online assessment.

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