

Assessing the Difficulties Faced by the Iraqi EFL University Students with Online Assessment in Third Year Stage

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Summary:

Online assessment offer useful means of assessing knowledge and abilities, but they also present some difficulties that must be resolved in order to have a positive assessment experience.

Online assessment may seem easy, but there can be major challenges that cause real difficulties for students, cast doubt on the reliability of the exams, and undermine the credibility of the institutions. However, the present study aims to shed the light on determine the challenges that most of EFL Iraqi students faced during online assessment. For this purpose, the researches set a questionnaire which contains three parts each part describes different data which related to each other. The data was collected from Iraqi EFL undergraduate third year students chosen randomly from Department of English, Al-Mansour University Collage, University of Diyala, Mustansiriya University. The results are analyzed through descriptive statistics of the data through SPSS 26 software program. According to the findings, the researchers recommend some ideas for each part of the study.

1. Introduction

1.1 General Background

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) affected all the aspects of life including education. It is apparent that one of the most impacted parts was education. Neither the world nor all the educational institutions were prepared to hold the shift from presence teaching environment to online platforms. Therefore, it has a strong impact on the students' learning environment. As a result, many governments had to close all the universities and schools in order to stop the COVID-19 spread and make educational processes possible. All the educational institutions including all the universities and schools were forced to change teaching atmosphere from face to face teaching to online teaching by using specific electronic applications and platforms. In this case assessing students' performance become the biggest challenges for both of the teacher and the students.

It is impossible to carry out online teaching and assessment without using technology and internet although it requires using software licensee, computers, servers, and all the staff should be training in order to know how to use online teaching programs (Joshi, et al, 2020: 86). Hasan (2021: 41) states that using internet in teaching is different from any other technologies program even if it has been used in teaching before COVID-19 but it still has many barriers such as lack of face to face connection. One suggested solution for this problem is to create a suitable environment that encourages the students to support each other so as to create an effective community in online learning environment.

a. Problem of the study

The problem of the present study comes from the views that Iraqi learners faced many difficulties during online assessment.

b. Aim

The present study aims at assessing the main difficulties that most of Iraq EFL learners faced with online assessment.

c. The Limits of the Study

The study is limited to the third year EFL college students at the department of English /Al-Mansour University Collage, Collage of Basic Education/ University of Diyala, Collage of Arts/ Mustansiriya University.

d. Research Tools

The present study adopted a questionnaire which contains 16 items; divided into three parts:

1. Part one contains 7 items which specifically designed in order to find out the main technical difficulties that most of EFL Iraqi learners faced.
2. Part two contains 4 items which measure the linguistics difficulties that EFL Iraqi learners faced during online assessment.
3. Part three contains 5 items which related to the main difficulties that most of EFL Iraqi learners faced during the administrative of online assessment.

The test was carried out on 11/5/2022. The subjects are required to choose only one option from a variety of three options. The statistical analysis of the data was calculated by using SPSS 26 software program.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Online Assessment

Since COVID-19 have been appeared there is a significance need to introduce online-teaching and online-assessment, by using e –assessment, measuring students' outcome become possible. Therefore, presence learning becomes distance learning. Thatsarani, et al (2023:3) see that distance learning as a method of teaching rather than a philosophy of education. In distance learning, the students can study on their own place which could be at home or at work without having direct and physical contact with the teacher. In this case, technology tools play an essential role in which the teacher and the student should use a specific

application such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and Google Forms in order to facilitate learning processes.

According to Weleschulk (2019:5) online assessment can be defined as any tools that can be used to evaluate students' achievement, provide them with feedback, and enhance learning process in fully online course, in this case assessing students' progress should be done completely in online environment. Additionally online assessment is used as a form of formative assessment to assess students' during a course of study or it can be used as a form of summative assessment to assess the student at the end of the course.

Online assessment also known as an electronic assessment since it should be done an electronically. Which means that, all assessing steps including such as designing test items, applying the test, recording students' responses, and providing feedback should be done by using Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

(Alruwais et al, 2018:34)

Hasan (2021:42), mention the important of choosing a suitable and an acceptable platform in online teaching process, which can simplify learning environment. Thus, the students should know that all these platforms is easy to use in online courses, as well as it is very essential to use different platforms that provide the students with continuous access to online courses and create student -student interaction , student –content interaction, and student –teacher interaction.

2.2 Challenges of Online Assessment

Assessment during COVID -19 becomes the biggest challenge for a lot of teachers and students; many students faced difficulties during an examination such as physical distance between the teacher and students, time managing, internet disconnect, and disability to use computer and technology during online examination.

Al-Moqbali (2022:74) categorized the challenges that the students faced during online assessment into three types:

- A. Information –Technology related challenges (IT)
- B. Learners –related challenges
- C. Staff –related challenges

The following points are the main challenges that the students faced with online assessment:

1. The students access to online assessment is totally depends on availability of an internet, for some student it cost a lot of money, additionally; it is difficult to provide some students with internet because of their geographic location. Therefore, being able to access on online classes will be challenge for some students. (Mohd BASAR, et al. 2021:123). According to Al –Maqbali (2022:74) all required resources for online assessment such as network service, online platform, technological resources can enhance online assessment during the pandemic.
2. Alruwais (2018:35) states that some student especially inexperienced students faced difficulties on how to use a computer devices, or how to do an online examination. In order to avoid this problem, it important to train student on how to deal with new technology during online assessment.
3. Guangul, et al (2022: 522) argue that during online assessment, many students may face technical difficulties in this case fixing these problems will not be an easy procedures especially it should be done on online environment.
4. Kabir, et al (2022:5) mention that online assessment can make a negative effect on students and teachers' mental health and the ability to meet work related needs. As well as, many student feel that the pandemic and lockdown impact their academic performance at the same time many teachers were disable to teach and assess their students remotely. Moreover, many students feel stress on

online assessment rather than on presence assessment because they afraid of being disconnected with internet, and faced technical problems with software or hardware.

5. For cultural or personal reasons, many students do not prefer to open camera when the teacher ask them to show their ID during online examination. (ibid)
6. Beleulmi (2022:57) point out that online assessment becomes a problematic issue especially on time managing for students in first year since they are unfamiliar with online assessment and they do not have information it and some of them do not know how to use computers so they take more time in order to be able to deal with online assessment. Therefore, it very important not only for the teacher but also for the student to involved on training courses program which is specifically design in order to train the teacher and the student on how to use these new technological tools in learning and teaching process.
7. Online assessment required using well –established system, program, software, and hardware for both of the teacher and the student in order to use online assessment successfully for some students it will be difficult to provide these devices. (Guangul, et al. 2020:522).
8. Unfortunately, the students' and the teachers' information could be stolen in online assessment. The loss of students' information obstructs the process of evaluating students' performance and achievement. In this case, the teacher has to prepare and design another exam or activity and the student should do it again. This process will be time consuming and overloading for both of the teacher and the student, although losing information could be happen in presence assessment but in online assessment is more remarkable. (Kiennert, 2017: 267)

2.3 Previous Studies

1. Trang, & Chi, (2022)

A questionnaire has been used in a study on Vietnamese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' opinions regarding online tests and the difficulties they faced. The questionnaire covered test anxiety, challenges with technology, and general opinions on online exams.

2. Yeung, & Yau,. (2022).

An online questionnaire was utilized in a thematic analysis research on Hong Kong students to gather information about their experiences and challenges with online learning and evaluations. This study identified difficulties with academic integrity, lack of quick feedback, and technological impediments.

3. Alsalhi, Qusef, Al-Qatawneh, & Eltahir, M. E. (2022)

A questionnaire has been used to explore the acceptance of online assessment on the part of students of Princess Sumaya University for Technology (PSUT) in Jordan during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that, undergraduate students showed a high level of acceptability of the use of online assessments. Additionally, the results showed that the degree of acceptability of online assessments differed based on computer abilities and the college variable.

3. Methods

3.1 Research Questions

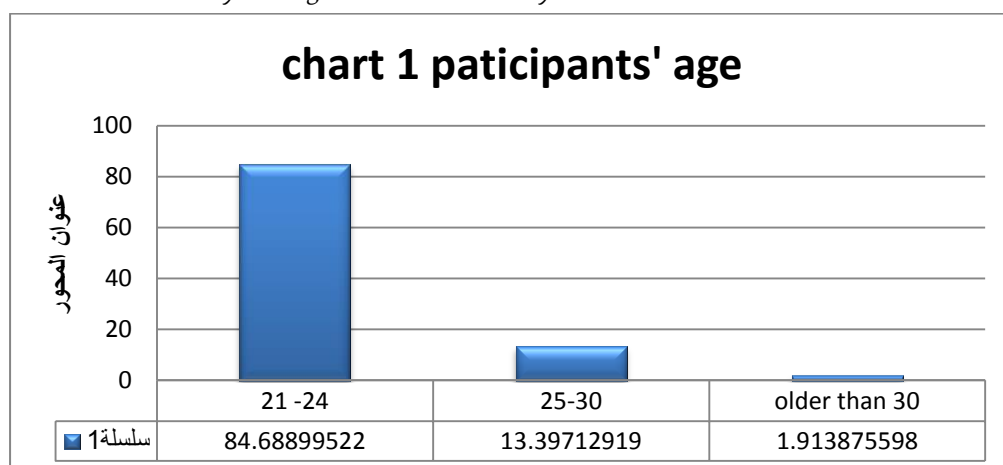
The present study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Do Iraqi EFL learners face any technical difficulties during online assessment?
2. Do Iraqi EFL learners face any linguistics difficulties during online assessment?
3. Do Iraqi EFL learners face any difficulties during the administrative of online assessment?

3.2 Subjects

The study includes 209 EFL undergraduate third year students chosen randomly from Department of English, Al-Mansour University Collage, University of Diyala, Mustansiriya University. The participants' age range between 21-24 years old

The reason behind choosing third year undergraduate students is that they were tested electronically during Covid-19 for three years.



3.3The Test

3.3.1 Test Validity and Reliability

The main two characteristics of good test are validity and reliability. According to Mousavi (2012:869) the test will be valid when it measure what is supposed to measure. Test validity contains two types: content validity and face validity, the contents of the test is said to be valid when it represent a language skills, strictures, etc. (Mousavi, 2012:158). The items of the questionnaire for the present study was selected carefully after studying the subject filed. While face validity refers to the way the test was appearance to learners.

In other hand, reliability refers to the consistency of test through different times. This means that when the test is repeated, the scores remain generally steady. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to test the reliability of the questionnaire items; 80% is enough to admit the questionnaire for the students.

3.3.2 Pilot Study

The aim of applying pilot study is to measure the amount of time required to answer the items of the questionnaire and to reveal factors in specific items that are not

apparent when the test is written. Therefore, pilot study was applied for 10 students selected randomly from the sample on Sunday 8/5/2022

3.3.3 Administration of the Test

The main test was applied on Wednesday 11/5/2022. The questionnaire sends electronically to the participants through their official e-mails, and the students were given 60 minutes to answer the questionnaire and they were informed on how to answer the questions carefully. To save time and effort, the researchers used Google Form in order to write the items of the questionnaire.

4 Data Analysis

4.1 Analysis of Technical Part

The findings of technical part of the questionnaire are shown as seen; the results indicated that the highest average go to the fifth item: (I can do my exams with my non-official e-mail) with mean 2.54 and Std. Deviation 0.753, followed by the last item: (When I do my exams, I use other devices to open browsers pages to look for the correct answers) with mean 2.44 and Std. Deviation 0.751. While the lowest average was given to the third item (I have to do my exams with my official university e-mail) with mean 1.23 and Std. Deviation 0.535. According to table 1 the weighted average of the first part of the questionnaire is (Sometimes), as a general tend according to 3-point Liker's scale for frequency as shown in table (1) since 1.947 lies in the interval [1.67 – 2.33]. Therefore, the average of (Technical Part) is (1.947) which is considered between upper level and lower level, since the intervals level as follow: Never: [1.00-1.66], Sometimes: [1.67-2.33], Always: [2.34-3.00].

Table (1) Statistics of Technical Part

Technical Part		Always	Sometimes	Never	Mean	std. deviation	Rank
I use Google forms to do my exams.	N	80	100	29	1.76	0.681	2
	%	38.3	47.8	13.9			
I prefer electronic exams more than presence exams.	N	63	82	64	2.00	0.781	2
	%	30.1	39.2	30.6			
I prefer presence exams 1 online exam.	N	93	76	40	1.75	0.758	2
	%	44.5	36.4	19.1			

I have to do my exams with my official university e-mail.	N	171	27	11	1.23	0.535	1
	%	81.8	12.9	5.3			
I can do my exams with my non-official e-mail.	N	33	30	146	2.54	0.753	1
	%	15.8	14.4	69.9			
When I do my exams, I cannot open other browsers pages to look for the correct answers.	N	77	73	59	1.91	0.804	2
	%	36.8	34.9	28.2			
When I do my exams, I use other devices to open browsers pages to look for the correct answers.	N	33	52	124	2.44	0.751	3
	%	15.8	24.9	59.3			
weighted mean						1.9474	
std. deviation						0.32712	

4.2. Analysis of Linguistics Part

The analysis of linguistic part of the questionnaire shown that the second item has the highest average (I copy the answers from my lectures and paste it without any editing in the open question items of the test.) with mean 2.54 and Std. Deviation 0.693 followed by the first item (I use the predictive text feature in my device so I can be sure my answers with no typo) with mean 2.16 and Std. Deviation 0.798 followed by the fourth item (I learn new vocabulary while I am looking for the correct answer during the online exam) with mean 1.82 and Std. Deviation 0.742 . While the lowest average was given to the third item (I check every objective question item in my lectures before I choose the correct answer) with mean 1.57 and Std. Deviation 0.744. According to table 2 the weighted average of the second part of the questionnaire is (Sometimes), as a general tend according to 3-point Liker's scale for frequency as shown in table (2) since 2.023 lies in the interval [1.67 – 2.33]. Therefore, the average of (Linguistics Part) is (2.023) which is considered between upper level and lower level, since the intervals level as follow: Never: [1.00-1.66], Sometimes: [1.67-2.33], Always: [2.34-3.00].

Table (2) Statistics of Linguistics Part

Linguistics Part		Always	Sometimes	Never	Mean	std. deviation	Rank
I use the predictive text feature in my device so I can be sure my answers with no typo.	N	52	71	86	2.16	0.798	2
	%	24.9	34.0	41.1			
I copy the answers from my lectures and paste it without any editing in the open question items of the test.	N	24	49	136	2.54	0.693	3
	%	11.5	23.4	65.1			
I check every objective question item in my lectures before I choose the correct answer.	N	121	56	32	1.57	0.744	1
	%	57.9	26.8	15.3			
I learn new vocabulary while I am looking for the correct answer during the online exam.	N	79	88	42	1.82	0.742	2
	%	37.8	42.1	20.1			
weighted mean						2.023	
std. deviation						0.449	

4.3. Analysis of Administrative Part

The last part of the questionnaire contains five questions about the main challenges encountered when administering the online examinations. The results show that the first question (Most of the question items in the online exams are-----) gets the highest average 2.22 with std. deviation 0.91 in which 55% of the subject choose (both), followed by the last question (The texts I have to study for the online exams are -----the presence exam) with mean 2.01 and std. deviation 0.88 where 39% of the responses was (as same as), after that the fourth question (The duration of online exams are-----) with mean 1.89 and std. deviation 0.831 in which 84% of the subject selected (fair enough). While in third question (When my profs return me my score, I get -----) 50% of the responds was (get nothing) with mean 1.84 and std. deviation 0.909. The results show that the second question (Online exam that I had contains -----) gets the lowest average 1.40 with std. deviation 0.754 in which 159% of the responds were (only written items).

Table (3) Statistics of Administrative Part

Administrative Part					Mean	std. deviation
Question 1		objective	subjective	Both	2.22	0.910
Most of the question items in the online exams are-----	N	68	26	115		
	%	32.5	12.4	55.0		
Question 2		only written items	Audio track	video and photos	1.40	0.754
Online exam that I had contains -----	N	159	16	34		
	%	76.1	7.7	16.3		
Question 3		get nothing	oral feedback in the lecture	written feedback with the score	1.84	0.909
When my profs return me my score, I get -----	N	105	32	72		
	%	50.2	15.3	34.4		
Question 4		fair enough	not enough	same as the presence exam	1.89	0.831
The duration of online exams are-----	N	84	63	62		
	%	40.2	30.1	29.7		
Question 5		more than	less than	as same as	2.01	0.880
The texts I have to study for the online exams are ----- -the presence exam.	N	79	48	82		
	%	37.8	23.0	39.2		
weighted mean					1.875	
std. deviation					0.410	

5 Findings

The following conclusions obtained from this study are:

1. Regarding the first question of the study, the results shown that Iraqi EFL learners faced technical difficulties during online assessment.
2. According to statistical analysis of technical part, some of technical difficulties could be appeared such as most of Iraqi EFL learners were not allowed to use non-official e-mail, since 69% of the responds for the fifth items (I can do my

exams with my non-official e-mail) was (never) with mean 2.54 and Std. Deviation 0.753. Therefore, general tend for the first part according to 3-point Liker's scale for frequency was (sometimes) since 2.023 lies in the interval $[1.67 - 2.33]$ Therefore, weighted mean for the technical part was (1.947).

3. Iraqi EFL learners prefer presence exams more than online exam since 44% of the responds was (always) to third item (I prefer presence exams more than online exam).
4. Concerning the second question of present study, the results indicated that Iraqi EFL learner faced some challenges with linguistics part since the weighted average of the second part of the questionnaire is (Sometimes), as a general tend according to 3-point Liker's scale for frequency
5. With reference to the third question, Iraqi EFL students faced the following problems:
 - A. The majority of the online test's question types are objective and subjective, since 55% of the responds was (both)
 - B. Most of Iraqi EFL learners mention that they get only the scores without any written or oral feedback.
 - C. Mostly, the items of online assessment were only written text without using audio track, video and photos.
 - D. The amount of materials that the student examined is the same as the presence exam.
- 6 Recommendations
 1. Plagiarism detection software is mandated for educational institutions in order to prevent cheating.
 2. Provide students with chances to participate in group problem-solving exercises, teacher-student discussions, and self-assessment activities so that teachers may gain pertinent and useful insights into how they are learning.

3. Employ a variety of assessment methods, such as multiple-choice questions (MCQs), descriptive evaluations, student e-portfolio assessments, online role plays, scenario-based activities, online conversations, etc. they will enable the teacher to assess their student in different learning situations.
4. For inexperience students who are unfamiliar with online assessments, they must first receive training before they start .

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- Appendix: The Test
- Dear Students
- As a part of our research at Al-Mansour University College and Al-Kitab University, We have conducting study to check " Challenges faced by EFL Iraqi Students in Doing Online Exam: Al-Mansour University Collage , Mustansiriyah University and University of Diyala ". We will appreciate if you respond to the following questionnaire.

Note: your response will be held in strictest confidence and will remain anonymous.

Researchers

Sex: male female

Age: 25-30 ☐ 21-24 ☐ older than 30 ☐

University: ☐ Al-Mansour University College ☐ University of Diyala ☐ Mustansiriyah University

Part One:

1. I use Google forms to do my exams.

☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never

2. I prefer electronic exams more than presence exams.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

3. I prefer presence exams more than online exams.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

4. I have to do my exams with my official university e-mail.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

5. I can do my exams with my non-official e-mail.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

6. When I do my exams, I cannot open other browsers pages to look for the correct answers.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

7. When I do my exams, I use other devices to open browsers pages to look for the correct answers.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

Part Two:

8. I use the predictive text feature in my device so I can be sure my answers with no typo.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

9. I copy the answers from my lectures and paste it without any editing in the open question items of the test.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

10. I check every objective question item in my lectures before I choose the correct answer.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

11. I learn new vocabulary while I am looking for the correct answer during the online exam.

☐Always ☐Sometimes ☐Never

Part Three:

12. Most of the question items in the online exams are _____

☐objective ☐Subjective ☐both

13. Online exam that I had contains _____

☐Audio track ☐video and photos ☐only written items

14. When my profs return me my score, I get _____

☐written feedback with the score ☐oral feedback in the lecture ☐get nothing

15. The duration of online exams are _____

☐fair enough ☐not enough ☐same as the presence exam

16. The texts I have to study for the online exams are _____ the presence exam.

☐more than ☐less than ☐as same as

تقييم الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلبة العراقيون في المرحلة الثالثة دارسوا اللغة الانكليزية كلفة أجنبية أثناء الامتحانات الإلكترونية

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الاختبارات الالكترونية. اللغة الانكليزية كلفة اجنبية. صعوبات
الملخص:

اضحت الاختبارات عبر الإنترنت من أهم وسائل تقييم المعرفة والقدرات، الا انها في الوقت ذاته مصحوبة ببعض الصعوبات التي تحتاج الى حلول للحصول على تجربة تقييم فاعلة، كون هذه الصعوبات لا تواجه الطلبة فحسب بل تلقي بظلال من الشك على موثوقية الاختبارات وتقوض مصداقية المؤسسات الاكاديمية. تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على التحديات التي يواجهها معظم الطلبة العراقيون دارسوا اللغة الانكليزية كلفة اجنبية اثناء الامتحانات الالكترونية ولهذا الغرض أعد الباحثون استبانة تتكون من ثلاثة محاور حيث يتناول كل محور بيانات مختلفة ومرتبطة ببعضها البعض أظهرت كيفية تعامل الطلبة مع هذه الاختبارات. تم جمع هذه البيانات بطريقة عشوائية من طلبة المرحلة الثالثة من قسم اللغة الانكليزية في كليات (كلية المنصور الجامعة، الاداب/ الجامعة المستنصرية، التربية الاساسية / جامعة ديالى)، وتم تحليل النتائج من خلال استخدام برنامج الإحصاء الوصفي SPSS 26، وفي ضوء النتائج توصل الباحثون الى مجموعة من التوصيات.