



Online Assessment in Academic Education during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Iranian PNU TEFL Professors and Students' Experiences and Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

- Online testing is an alternative to traditional one.
- Online assessments are a part of the online learning process.
- Online assessment can take a variety of forms, including automated management procedures, digitization of paper-based systems, multiple-choice tests, and problem-solving skill assessments (Ridgway, et al., 2004).
- Despite the use of online assessments in many educational settings, many studies have reported barriers to the practice of online assessment (e.g., Abduh, 2021; Forrester, 2020; Ghanbari & Nowroozi, 2021; Yulianto & Mujtahin, 2021).
- The transition from traditional physical classroom-based education to online one caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 had an extensive impact on various aspects of education.

1.2. Statement of the problem

By reviewing and evaluating the previous research the researcher of the present study found that the number of participants "teachers" used in their studies was low. In addition, they employed only one instrument either questionnaire or interview. Despite the fact that assessment procedures can have an effect on students, too, the previous studies just explored the idea of teachers, and the perception of students was ignored.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The findings of the present study could be useful for:

1. Policy-makers
2. Administrators of the universities
3. EFL teachers

1.4. Research Questions

RQ1) What are the challenges faced by TEFL professors of PNU involved in online assessment during COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2) What are the challenges faced by TEFL students of PNU involved in online assessment during COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ3) What were the coping strategies of PNU TEFL Professors involved in online assessment at the time of COVID-19 pandemic?

METHOD

2.1. Research Design

Qualitative study/ A survey research design

2.2. Participants

Payam Noor University (PNU), South Tehran branch
The convenience (availability) sampling
Five TEFL PNU instructors and 100 female and male students.

2.3. Instruments

Semi-structured Interview

- 10 open-ended questions
- Each interview about one hour.

Researcher-made Students Questionnaire

A researcher-made questionnaire With 25 items. The questionnaire contained three sections: A: Demographic information; B: instructors' assessment practices in online mode of assessment (13 items), and C: challenges of online assessment (12 items).

2.4. Procedure

The data was gathered through two phases:

Phase one: 1. Administering interviews to the instructors, audio-recording and transcribing the interviews

Phase two: Administering the researcher-made questionnaire

2.5. Quantitative Data

Two types of statistical analysis: Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Qualitative Data

The descriptive qualitative content analysis technique (Creswell, 2012) was employed.

RESULTS

Answering the First Research Question

Table 4.1. Challenges faced by TEFL professors of PNU in online assessment during COVID-19 pandemic

No.	Theme	Expressions From Opinions	Frequencies
1	Student's Cheating	1. A real challenge 2. Creating anxiety 3. Students' misuse 4. Useful and conducive	81% 65% 71% 5%
2	The Possibility of Impersonation	1. The students' identity 2. Video facility 3. Identity check 4. Instructors' concern	35% 24% 41% 53%
3	Poor Internet Connection and Weak Platform	1. Internet disconnection 2. Poor internet 3. Platform problems 4. A biggest challenge	95% 98% 85% 78%
4	Digital Literacy	1. Computer skill 2. A primary challenge 3. subsequent chance 4. A hindering element	68% 40% 29% 56%

Answering the Third Research Question

Table 4.2 Coping strategies of PNU TEFL Professors involved in online assessment at the time of COVID-19 pandemic

No.	Theme	Expressions From Opinions	Frequencies
1	Students' Cheating Prevention Strategies	1. Randomized or shuffled questions 2. A reliable test bank 3. The time of the exam 4. Different modes of assessment	43% 15% 10% 29%
2	Improving the Digital Facilities	1. Boosting the online infrastructures 2. Suitable network connection 3. Fair online assessment 4. The quality of online platforms	68% 89% 35% 77%
3	Holding Training Sessions	1. Online education trainings 2. Online assessment trainings 3. Educational administrators 4. Digital literacy trainings	56% 42% 15% 49%

Answering the second Research Question

Table 4.3. Students' challenges of Online Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Residual			Chi-Square	df	Sig.
			Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree			
Q1	2	7	16	46	29	63.3	4	.000
Q2	2	14	10	44	30	56.8	4	.000
Q3	1	11	16	43	29	53.4	4	.000
Q4	2	9	19	42	28	49.7	4	.000
Q5	1	9	14	43	33	60.8	4	.000
Q6	2	9	20	34	35	43.3	4	.000
Q7	1	8	20	50	21	70.3	4	.000
Q8	2	6	17	50	25	72.7	4	.000
Q9	2	13	20	43	22	45.3	4	.000
Q10	3	11	13	45	28	55.4	4	.000
Q11	4	12	15	40	29	41.3	4	.000
Q12	2	5	20	47	26	65.7	4	.000

The most important challenges were short time of the exam that was stress-provoking and the platform's problems during the exam session in which the students could not upload their exams.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study are in line with the findings of Abduh's (2021), Zhang et al. (2021), and Ghanbari and Nowroozi (2021).

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