
**UNMASKING THE ROADBLOCKS: A STUDY ON CHALLENGES IN
ONLINE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION TOOLS FOR EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 and globalization have enabled educational institutions worldwide to integrate technological resources in language classrooms. Multiple online resources (websites/applications) have become a part of classroom practices like Kahoot, Padlet, Word wall, Nearpod, Flipgrid, Mentimeter, Socrative Quizzes, etc., for teaching and assessment. Utilizing these resources has made teaching and assessment easier, but many challenges are faced due to their implementation. The current study aimed to look at the challenges the educators faced while using Online Tools for Assessment/Evaluation. The research provided insights and recommendations to enhance technology integration in language education by identifying these challenges. A qualitative approach was used to collect and analyze the data. Participants were selected through convenient and snowball sampling, and data was collected from them via semi-structured interviews. The respondents comprised 30 English Language Teachers from various schools, colleges, and universities in Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan. A semi-structured interview protocol was adapted and used to seek honest opinions and perceptions of teachers. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis. The significant findings in the research showed that the challenges included lack of teacher training, student technology usage, student motivation, website errors, limited features in the free versions of applications, internet issues, difficulty in measuring the learning outcomes, cheating, and lack of digital literacy. The challenges can be overcome opportunities like professional development program for teachers. The significance of the study lies in the fact that it has the potential to enhance the educational experience, improve access and equity, inform policy, and contribute to the ongoing evolution of education in a technology-driven world.

Keywords: Technology, Assessment, Tools, Challenges, and Student Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment of students' learning is one of the most integral parts of education. It includes formative and summative forms of evaluation, and the main idea behind assessment is to provide feedback to students about their learning, which helps in measuring the quality of education, identifying students' strengths/weaknesses and improving the learning processes (Al-Moqbali, 2022). The educational assessment has been administered in online environments despite challenges encountered. Educators can use various (flexible and dynamic) resources in online learning environments to evaluate and measure students' learning progress. Online assessments are quicker than in-person ones and can be more fun for the students. Some of the websites that can be instantly used to assess students online are Padlet, Nearpod, Quizzes, Kahoot! Breaking news English, Mentimeter, etc. On these websites/online applications, personalized quizzes can be taken, games can be played, and students' reading and writing can be assessed in the form of competitions, teamwork, and games. Students also love these assessment sources as, unlike traditional tests and examinations, such websites do not make the students feel the fear and anxiety of assessment.

RESEARCH PROBLEM/RESEARCH GAP

Online tools have become a common practice for assessment worldwide. A vast literature focused on the advantages of technological-based tools in online and in-person classrooms. However, using the tools comes with challenges, and literature must also look at the challenges too as vast research is not available focusing particularly the challenges. Based on such research gap, this research study focuses on the challenges to make them clear for the teachers so they can come up with possible solutions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is imperative to address the challenges of integrating online assessment tools in the classrooms to make things better for the teachers. Some of the significant impacts that the current study can contribute for classroom practices are improved knowledge of teachers about educational technology, better learning and teaching experiences, access and equity, data-driven decision-making, cost-

efficiency, professional development of teachers, adaptation to changing circumstances, policy development, and global impact.

AIM AND OBJECTIVE/RESEARCH QUESTION

The research aimed to identify educators' barriers to adopting and integrating online assessment tools into their teaching practices. Based on this aim, the research had the following objectives and research questions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To get information on what kind of assessment tools (websites/applications) are used by the teachers in their online classrooms
- To look at the challenges of online assessment methods (Kahoot, Padlet, etc.) faced by the language teachers of Hyderabad, Pakistan.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1: What assessment tools (websites/applications) are used by the teachers in their online classrooms in Hyderabad, Pakistan?
- RQ2: What are the challenges of online assessment tools (Kahoot, Padlet, etc.) faced by the language teachers of Hyderabad, Pakistan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment in Online Learning Environments

Assessment plays a vital role in language teachers' lives to identify the learners according to their appropriate levels; it helps in the diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of the learners and provides them feedback and grades during and end of the academic terms (Tosuncuoglu, 2018). Research done by Yulia, Husin, and Anuar (2019) showed that online assessments allowed for more interaction than traditional paper-based assessments. Not only that, students who had their assessments using gadgets were more comfortable with the material at hand and this allowed for stress-free feedback session between the teacher and students. Various other research students have also supported this claim, highlighting the positive impacts of online assessment on learners' performance (Raymer, 2013). Thus, with the correct usage of technological tools,

dynamic methods could be brought into language classrooms where language teaching and assessment activities can be integrated, and both processes coincide (Mohammed, 2021).

Assessment in Online Language Learning

Technology usage has become relevant when it comes to assessing learners. It helps make the traditional classrooms' student centered', ensuring authentic and meaningful evaluation of learners (Fuchs, 2014). According to research, students' motivation and interest level in online assessment methods is exceptionally higher than in traditional in-person classes due to the integration of technological tools (Azmi, 2017). This perspective can be traced back to the engagement theory,' which suggests that meaningful engagement of learners in the evaluation processes is significant, and it can be done through interactive tasks, group work, projects to enhance focus, and authentic practice through learning (Mavromoustakos & Kamal, 2018).

Pedagogical Tools in Language Assessment

The application of such social networking sites has been positive on the students if they are implemented under facilitated observations of the instructors (Tan, 2021). The websites come with attractive features (colors, music, engaging tasks, etc.), so they develop a sense of interest and motivation among students.

According to Kapp (2012), an assessment game/tool needs meaningful context, cognitive activities, challenges, and feedback. The research done by Kapp (2012) suggests that 'gamification' in language classrooms supports language acquisition through the correct practice of skills. According to Kumar (1999), computer games, as a tool in language assessment, act as an intrinsic motivational force that encourages curiosity and maximum participation among learners. Through such tools, students feel they have control of their learning (LaRosa, 2017). Advancements in technology can benefit the students in terms of having more flexibility in the learning methods, chances of more interaction among fellows, exchange of knowledge and real-time feedback between teachers and students (Jafarov & Aliyev, 2024).

One such tool is called 'Padlet', which is like a sticky note board and comes with a wall inside the application. In this 'wall', the users

can post words, links, pictures, videos, and other related materials in which the contents are viewable by anyone with access to the link or address to a wall in Padlet (Rashid et al., 2019). This wall allows the learners to practice free writing about any classroom activity, assignment, personal experience, etc. (Toti, 2018). Another tool is Kahoot, which allows teachers to create student quizzes (LaRosa, 2017). Kahoot! (<https://getkahoot.com/>) is an online global educational brand that offers a free student response platform resembling the popular trivia game Quiz. It is free and effortless to be used by teachers. Teachers can use it to make game-based surveys, discussions, and quizzes. Singer (2016) notes that Kahoot! 's game-like features have helped turn it into a classroom phenomenon with about 20 million users in May 2016.

Research has also discussed the importance of 'Mentimeter', an in-class audience polling technology that allows students to share their views on a particular topic (Irons, 2020). This tool can be used to assess students' understanding or to get their perspective on a given topic of discussion (Beth, 2020). 'Google Forms' are also valuable tools for educational settings as they help create online surveys, quizzes, and assessments that can be easily shared with many students and analyzed quickly (Adelia, 2021). It reduces teacher's efforts, so teachers can focus more on student engagement and providing feedback to the students. 'Edmodo' is also a platform where various assessment features like quizzes, assignments, and discussions are offered, which can be analyzed for meaningful and quick results. If we talk about various activities for formative assessment, 'Socrative' is an app that provides help to teachers in creating quizzes, polls, and exit tickets for formative assessment in no time.

Some other tools that foster interaction among learners are 'Flipgrid', 'Vocaroo', and 'Zoom breakout rooms' (Kleinsmith, 2017; Beth, 2020; Paulsen & McCormick, 2020). Many existing studies have suggested that using such technological tools and gadgets also encourages and improves critical thinking skills among learners, which is one of the most important 21st-century skills (Ekblaw, 2016; Mavromoustakos & Kamal, 2018). The literature also discusses that learners' engagement and motivation to participate increases when their thoughts are read and discussed out loud. Hence, they start sharing more and more from their sides (Fuchs, 2014).

Challenges in Online Modes of Assessment

No matter how valuable these tools are for language classrooms, it is essential to combat and tackle some challenges that come with them in order to use them effectively. Some challenges are solvable, so immediate actions could be taken to reduce them, and some can be difficult for language teachers. The challenges include technical issues, ensuring fairness and security, and maintaining student engagement. Internet connectivity problems, Lack of teacher training, difficulty in grading the students, etc.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design/Sampling

This research study has followed a qualitative research design, which allows the researcher to deeply understand and explore the phenomenon in line with the participants lived experiences (Shah & Corley, 2006). The data for this study was collected through interviews with English language teachers at schools and university levels from Hyderabad city. Convenient and snowball sampling methods were used to gather the participants. Snowball sampling works best when the researcher finds it difficult to identify the participants, so they are located through a chain of networks (Creswell, 2012). The sample size was kept at 30 (Male = 12; Female = 18) aged between 25 and 40 years old. Semi-structured interviews were done to collect the detailed data from the participants. The researcher implemented the semi-structured interview protocol, adapted from the case study of Gupta, *et al* (2023), and its reliability was identified by pilot study and expert feedback. The choice of using semi-structured interviews was essential as it allowed the researcher to deeply explore participants' perceptions and beliefs regarding selected themes that serve the purpose of the study (Adams, 2015). The data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis (TA) method. In the TA process, the researcher identifies, organizes, and offers insights into meaningful patterns or themes (Howitt & Cramer, 2008). In the current research, thematic analysis encompassed the six phases as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) gaining familiarity with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. For the present study, coding was implemented manually.

Results/Findings and Discussion

Based on the interviews conducted with 30 English language teachers, various themes were generated including technical difficulties, Pedagogical Considerations, Data security and privacy, Training and support, and accessibility and inclusivity.

The results indicated that teachers used Padlet for assessing writing skills, Kahoot, Nearpod, quizzes, and centimeter for doing classroom quizzes to check students' knowledge and understanding of different topics. They use Bamboozle and Word wall for gamification in the classroom to enhance students' critical thinking. Finally, Flipgrid and Zoom check students' speaking and listening skills through video recordings and breakout rooms.

Multiple significant challenges under the themes were identified including large classrooms, lack of teacher training, student technology usage, website errors, limited features in the free versions of applications, internet issues, difficulty in measuring the learning outcomes, cheating, and lack of digital literacy.

The biggest issue reported by almost all participants as the most common challenge was the internet issues faced by teachers and students. Some students are less enthusiastic about online tasks because of unstable internet connection, and the teacher finds it difficult to assess them with other students (Wibowo & Novitasari, 2021). This finding aligns with the study done by (2022), who also suggests that internet issues are one of the most significant issues faced by online teachers as they fail to get responses from all the students equally, the way they do in conventional classrooms. One of the university teachers said, *“Internet issues are always there in online classes, because of this problem, many of the students fail to respond in the activities and this spoils the overall mood of the activity sometimes”*. Many teachers also reported the issue of internet cost, as many students need help to afford internet bills and participate in classroom activities. The following important issue reported by the participants was the need for teacher training. Participants from public sector universities of Hyderabad reported that they were not adequately trained to conduct online classes during COVID-19. Thus, they would share PowerPoint presentations and course books in PDF forms while sharing the Zoom screen. It was shared by a participant that, *“I have learnt to use various websites for quizzes and writing*

practices in online classrooms through some prestigious trainings. Before that, I used to conduct online classes at school but I knew nothing about involving students for interactive activities. Trainings are life savers!”

Furthermore, most teachers found it challenging to follow students' progress as it took work to measure the learning outcomes. In online classrooms, teachers find it challenging to know students' progress, strengths, and weaknesses through video conferences. Although online tests, quizzes, and other digital assessments effectively assess students, they still need to be improved to follow or track their progress (Diarsini & P., 2022). Lack of digital literacy was yet another issue reported by many teachers. This challenge also aligns with prior research. According to Arifuddin et al. (2021), many students and teachers fail to perform well via online assessment methods because their knowledge about those gadgets could be better. Students with poor ICT knowledge are disadvantaged in online assessment methods (Diarsini & P., 2022). Many students need to gain the knowledge and competence to use various applications (Fauzani et al., 2021), or they also feel the challenges of filtering the digital information or confirming whether or not it is suitable or correct (Kusuma et al., 2021). This finding is relevant to Ja'ashan's study (2020), which has also reported a similar finding that the technical challenge regarding e-learning was one of the significant challenges found at the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia, for both teachers and students. It involved students' inability to access PDF, course notes, PowerPoint, online feedback, etc., and teachers' less than enough training and experience dealing with digital content. A participant who was a teacher at a private college shared that *“During Covid-19, I always planned to use multiple interactive games and quizzes in my online classrooms but students knew very less about usage of internet-based websites and they took all my time in trying to register in the websites. While we used the platforms to do quizzes and writing tasks, many students (who performed very well in in-person classes) lagged behind just because they found it difficult to learn to use the websites and applications”*.

Another critical challenge for many educators is the application errors and limited access to their features. For example, it was reported that Kahoot's free version can only provide ten quizzes. Similarly, on

Padlet, a teacher can only make 10 Padlet walls with students, and then the teachers will have to pay for the features. Zoom also allows a limited number of participants in a video conference in the free version (Mohammed, 2021). Institutions may only be able to buy premium versions of some websites, and using free versions with limited features for many students is a big problem (Diarsini & P., 2022).

Less motivated and discouraged students also cause challenges for teachers (Zboun & Farrah, 2021). Many students find the virtual modes of teaching and assessment and need to be physically present in a classroom to perform well in the assessment. According to (Yulianto & Mujtahid, 2021), less motivated students often submitted the assignments late or only collected the tasks once the due date expired. This finding is in line with the study by Meşe and Sevilen (2021) regarding the results of interviews and creative writing tasks of students at a private university in Turkey. In their study, most students believed online education harmed their motivation because of the lack of social interaction. One of the teachers shared, *“I found in my online classes that less motivated students would skip the tasks by lying about connectivity issues or similar problems. On the other hand, those who liked the online environments were more regular and participated in the tasks enthusiastically”*.

The last reported challenge was related to the originality of students' tasks and assignments. Multiple teachers shared that it is more challenging to keep an eye on every student in online assessments than we do in in-person tests. Their quizzes and writing tasks could be done by someone else for the sake of good grades, or they can even look for information on the internet. A similar concern was reported in the study done by (Dwiyanti & Suwastini, 2021), who also reported that academic dishonesty and cheating can unfairly get many students good grades during online assessment and evaluation methods.

Apart from the challenges, it was reported by the teachers that the assessment websites are pretty tech-savvy and innovative for assessment. It was reported that the websites and applications have more benefits and fewer challenges, and if the challenges are solved, the usage of these websites can be made more common in the classrooms.

Possible Solution to Challenges of Online Assessments and Evaluations

Although, various challenges were found from the data collected by the teachers, it should be noted that the challenges can be tackled by diversifying assessment methods and bringing innovation into classroom teaching and assessment processes. Following are few of the ways that can be used by the educators to combat the challenges:

1. Diversifying assessment types such as projects, multimedia discussions to reduce cheating: in this era, the educators can use multiple ways of formative and summative assessment in order to combat the challenges faced by them in online learning environments. Quizzes on google forms or on various fun websites can be taken. This reduces chances of cheating and makes the classroom environment fun. eLearning assessments should be designed to incorporate measures of student engagement. For example, assessments could incorporate interactive elements, such as quizzes or simulations, that allow students to engage with the material in meaningful ways (Michelle, 2023)
2. Using secure platforms with proctoring: on internet, enormous websites are available but many of them can have the tendency to be unprotective as well. Teachers must educate themselves on which websites to use frequently through reading about them or by involving themselves into training programs. It is advised that proper training should be provided to all language instructors to standardize the method in teaching, especially in exposing instructors to the best apps or tools to be used in teaching the different language skills, such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing (Nordin, Omar, & Mohd Ridzuan, 2022)
3. Offer clear instructions and timely feedback: in the era of technology, the teacher needs to have multiple roles in the classroom apart from being an instructor only. S/he has to be guide, facilitator and support for learnings when it comes to sharing proper instructions about tasks, reputation of instructions in various ways to encourage maximum participation of all kinds of learners.
4. Provide technical and timely support: for many learners, learning through technology can be an alien concept. Maximum support in terms of technical areas should be ensured by the teachers to help

the students in their learning processes. The students of current generation expect their online teaching and learning experience to be intellectually stimulating, allowing for meaningful interactions, and proximate feedback.

5. Teachers must be given necessary professional development opportunities from time to time, so they can utilize innovative online approaches to assess learners in the classrooms.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This small-scale study focused only on the significant challenges educators face. Similar work could be done to discuss the possible solutions to these problems to make online teaching more effective and valuable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that proper professional development training be given to the teachers to become proficient in using technological tools in the classrooms, as the practice of the tools is crucial. Diversifying assessment methods such as projects, multimedia discussions, and interactive quizzes can reduce cheating and enhance student engagement in online learning environment. Using secure platforms with proctoring measures, along with proper training for teachers in selecting effective digital tools, is essential for maintaining assessment integrity and supporting language skill development. Clear instructions, timely feedback, and continuous technical support further enable teachers to act as facilitators, ensuring meaningful participation and an intellectually stimulating online learning experience for all students. Similarly, educational cultures must be made more supportive, which can encourage teachers to experiment with technology. Institutions must also ensure the availability of internet access to avoid technical glitches so that teachers can effectively use technological tools. Finally, collaboration among teachers should also be encouraged so they can share strategies and resources to integrate technology effectively.

CONCLUSION

The study deeply looked at the challenges of online assessment faced by the teachers during the implementation and found many

important issues. The resulted showed that many issues are there that English language teachers face while attempting to utilize online resource for assessment purposes in the classrooms. The most common challenges included large classrooms, lack of teacher training, student technology usage, website errors, limited features in the free versions of applications, internet issues, difficulty in measuring the learning outcomes, cheating, and lack of digital literacy. However, the challenges and issues could be solved by using certain ways like learning to make better and effective usage of technology through training programs and courses, diversifying assessment methods, using secure platforms, and providing impactful feedback to the learners.

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