

## Algerian EFL teachers' and students' attitudes towards online assessment feasibility and Impediment

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### Abstract

The current investigation revolves around online assessment feasibility and its practicability issues during the Coronavirus pandemic. Within this context, this study precisely aims at getting tertiary EFL teachers' and students' voices about to what extent online assessment can be ineffective or effective in an e- teaching/learning environment. To this end, a mixed-method design is used encompassing three research instruments, a questionnaire addressed to 50 second-year master didactics students at Ibn Khaldoun university of Tiaret, an interview, conducted with 5 EFL teachers from the same university, and a corpus analysis allowing for a comparative study of face-to-face and online exams' results. The triangulated analysis of the gleaned data reveals that the majority of the respondents and the interviewees recognize the importance and efficiency of the new mode of assessment. Assuredly, the comparative study displays that online assessment was much better than paper-pen-based exams in results.

**Keywords:** Assessment; digital literacy; e-learning; Online assessment; technological devices.

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## **1. Introduction**

Various sectors are affected by Internet technology (Salama, Uzunboylu & Alkaddah, 2020). Higher education is regarded as one of the primary sectors that are undergoing a massive change as it is gradually integrating information and communication technology (ICT) to improve the teaching and learning environment and process. ICTs have long been viewed as an assistance tool for teachers and students to share and disseminate knowledge. Within these changes, educators have recognized the need for new learning and teaching approaches. Therefore, online learning has been introduced in addition to online assessment. The latter allows students and teachers to interact synchronically. Moreover, it allows students to perform assignments from their homes rather than traveling long distances to their universities. Furthermore, online assessment allows instructors to correct and score exam papers in a short amount of time. More interestingly, some teachers employ automatic scoring, which allows for large-scale testing via computer applications. With such technological devices, the world has changed in all spheres of life, especially with the unprecedented pandemic of CoViD-19. Subsequently, the latter have obliged all individuals to change their methods and techniques.

The novel coronavirus (CoViD-19) emerged in late December 2019. It first debuted at a seafood and live animal market in Wuhan city, China. Then, in the first months of 2020, it spread around the world remarkably fast. The number of victims is increasing, causing alarm around the world. Worse, numerous laboratories and research centers have been unable to find a viable remedy for that disease for a significant time. The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated multiple times that there is no definite cure for this disease (Cetinkayaa & Cetinkaya, 2020).

It is worth noting that CoViD-19 has shaken the educational sector worldwide. To slow the virus's rapid expansion, all institutes closed their doors for a significant portion of 2020 and 2021 as an immediate response to the sanitary crisis. During this period, universities, colleges, and institutions all across the world are being urged to shift from traditional to online education. As a result, the outbreak of CoViD-19 was a major element in the transition to online learning, which demanded online assessment.

Similar to many other countries throughout the world, Algeria was hit by the CoViD-19 pandemic. As a result, all colleges and universities have shut down their doors as a precautionary measure to prevent the virus from spreading across the country. The Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has advocated for the creation of a platform that will allow students to learn online while maintaining contact with their instructors. Therefore, Algerian universities set up Moodle as a learning platform for students to complete their courses online. In addition, instructors utilize other platforms and software programs such as Google Classroom, Google Zoom, Google Meet, Padlet, and Flipgrid to facilitate and clarify instructing and assessing their students. Therefore, the current research is an attempt to explore the feasibility and the challenges of online assessment implementation in Algerian tertiary EFL face-to-face and e-learning environments.

### **1.1. Literature Review**

This article is devoted to offering in-depth relevant literature on the concept of assessment and how it has been transformed in terms of notions and functions from traditional classroom assessment to distance assessment. Chronologically ordered, the literature review moves from tracking the genesis of the concept assessment in educational contexts, through its theoretical framework and finally to some viable previous viable studies and outcomes. Accordingly, this section sheds light on the diverse kinds of assessment, their purposes, their functions, and what principles assessment ought to be based on. Providing a complementary shift in the educational landscape, this section shows how educators need to re-conceptualize fundamental issues of teaching, learning, and assessing in blended and online space and how they can better integrate assessment during the CoViD-19 Pandemic.

### *1.1.1. Assessment Shift from Face-to-Face to Online Assessment*

In the 21st century, ICTs and the fast-changing society have had an impact on higher education. The use of Internet technology to enhance learning and teaching has recently become far more simple and more viable than it ever was. As a result of the widespread use of ICTs in higher education, institutions have begun to shift from face-to-face to online learning. As the Internet has changed practically every part of our lives, it has made online learning feasible, and many researchers and educators are concerned with using it to progress and foster students' learning results (Khanahmadi & Sajadirad, 2019; Tajgozari & Alimorad, 2019). Moreover, the need for online learning has risen quickly among students from all walks of life around the world. Educators have recognized the necessity for innovative ways of learning and teaching as a result of the changes that have impacted the educational environment (Guemide & Maouche, 2021).

According to the English Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2022), the term 'CoViD-19' is a mild to severe respiratory illness that is caused by a coronavirus (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 of the genus Betacoronavirus), is transmitted chiefly by contact with infectious material (such as respiratory droplets) or with objects or surfaces contaminated by the causative virus, and is characterized especially by fever, cough, and shortness of breath and may progress to pneumonia and respiratory failure. While fever, cough, and shortness of breath are common symptoms may include fatigue, chills, body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. CoViD-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Ali and Al Damour (2021), view CoViD-19 as a worldwide pandemic caused by SARS-Cov-2, a newly discovered coronavirus that causes respiratory illness. First noticed in Wuhan, China, the coronavirus has impacted the world physically as well as financially, bringing down businesses and hitting the economy. As of June 2020, there have been a total of 9.1 million cases resulting in the deaths of more than 470,000. As the virus has impacted 216 countries, many facilities such as schools, leisure centers, barbers, and more, have had to temporarily shut down.

The widespread of the Coronavirus across the world has forced many countries to quarantine and stay at home without performing their duties, traveling, or even enjoying their time outside their homes. The purpose of doing that is to limit the spread of the pandemic which has killed millions around the world. Hence, this shutdown closure has led to the cessation of education for a certain time. For this reason, the educational system has been forced to shift from traditional learning to distance learning as well as from traditional paper-based assessment to a web-based assessment system. In this respect, Ali and Al Damour (2021) confirm that for the safety of learners, educators, and other staff members, the advent of CoViD-19 has compelled educational institutions to shift their efforts from physical to online platforms. The surprising adoption of online education over physical education in college has had a significant impact on the processes of assessing students and their evaluation strategies (Gürbüz, Afacan Fındıklı & Özdemir, Şebnem, 2022).

While the majority of studies focus on assessment techniques in traditional courses, just a few studies have looked at teachers' assessment practices when they are working online (Sofia & Kumassah, 2020). Because of the CoViD-19 pandemic, there has been a change in teaching and assessment from face-to-face to online. Even after the pandemic, this shift could have a long-term impact on classroom-based assessment (Zhang et al., 2021).

### *1.1.2. Online Assessment: Multifarious Definitions*

Learning is conceptually linked to assessment, where the amount and quality of learning are measured for reasons of safety, grading, or feedback. Therefore, one aspect of e-learning is an online assessment. Weleschuk et al. (2019) define online assessment as any way used to evaluate students' accomplishments, give feedback, or move the students forward in their learning process in fully online credit courses. These assessments can be completed online (such as online exams) or just require online submission (such as essays). Assessment is normally identified as formative, outlined

for information only, or summative designed for a score to indicate a result (Kasimatis & Papageorgiou, 2019).

In the same vein of thought, Kundu (2021) states that e-assessment is “The use of digital technologies to create dispense, evaluate and deliver feedback for formative, summative, diagnostic or self-assessment. It is a new assessment paradigm and methodology that has been playing a progressively important role in the transformation of higher education.

In short, online assessment is a method to assess students' learning using any technological device through an online environment (internet) as opposed to paper-pen exams (Anwar, Shah, Abid & Qamar, 2018). As regards feedback, it is either instantly available or given later by the course administrator.

### 1.1.3. The emergence of Online Assessment

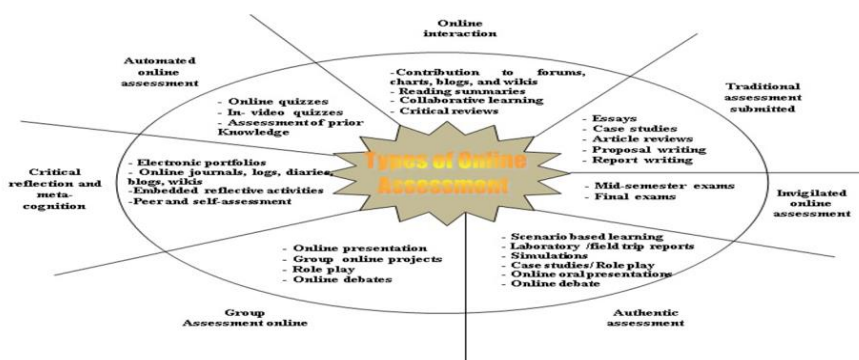
As mentioned by Ghali (2021), online assessment is not a new idea. It has been around in some forms since 1960 when the very first computer programs, such as automatic grader, started to be developed in education. The 1980s witnessed an increasing interest in using computers in tutoring as well as for designing online tasks. Later on, the period of the 1990s was characterized by the most essential impact of the World Wide Web (www). Since then, web-based assessment systems were started for the automatic grading of multiple choice, matching activities and true/false questions, and the evaluation of free responses (no predictable and non-predetermined answer in essay writing).

Ghali (2021) further continues by highlighting the difficulties that online assessments witnessed in the past. According to the researcher, those difficulties are related to the low processing of computers and their high costs. Nevertheless, the enhancement of technology has changed the situation (Bhuyan & Khan, 2022; Nazer Ali, 2022). Besides, it enabled psychological tests, certifications like TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), and licenses to be computer-based in several parts of the world. In addition, Crisp (2011) states that a wide range of tools permits online assessment to be broadened. The following section represents some digital tools that can be efficiently utilized for online assessment.

### 1.1.4. Online Assessment Types

There is a plethora of assessment types available for use to assess students remotely. Choosing the right assessment type depends on what needs to be demonstrated by the students as evidence that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes of the course. Donnan (2007) divides online assessment into seven types as demonstrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**  
*Online Assessment Types*



Source : Donnan (2007)

### 1.1.5. Advantages of Online Assessment

Several studies report that the use of online assessment has benefits for students, teachers, institutions, and in education aims. As regards the students, Dennick et al. (2010) state that online assessment helps students monitor their academic progress utilizing formative papers with feedback available 24/7. Besides, it is more appropriate for those who live in remote areas to be assessed in their location. Always et al. (2018) declare that students tend to choose online assessment since they have higher control, a friendly interface and it provides immediate feedback. As for *teachers*, Ridgway et al. (2004); Crews and Curtis (2010), and Alruwais et al. (2018) argue that online assessment saves teachers time and effort. Always et al. (2018) claim that "Using E-assessment can reduce the teachers' burden to assess large student number" (p. 35). Concerning the *institution*, the use of online assessment helps to reduce its costs, and it prevents students from cheating by providing different questions in different order (Alkharusi & Al-Hosni, 2021). This may lead learners to think that the test is different and will stop them to copy from their peers. Concerning *educational aims*, Ridgway et al. (2004) maintain that online assessment assists learning goals by supporting higher-order- thinking skills such as critiquing, reflection on cognitive processes, and facilitating group work projects.

In sum, online assessment advantages can be summarized by what Al-Smadi and Guetl (2008) perceive it to be:

Fair: offer a fair opportunity for success

Equitable: be indiscriminating between students

Formative: give many opportunities to learn through feedback

Well timed: provide learning stimulus

Redeemable: allow a series of opportunities

Efficient: be manageable within the constraints of resources

Valid: accurately assess the delivered material

Reliable: promote consistency between assessment tasks

Incremental: increase reliability and consistency over time

Demanding: challenge students and ensure high standards depending on the experience of the assessment designer or the system designer. (p. 3)

However, the implementation of online assessment in higher education may face some challenges as depicted in the following section.

### 1.1.6. Challenges of Online Assessment

Despite the advantages that online assessment offer, it will always have some challenges that can never be ignored. Always et al. (2018) have investigated these challenges and suggest solutions:

- Inexperienced students and teachers with ICTs; an unfamiliarity with computers or with online assessment processes that cause a lack of confidence between them and anxiety problems. As a solution to this problem, both students and teachers need training at the beginning to adopt the features and benefits of an online examination system.
- The inability to provide individual computers for each student and the lack of internet is a major challenges of E-assessment. Therefore, the universities should provide labs with full equipment and internet access for those students.
- Poor technical infrastructure development, especially in poor countries is another significant weakness of the online assessment. So, while shifting to the online mode, the governments should consider whether all understudies can show up for the test and what arrangements can be made to guarantee the same.
- Even though online assessment has eased the invigilators' jobs, the problem arises mostly with scoring and correcting long answer-type questions. Always et al. (2018) illustrate some solutions such as; comparing the correlation between computer and human judges, and the correlation between

the scores of two human judges. Moreover, the computer will be appropriate for questions that well defined answers such as short answer questions.

### 1.2. Purpose of study

This study precisely aims at getting tertiary EFL teachers' and students' voices about to what extent online assessment can be ineffective or effective in an e- teaching/learning environment.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The current section is devoted to describing in detail the research methodology and design and the different procedures taken by this study to explore the usefulness and limitations of online assessment in the CoViD-19 era. In this account, the researcher presents in-depth the research tools used to address the study questions, the target population, techniques of collecting data, and the fieldwork where the investigator conducts this study.

### 2.1. Data Collection Instruments and Participants

Throughout this section, the researcher delimits the target population, the way they are selected, and the way data are collected. The informants are distributed as follows: 50 Master students were handed a questionnaire, 5 EFL teachers were interviewed and corpus content was scrutinized.

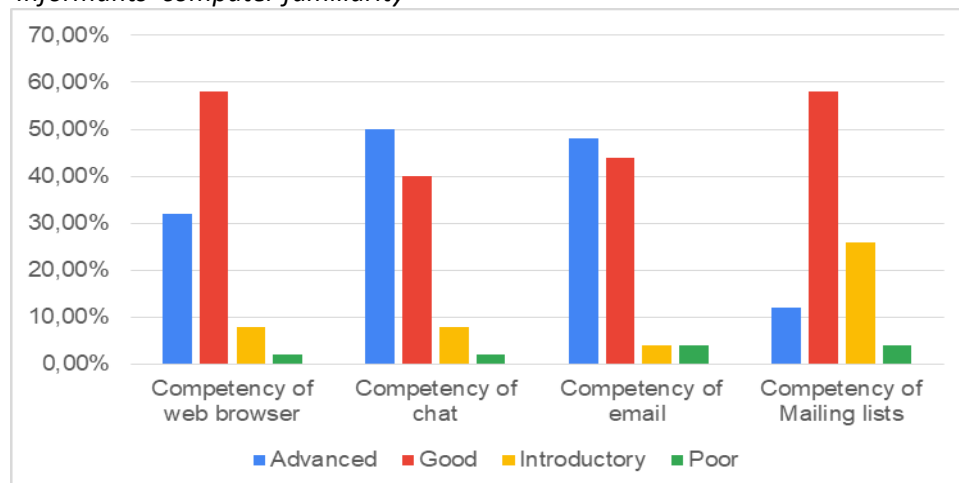
## 3. Results

### 3.1. Questionnaire

**Question Item 1:** Which platform(s) are you familiar with? Figure 2 displays the informants' computer familiarity

**Figure 2**

*Informants' computer familiarity*



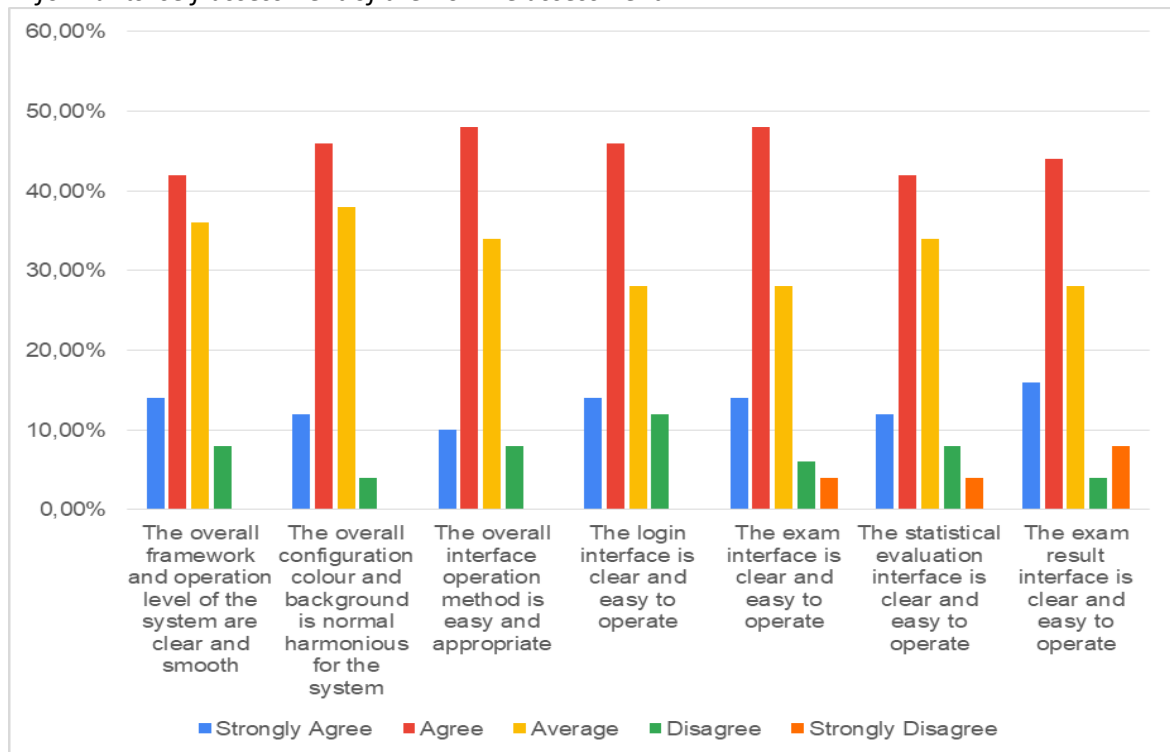
Question- item 1 is mainly asked to gauge the informants' familiarity and insightfulness as regards computing. The collected results reveal that 58% (N=29) of the target population confirm that they are good at the competency of web browsers and competency of mailing lists, whereas the others are good at emailing and chatting, 44% (N=22), and 40% (N=20) respectively. 50% (N=25) of the respondents attest that they are advanced in chatting, and 48% (N=24) are advanced too in emailing. The rest are shared between the competency of a web browser and the competency of a mailing list, viz., 32% (N=16) for the former and 12% (N=6) for the latter. The rest of the respondents confessed that they are at the level of introductory or poor, 26% (N=13) and 4% (N=2) respectively.

It is worth highlighting that the introductory competency for students can allow them to follow and interact via the internet and the used platforms. Besides, students are generally familiar with all types of manipulation as regards ICTs.

**Question item 2:** How would you perceive your first online assessment experience?

**Figure 3**

*Informants' self-assessment of their online assessment*



Drawing on the gleaned data (cf. figure 3) from the question- item 2, one can notice that the respondents agree on what follows: 48% of the informants self-evaluate the overall interface operation method as easy and appropriate, and the register interface as clear and easy to operate. In addition, 46% of the target sample perceive that the overall configuration color and background are normally harmonious for the system and the login interface is clear and easy to operate, and 42% of them assess the overall framework and operation level of the system as clear and smooth, and the exam interface as clear and easy to operate. The rest 44% view the statistical evaluation interface as clear and easy to operate. On the other hand, 28% of the informants assess the login interface as clear and easy to operate, the register interfaces as clear and easy to operate, and the statistical evaluation interface as clear and easy to operate. Besides, other 34% attest that the overall interface operation method is easy and appropriate and the exam interface is clear and easy to operate. 38% of them affirm that the overall configuration color and background are normally harmonious for the system, and 36%, perceive that the overall framework and operation level of the system is clear and smooth. Only a few of them 4% strongly disagree as all the options provided. As regards the strong agreements, they are shared among different options.

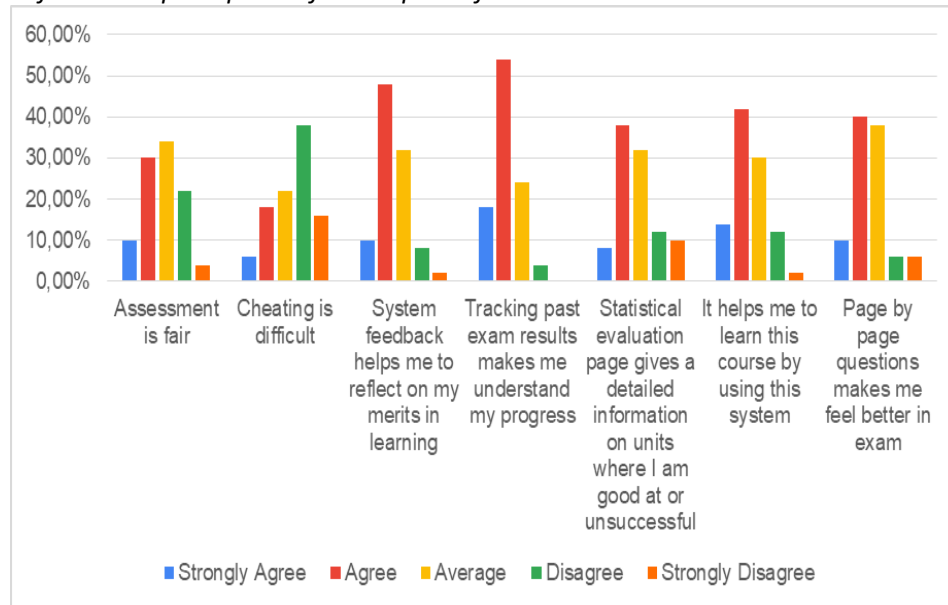
It is worth noting that almost all students have common thoughts in terms of the user interface.

**Question item 3:** What impact does Online Assessment have on students' learning?

Figure 4 displays informants' perception of the impact of online assessment on students' learning process

**Figure 4**

*Informants' perception of the impact of online assessment on students' learning process*



About the first item “Assessment is fair”, the statistical data show that 30% of the targeted samples agree that assessment is fair, 34% of them see that notion as average, and 22% of the informants attest that they disagree with that. The rest are shared between strongly agree and strongly disagree; 10% and 4% respectively. Concerning the second item “Cheating is difficult”, the gleaned data show that 38% of the respondents disagree with the claim that cheating is difficult, 22% of them perceive it as average, only 18% agree with that item, 16% strongly disagree, and only a few of them (6%) strongly agrees. Relating to the third item, “System feedback helps me to reflect on my merits in learning”, the numerical data demonstrate that about half of the targeted population (48%) agree that the system feedback helps them to reflect on their merits in learning, 32% of the informants consider it as average, only 10% strongly agrees. As regards the fourth notion “Tracking past exam results makes me understand my progress”, more than half of the targeted sample (54%) agree with the importance of tracking past exam results to understand their progress, 24% of the informants regard this item as average, 18% of them are strongly agreed. Only a few of the respondents (4%) disagree and none (0%) strongly disagree. Concerning the fifth statement “Statistical evaluation page gives detailed information on units where I am good at or unsuccessful”, the collected data show that 38% of the surveyed students agree with that item, 32% of them view it as average, and 12% disagree. The rest are shared among strongly agree and strongly disagree; 8% and 10% respectively. As for the sixth item “It helps me to learn this course by using this system”, 42% of the same population agrees that online assessment helps them learn the course using this system, 30% see the statement as average, and 14% of the respondents are strongly disagreed. Finally, for the last item “Page by page questions makes me feel better in an exam”, the numerical data reveal that 40% of the targeted population agree with that statement, 38% consider it as average, only 10% of the informants strongly disagree, and few of them (6%) are disagree and strongly disagree.

Based on the results above, it is interesting to note that the exam’s fairness and cheating inaccessibility are among the attractive options. Here, most of the students think that cheating is not difficult. Hence, it can be said that students had similar thoughts on the system use of online assessment tools. Besides, system feedback, tracking past exam results, and questions appearing page by page had a positive impact on the learning process. Thus, students have positive thoughts regarding online assessment.

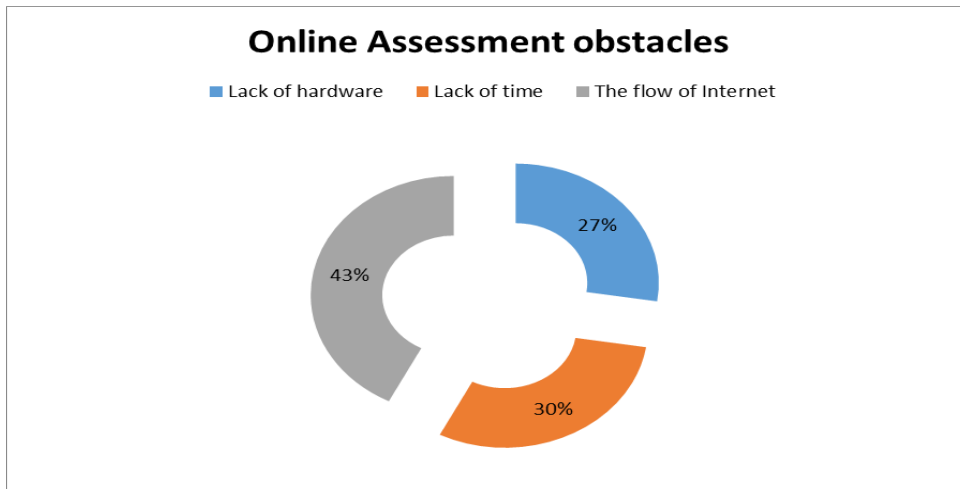
**Question item 4:** What precludes the use of Online Assessment on the net?



Figure 5 displays online assessment obstacles.

**Figure 5**

*Online assessment obstacles*



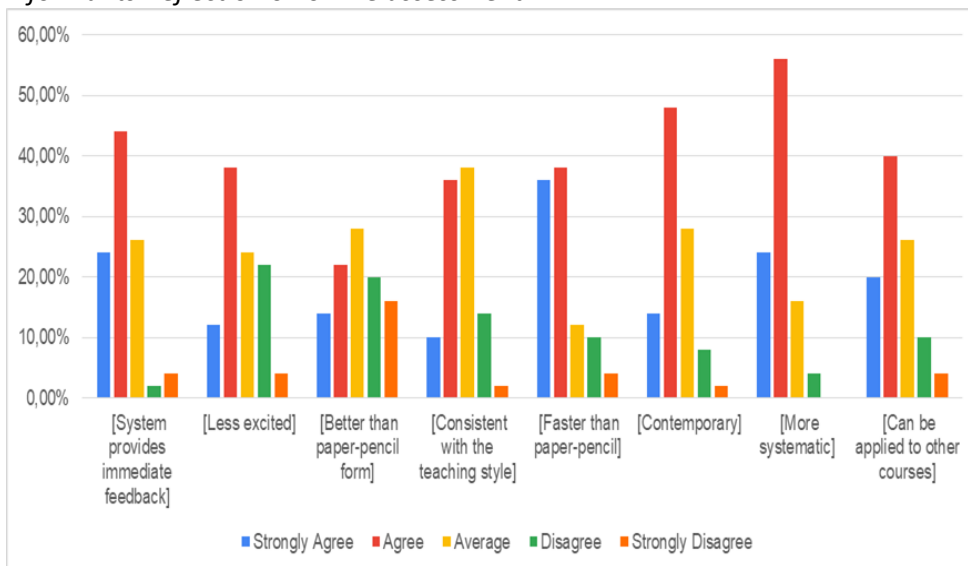
Question item 10 is mainly used to deter respondents' obstacles as regards the implementation of the online assessment. The collected answers are shared among three different views, i.e., lack of hardware (44% N=22), lack of time (48% N=24), and the low flow of Internet (68% N=34).

It is quite clear that the unavailability of the means that ease respondents' use of E-assessment is the main hurdle for such assessment. Besides, the surveyed sample complains about time lack.

**Question item 5:** What is the participants' opinion about online assessment?

**Figure 6**

*Informants' reflection on online assessment*



The statistical data inserted in the graph above demonstrate that the agreement option has a high percentage as regards all the items: 56% (N=28) of the respondents view online assessment as more systematic, and 48% (N=24) of them perceive it as contemporary. Besides, 44% (N=22) of the targeted sample see the system provides immediate feedback, 40% (N=20) regard that it can be applied to other courses, and 28% (N=14) view it as less exciting and faster than paper-pencil. In addition, 36% (N=18) think that it is consistent with the teaching style. Yet, 22% (N=11) perceive it as better than paper-pencil form.

The responses reveal that the targeted sample is aware of the importance of the new form of assessment. All options are selected but in different percentages.

**Question item 6:** What is your attitude towards online assessment?

The data revolving around item 6 reveal that among the targeted sample 27 respondents have positive attitudes towards online assessment. These students considered that online assessment is quicker, good, more systematic, useful, understandable, beneficial, and interesting. Some state that since technology had become part of their everyday life, higher education should adopt this new way of learning and assessment.

On the contrary, 13 informants show their negative attitudes regarding online assessment. They prefer to be assessed traditionally. For them, face-to-face assessment is more valid, reliable, exciting, and motivating. They state that the paper had a special charm that could not be found on the computer. They declare that pen correction is more analytical, i.e., it allowed them to have a clear idea of the type of mistake and learn from them.

It is worth mentioning that 6 informants, representing (12%), did not provide an answer to such open-ended questions. Besides, 4 others (8 %) provided unclear answers

S1 "Online assessment is a new way adopted recently with the appearance of new technological devices and the internet"

S2 "The purpose of the study online is to develop attitudes towards online assessment"

S3 "I often have some online assessment"

S4 "I do not know"

### **3.2. Interview Data Analysis**

The main purpose of this interview is to investigate teachers' experience with the teaching platforms and provide them with the opportunity to voice out their attitudes toward online assessment.

**Question item 1:** Do you use distance-learning platforms while teaching?

Four of the surveyed teachers (4/5) use learning platforms while teaching. However, only one teacher (1/5) declares that he does not utilize such type of learning.

**Question item 2:** If yes, is there any positive disposition on the part of the student?

Almost all the interviewees (4/5) assert that the majority of the students cooperate since they find distance learning more convenient.

**Question item 3:** If no, what prevents your students from responding to such type of learning?

Only one teacher (1/5) states that the majority of the students complain that they lack both hard and software which is the main reason that obstructs the use of e-learning.

**Question item 4:** While teaching via the suggested platform(s), which of these tools do you usually use?

All of the surveyed teachers claim that Moodle and Google classroom are the most frequent tools in distance learning. One teacher adds Google zoom.

**Question- item 5:** Do digital floors help in conducting remote assessments?

As regards this question, four of the interviewees agree that these digital floors aid in conducting E-assessment since they help teachers gain time and students avoid the burden of displacement. However, only one teacher responded negatively. To justify his claim, he points out what follows "No, because some students may opt for plagiarism or ask others to do their assignments".

**Question item 6:** Have you experienced E-assessment? Is it only in the pandemic period?

Three of the surveyed teachers declare that the starting point of such experience is due to Covid-19 Pandemic. One teacher stated that he used online assessment before the pandemic, whereas, only one teacher confesses that he never tries remote assessment before.

**Question item 7:** How would you assess this experience?

Regarding this question, the surveyed teachers give a variety of answers as follows:

T1 states that the experience is good and helpful, though there still exist some obstacles that hamper online assessment activity.

T2 asserts that this experience is built upon a lot of reading and practice. However, it requires a lot of time.

T3 sees the experience as successful with some students while others prefer to present their work on paper.

T4 declares that it is generally an effective experience reflecting students' skills in the subject taught.

T5 indicates that it could have been very profitable for teachers and students if the necessary means had been put in the hand of both teachers and students.

**Question item 8:** Does the institution insist on such an assessment?

All of the interviewees confirm that the institution asserts on assessing students remotely. One teacher points out that Distance Learning Cell scheduled training for all teachers at Ibn Khaldoun University, however, the rate of participants was low (35%), and most teachers did not give vital importance to such assessment.

**Question item 9:** Have the results of the remote assessment been approved by the administration?

One of the surveyed teachers has no idea about the administration vis-a-vis such online assessment. The rest answer positively.

**Question item 10:** Do you think that online assessment is more effective than face-to-face assessment?

Answers to question-item 10 show that the targeted teachers have two different attitudes towards the effectiveness of the online assessment. Three teachers (3/5) state that it is more effective than paper-pencil assessment since it facilitates the correction, saves their time, and shortens the distance. They assert its reliability and validity because there is rigor and traceability, i.e., the administration "webmaster" can verify any work and its assessment. On the contrary, the rest (2/5) are skeptical about its efficiency. They maintained that traditional assessment is much safer, more reliable, and more valid. It provides chances for scaffolding students and clarifies any ambiguity. They assert that it is useful for them and their students, whereas, the other way of assessing would render both teachers and student to be passive. In addition, they maintain that the department is neither ready nor adequately equipped for such an assessment.

Question-item11: What do you suggest to render such type of assessment efficient and embarrassing for teachers and learners?

The totality of teachers provides different suggestions for this item as follows:

- Teachers and students should be motivated to use such type of assessment which is an integral part of online teaching.
- Educators and learners alike need some training about how these online platforms can be used for assessment; a sort of digital literacy.
- The necessary and appropriate tools such as laptops and the internet, should be available and at the disposal of all students and teachers.

- The administration should insist on such assessment and make it a condition of promotion.

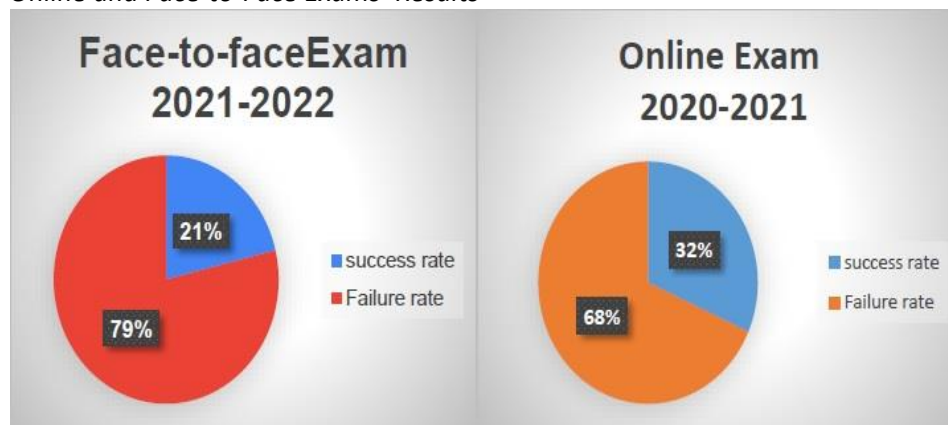
Referring to the interviewees' responses, it can be deduced that attitudes towards online assessment are shared between favorable and unfavorable. Most of them have acknowledged the vitality of this type of assessment not only because of the current sanitary restrictions but for the many benefits it provides.

### 3.3. Corpus Data Analysis

For the sake of scientific validity, it is necessarily viewed to use a third research instrument, viz., analysis to enrich the understanding of educational issues and questions. The findings were collected during both academic years 2020/2021 and 2021/ 2022 from the module of it. It is worth mentioning that the targeted population of a questionnaire and the results of the aforementioned module have been demonstrated within the failure and success rates of those who passed face-to-face and online exams. The analysis of the results indicates that the success rate of students (32% N=19) who underwent online assessment was better than the one of students who were examined face-to-face (21% N=28).

**Figure 7**

*Online and Face-to-Face Exams' Results*



Based on figure 7, we can say that the new mode of assessment is more effective, beneficial, interesting, and motivating.

### 4. Discussion

The current study investigates the effectiveness and challenges of online assessment at the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun University during the CoViD-19 pandemic. This section aims at discussing the results of the collected data. The interpretation of the findings will enable them to answer the research questions as well as to confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis.

The gleaned data from the students' questionnaire show that there are two divergent opinions, one being more dominant than the other. Indeed, the majority of students were in favor of online assessment. Whereas, the others were against it. The portion of students who were fervent for E-assessment claimed that having recourse to such a mode of evaluation becomes necessary as they live in an era surrounded by technology.

The results reveal that the heavy majority of respondents are familiar with computers and assessment tools which are the most fundamental key factors in online assessment. Besides, they argued that features of obtaining immediate scores and feedback motivated them and contributed positively to their achievement in exams. Those features are the main advantages of the computer-based assessment relative to the paper-pen exam.

Although one may generally see today's students as a digital-addicted generation, who may automatically like the introduction of technology into their learning process and be in favor of a

change, reality demonstrated the contrary. In effect, a considerable percentage of students argued that online assessment is less exciting and less motivating, and the exam is not fair. This portion of learners liked the way things were preceding. Such a reaction might be linked to the non-mastering of technological devices. This is what Alruwais et al. (2018) refer to as inexperienced students with computers.

Regarding the findings of the interview, the collected data show that the majority of EFL teachers at the university were conscious of the importance and benefits that online assessment could provide for their teaching practices regarding the organization as well as time and effort gain, and this is the main advantage of e-assessment. As related to the literature, using E-assessment can reduce the teachers' burden to assess large student numbers (Alruwais et al., 2018). However, the very minority was against implementing it in the teaching process. They have negative attitudes toward it. They maintain that online assessment is inappropriate, useless, and ineffective. Besides, they associate it with cheating. This negative reaction might be related to a lack of sufficient knowledge about how online assessment functions or teachers do not master the use of digital tools. This may also result in a lack of confidence between the students and their teachers.

Throughout the browsing of gleaned data, both teachers and learners argued that the non-readiness of the current environment at the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun university to technology, lack of adequate materials (technological divide), and lack of internet render them unable to depict themselves using such type of evaluation. These findings support Alruwais et al. (2018) claim that unequipped labs and infrastructure barriers are the major drawbacks that obstruct the implementation of online assessment in the teaching-learning process.

The collected data from the corpus analysis reveal that students who underwent online assessment do much better than those who sat for paper pen- exams. Therefore, online assessment helps students to fully engage with the task at hand. However, pen-and-paper exam feels uncomfortable to those who were less successful.

The triangulation of data gleaned from the students' questionnaire, the teachers' interview, and the corpus analysis are reported, discussed, and then interpreted following previous findings. The scrutinizing of EFL teachers' and learners' awareness of the importance of online assessment as well as the deep analysis of questions revealed that EFL teachers and learners in higher education are not ready to implement online assessment because they face great difficulties in implementing it in the current situation (Alyasin, 2018; Devedzic & Devedzic, 2019). Thus, the hypotheses are confirmed.

## **5. Conclusion**

The present research was conducted to investigate the efficiency and drawbacks of online assessment at the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun University during the CoViD-19 pandemic. Indeed, online assessment is never used at the department before the current crisis, while living in an era surrounded by technology. Therefore, having recourse to such type of evaluation has become necessary to cope with the needs of the massive change.

It is worth highlighting that these types of teaching and assessing are imposed by the sanitary restriction forced by CoViD-19. Concerning the collected data, all institutions are obliged to shift from the traditional way of teaching and assessing to online.

The analysis of different gleaned data, drawn from the three investigative instruments (students' questionnaire, teachers' interview, and corpus analysis) reveals that the majority of students and teachers are fully aware of the importance and benefits that online assessment could provide for their teaching-learning practices for many reasons; time and effort gaining, shorting distances, reducing expenses, organization, etc. Besides, it is compatible with the LMD system that encourages learners' autonomy.

Even though the importance of online assessment is not denied, they were still skeptical and unwilling to apply it by few teachers and students. They associate their attitude towards such

assessments with the main reason which is cheating. They prefer to be stuck to old habits of assessing as it is the most effective way, rather than introducing some changes.

Yet, to make all students and teachers draw advantages from these new technologies and the benefits they provide, the government should provide all educational institutions with the necessary tools and digital literacy training opportunities to equip students and teachers alike with vital software and techniques. Without this, all instruction remains a dead letter.

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