

Disclosing issues of language assessment in an online platform: A review

Gomez, Dan ✉

University of Mindanao, Philippines (dangomez031986@gmail.com)

Received: 26 October 2022

Available Online: 8 November 2022

Revised: 1 November 2022

DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2022.355

Accepted: 8 November 2022

ISSN: 2243-7703

Online ISSN: 2243-7711

OPEN ACCESS



Abstract

This study aimed to review theoretical perspectives concerning language assessment in the midst of the pandemic as it shifted from traditional to online mode of assessment. Furthermore, this paper also aimed to identify issues raised relative to the shift of assessment. Finally, literatures from different studies were utilized to gather insights in the light of online language assessment.

Keywords: online assessment, issues, theoretical perspectives, Philippines

Disclosing issues of language assessment in an online platform: A review

1. Introduction

Language assessment, whether formative or summative, plays an important role in second language learners' educational experience and learning outcomes. Whether assessment is used for student initial screening, placement, or progression in a language course, it always involves gathering, interpreting and evaluating evidence of learning. Such information collected through the different assessment and evaluation tools allows educators to identify student needs and plan a course of action to address these needs, provides feedback about the effectiveness of teaching practice, guides instruction and curriculum design, and provides accountability for the system.

For language educators, assessment is perhaps one of the most difficult and demanding tasks they have to perform given that designing valid and reliable assessment tools requires specialized skills, while decisions about assessment, especially 'high-stakes' exams, can have a lasting impact on students' progress and life. Furthermore, in order for assessment to be useful, it must align itself with the mandated standards and academic expectations of the specific context where it occurs. Since no single type of assessment can provide all the information that is necessary to gauge students' progress and language proficiency levels, educators need to incorporate a variety of assessment techniques into their practice and be aware of approaches and methods that can help provide valid and reliable evidence of student learning. However, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced testing centers to close which greatly impacted schools and colleges. Some schools are not ready to shift its paradigm to accommodate the ongoing problem in line with students' language assessment in judging language proficiency. While implementing accommodations is nothing new in English language testing (Abedi, 2017), the focus of accommodations has mostly been on providing accommodations for English language learners when they are assessed via English in subject matter in online manner.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, governments imposed strict, sweeping mitigation efforts including travel bans, social distancing, and quarantines. Schools and universities were forced to close campuses and deploy distance learning solutions in order to reach the approximately 1.5 billion students affected worldwide. This sudden shift brought with it a myriad of challenges: keeping personnel safe and healthy, ensuring academic rigor and engagement, providing clear communication, and others. This shift to distance or online modes involved the use of fully remote teaching solutions such as mobile learning, radio, Zoom-based lectures, or any other methods that are contextually feasible. Institutions of varying types and sizes all over the world were forced to find and implement quick solutions. The crisis required the academic manpower to redesign in a short period of time what was supposed to be an already planned out academic term. Thus, this study is conducted to determine some theoretical perspectives and raise issues relative to language assessment during pandemic. This would also aim to determine the impact of language assessment in an online platform.

1.1 Objectives

This paper aimed to:

- review perspectives of online language assessment
- identify issues raised in language assessment in an online platform

2. Theoretical foundation in online language assessment

With the development of modern technologies and learning tools and systems, Online Education (OE) has been receiving ongoing attention from day to day. Therefore, Assessment Practices(Aps) should be

accommodated in such ways that they can measure students' learning accurately and adequately (García-Peñalvo et al., 2021; Sa'di et al., 2021). APs in OE which have been termed e-assessment can bring about both advantages and disadvantages (St-Onge et al., 2021). The advantages include time and location flexibility, lesser administrative burden, easier preparation, scoring and moderating of question papers, quicker evaluations and results, a friendly climate, a secure solution, easier report creation, and cost-effectiveness (St-Onge et al., 2021; Kundu & Bej, 2021).

However, the disadvantages include challenges in technology adoption, infrastructural barriers, difficulty in grading long-answer type, susceptible to cheating, transitioning to open-book exams, and the lack of face-to-face interactions between teachers and students (García-Peñalvo et al., 2021; Kundu & Bej, Azizi Language Testing in Asia (2022) 12:14 Page 5 of 17, 2021; Sa'di et al., 2021). For example, in e-assessment practices, students can answer on their own devices at home; thus, they cannot be checked upon. As the second drawback, students do not have opportunities for raising their concerns and sharing their voices about e-assessment practices

3. Issues raised in online language assessment

Online exams also tend to increase in parallel with this situation since most of the exams, quizzes, tests, and many other measurement and evaluation tools have been moved to online platforms in Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) period. The concept of ERT emerged as a result of the crisis experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes workarounds rather than a permanent plan. Unlike planned distance education activities, it aims to produce fast, practical, reliable, and flexible solutions to problems (Hodges et al., 2020). The need for secure online assessment systems has been felt more especially during the COVID-19 period. Therefore, online assessment tools should also have features that can provide solutions to the problems in the ERT period.

Security issue has been a common problem for online exams (Barthel, 2016; Butler-Henderson & Crawford, 2020; Dadashzadeh, 2021). This damages the reputation of training programs and reduces the value of the diploma in the eyes of potential employers (Carrell et al., 2008; Dadashzadeh, 2021). As a solution, security-enhanced online assessment systems are used to prevent cheating and fraud (Foster & Layman, 2013; Slusky, 2020; Tomasi et al., 2011). In addition, another challenge raised is on its disadvantages which include challenges in technology adoption, infrastructural barriers, difficulty in grading long-answer type, susceptible to cheating, transitioning to open-book exams, and the lack of face-to-face interactions between teachers and students (García-Peñalvo et al., 2021; Kundu & Bej, Azizi Language Testing in Asia (2022) 12:14 Page 5 of 17, 2021; Sa'di et al., 2021). For example, in e-assessment practices, students can answer on their own devices at home; thus, they cannot be checked upon. As the second drawback, students do not have opportunities for raising their concerns and sharing their voices about e-assessment practices.

4. Conclusion

Taken together, it is reasonable to argue that fairness is a critical facet in e-assessment practices. Therefore, the conceptualization of fairness should be reshaped in e-assessment practices such that it can be useful for testing stakeholders to implement quality e-assessment procedures, leading to quality education. The findings indicated that the information about Assessment Practices should be truthful, adequate, and persuasive. Align with Rasooli, Zandi, and DeLuca (2019), the truthfulness, adequacy, and justification of information should be invoked proactively and reactively. That is, the required information about assessment procedures should be given to students prior to, during, and after test administrations. Taking consideration in all of these, it is vital for schools to ensure that the Learning Management System (LMS) to be used should have features that will ensure honesty in grading students and that academic dishonesty should be avoided by means of ensuring safety feature of the adopted learning management system.

5. References

- Abedi, J. (2017). *Utilizing accommodations in assessment*. In E. Shohamy, I. G. Or, & S. May (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education: Language testing and assessment* (3rd ed., pp. 303–322). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Buttner, E. H. (2004). How do we “dis” students: A model of (dis)respectful business instructor behavior. *Journal of Management Education*, 28, 319–334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562903252656>
- García-Peñalvo, F. J., Corell, A., Abella-García, V., & Grande-de-Prado, M. (2021). Recommendations for mandatory online assessment in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic. In *Radical solutions for education in a crisis context* (pp. 85–98). Springer.
- Rasooli, A., DeLuca, C., Rasegh, A., & Fathi, S. (2019). Students’ critical incidents of fairness in classroom assessment: An empirical study. *Social Psychology of Education*, 22(3), 701–722. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-019-09491-9>
- Rasooli, A., Zandi, H., & DeLuca, C. (2018). Re-conceptualizing classroom assessment fairness: A systematic metaethnography of assessment literature and beyond. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 56, 164–181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2017.12.008>
- Rasooli, A., Zandi, H., & DeLuca, C. (2019). Conceptualising fairness in classroom assessment: Exploring the value of organisational justice theory. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 26(5), 584–611. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2019.1593105>
- St-Onge, C., Ouellet, K., Lakhali, S., Dubé, T., & Marceau, M. (2021). COVID-19 as the tipping point for integrating e-assessment in higher education practices. *British Journal of Educational Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13169>