



Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Saida, Dr. Moulay Tahar
Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts
Department of English Language and Literature



Enhancing Online Assessment in the Algerian Higher Education: The Case of First Year EFL Master's Students at Saida University

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Prepared by:

Miss. Cherief Houda Chaimaa

Supervised by:

Dr. M.SENOUCI

Board of Examiners (MCA)

Mrs.M.BOUDLEL

Chair Person

University of Saida

Dr.M.SENOUCI

Supervisor

University of Saida

Dr.O.DRISSI

Examiner

University of Saida

Academic Year: 2024/2025

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material that has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

Date:

Name: Cherief Houda Chaimaa

Signature:



Dedication

To my beloved family dad, mom, my brothers Mouad and Omar and my little sister Basma
Your unwavering love, patience, and encouragement have been my greatest strength.

To the resilient people of **Palestine**,

whose steadfastness reminds us that resistance can take many forms—through words, through knowledge, and through faith.

To the Palestinian students who hold onto their books amid rubble and fear,
your determination inspires mine.

To the heroic resistance of **Al-Qassam** whose unbreakable faith and sacrifice, remind the world of the meaning of dignity, courage, and freedom. Your strength whispers to my soul in moments of weakness and inspires me to hold on, always.

And finally, to myself for the patience to endure, the strength to keep moving forward, and the faith that every effort would one day be worth it.

This thesis is a humble act of solidarity and a prayer for justice,
dignity, and liberation.



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May our pens continue the fight where silence and injustice prevail.

Abstract

Online assessment has become an essential component of higher education, especially following the shift to digital learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, many challenges continue to affect the fairness, consistency, and effectiveness of these practice, particularly in the Algerian EFL context. This study aims to explore the continuing challenges of online assessment within Algerian universities and provide practical recommendations for improving their quality with respect to fairness and degree of engagement. A mixed-methodology was conducted in this study with questionnaire data collected from First Year Master's students at Saida University in Algeria and semi-structured interviews from university instructors. The investigation revealed that students regularly perceive online assessments as inconsistent and devoid of standards, which resulted in loss of motivation and engagement during their assessments. Instructors also presented barriers including challenges related from technical aspects, academic integrity, and participation. Based on the results, the study points out pedagogical concerns and practical recommendations for improvements that accommodate to the teachers and learners' needs. Overall, the significance of this research is to elaborate on the current literature in online assessments and raise the capacity for fair and engaging online assessments.

Keywords: Algerian higher education, consistency, EFL, fairness, student engagement, online assessment.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

- **EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
- **OA:** Online Assessment
- **AI:** Artificial Intelligence
- **HE:** Higher Education
- **ICTs:** Information and Communication Technologies
- **DigCompEdu:** Digital Competence Framework for Educators
- **LMS:** Learning Management System
- **M1:** Master 1
- **UDL:** Universal Design for Learning
- **UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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General introduction

General Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in making individual's and society's futures better, offering them numerous academic and professional opportunities. Considering the world is changing rapidly, education is no longer contained in classrooms. With technological advances, the means by which knowledge is delivered and assessed have been changed forever and this is particularly true in higher education contexts. Among the key changes in the academic landscape is a greater use of online assessment, which is an area of both necessity and innovation. While online assessment is useful for various purposes, there are particular challenges to making progress in higher education through online modes of assessment. This situation is especially relevant to students in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) stream, who rely on communication and interaction to facilitate their learning.

The transition to online assessment mode in the university context in Algeria has revealed numerous drawbacks in terms of infrastructure, readiness, and pedagogical design. Students and teachers both often struggle with preparing for digital platforms, defining assessment criteria, and ensuring validity and reliability in the assessment process. In the case of EFL learners, this challenge is further complicated by language differences and the limited opportunities for students to utilize language authentically. Online assessment may make it easier for students in terms of flexibility and access, but it is possible that it can have a negative impact on engagement and student performance when not implemented thoughtfully.

Under these circumstances, it becomes necessary to evaluate the experiences of both students and instructors in relation to online assessment. This study is designed to examine the effectiveness, challenges and effects of online assessment within the EFL Master One program at Saida University. It also seeks to understand how these assessments affect the instructional process and how we can take action towards refining or developing assessments that promote purpose and educational goals. It also intends to raise educators' awareness of best practices for online evaluation, and to provide suggested plans for creating valid, fair and pedagogically sound assessments in online courses. This inquiry is concerned with a number of central questions:

- What are the challenges with the current online assessment methods in the Algerian university?
- How can online assessments be enhanced to ensure fairness, consistency, and students' engagement?

. In order to address these questions, the researcher hypothesizes that:

- Current online assessment methods in Algerian universities may present significant challenges due to limited digital infrastructure, lack of teacher training, unclear assessment criteria, and students' unfamiliarity with digital platforms
- Enhancing online assessments through clear rubrics, interactive platforms, regular feedback, and teacher-student training programs can promote fairness, ensure consistency, and increase student engagement in the assessment process.

General Introduction

In short, EFL students will not perform optimally through an online assessment if there is no training and technical support, then it could be unreliable and unfair.

In order to explore this phenomenon, a mixed methods design will be utilized to gather quantitative and qualitative data related to the research objectives. The research instruments will include a structured questionnaire administered to Master One EFL students, semi-structured interviews with university teachers. The research process will give the researcher useful data to help understand the current state of online assessment and provide assumptions to improve online assessment practices.

The study will be arranged into three chapters. The first chapter will provide a theoretical foundation, and review of literature on online assessment, focusing especially on the application to EFL. The second chapter will provide an overview of the research design, and the instruments, While The third chapter will contain the data analysis , the interpretation and will offer pedagogical considerations and practical recommendations for enhancing online assessment practices that take into account teachers, and learners alike.

In terms of expected results, this study anticipates revealing the potential of online assessment procedures to facilitate greater independence and flexibility in learning, while also exposing many challenges for students and educators alike. Some of the possible obstacles to online assessment that may emerge from this study include considerations of accessibility, fairness and effectiveness in assessing language skills. While the anticipated findings may be critical of the current situation regarding online assessments, it is hoped that this study may be a positive contribution to overcoming some of these challenges and optimizing online assessment in Algerian higher education.

Chapter I:

Review of Online Assessment Within EFL Contexts

1.1 Introduction

With the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic, online assessment has gradually become the dominant mode of examination in higher education institutions, due to its ability to increase learning processes and outcomes. It offers several benefits, including meaningful feedback, interactive support, and better student engagement and performance. As educational institutions adopt technology, online evaluation is seen not just as an add-on, but also as a supplement to established techniques (Stöhr et al., 2020).

1.2 Online Assessments ‘Historical Background in Higher Education

Higher education has always relied heavily on assessment as a means of improving student learning, directing teaching methods, and guaranteeing academic standards. In the past, student performance was assessed primarily face-to-face using formal essays, oral exams, and handwritten exams (Ewell, 2002). Summative assessment which refers to evaluating students at the conclusion of a course or program with little feedback during the learning process, was the focus of these traditional modes.

After that educational theorists started promoting more formative methods that encourage learning through ongoing feedback in the second half of the 20th century. More student-centered assessment techniques, such as project-based learning, peer evaluations, and reflective journals, were made possible by this pedagogical change (Sadler, 1989).

Assessment procedures underwent a dramatic change in the 1990s when technology was introduced into the classroom. Universities started looking into computer-based testing as a way to increase efficiency and lessen administrative burdens as computers and the internet became more widely available. Automatic grading, randomized question pools, and instant feedback were previously unfeasible in traditional settings, but they are now possible thanks to computer-based testing systems like Computerized Adaptive Testing (CAT) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Blackboard and Moodle (Bennett, 2002; Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023).

The adoption of online assessments was accelerated in the early 2000s by the creation of cloud-based tools and open-source platforms. Using tools like Google Forms, Socrative, and Edmodo, along with learning management systems like Moodle and Canvas, teachers were able to administer formative and summative tests from a distance. In addition to quizzes, these resources

provided forums, group projects, and digital portfolios to accommodate different learning needs and styles (Ugboaja et al., 2021).

An important turning point in the history of online assessments was the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Higher education institutions all over the world were forced to switch to online instruction and evaluation almost immediately. Despite being chaotic at times, this emergency transition revealed gaps in digital preparedness and accelerated the widespread adoption of online assessment methods (García-Peñalvo et al., 2020). Teachers had to quickly adjust, frequently without the necessary infrastructure or training, which resulted in a reassessment of academic integrity, assessment validity, and the use of technology in the classroom (Simelane & Pillay, 2024).

Online assessments continue to change in the post-pandemic era. More focus is being placed on hybrid and blended learning models, which offer inclusive and flexible learning experiences by combining digital and in-person methods. Online assessments may become even more personalized, secure, and data-driven in the future due to the increasing use of blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), and learning analytics (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023). All things considered, the evolution of online assessments over time illustrates the intricate relationship between societal demands, technological advancement, and pedagogical theory. Assessment procedures will probably continue to be at the forefront of educational reform as higher education embraces digital transformation.

1.3 Concept of Assessment

Gesuato and Castello (2020) defined Assessment as the process of expressing a value judgment on something or someone, signifying where they stand in terms of intrinsic or perceived qualities.

1.3.1 Concept of online assessment

Online assessment, also referred to as e-assessment, means the use of digital tools to create, implement, and evaluate students' learning outcomes (Gikandi et al., 2011). It includes a wide range of methods, from multiple-choice quizzes to open-ended reflections, oral tests via video calls, and peer assessment through learning platforms. As educational institutions embrace technology, online assessment is considered not just as an add, but as a complement to traditional methods (Stöhr et al., 2020).

1.3.2 Formative and summative assessments

These two types of assessments can both be administered online, and both serve essential roles in guiding instruction and measuring students' progress and performance. Karunaratne and Wijewardene (n.d.) explain that Formative assessment is typically conducted during a program to provide immediate feedback and improve student learning without grading. It focuses on enhancing instructional quality and meeting learning objectives. While Summative assessment often occurs at the end of a program to judge student performance against a set of standards, its primary purpose is to evaluate student learning at the conclusion of an instructional period, typically through standardized tests, final exams, or end-of-term projects (Brownlie, Burke, & Van Der Laan, 2023) while Diagnostic assessment is an assessment used by an instructor to judge the prior knowledge and self-assessment where learner reflects on their understanding. (O'Reilly & Morgan, 1999)

1.3.3 Ipsative Assessment

Ipsative assessments focus on measuring a student's current performance against their previous performances. This type of assessment emphasizes personal growth and development over time. Online platforms can track progress through portfolios or iterative assignments, encouraging students to reflect on their learning journey (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023).

1.3.4 Peer and Self-Assessment

Peer and self-assessments involve students evaluating their own or each other's work. These assessments promote critical thinking and self-awareness. Online tools facilitate these processes through structured rubrics and anonymous feedback mechanisms, fostering a collaborative learning environment (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023).

1.3.5 Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessments require students to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world tasks. These assessments are designed to be relevant and meaningful, often involving projects, case studies, or simulations. Online authentic assessments can leverage multimedia and interactive technologies to create immersive learning experiences (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023).

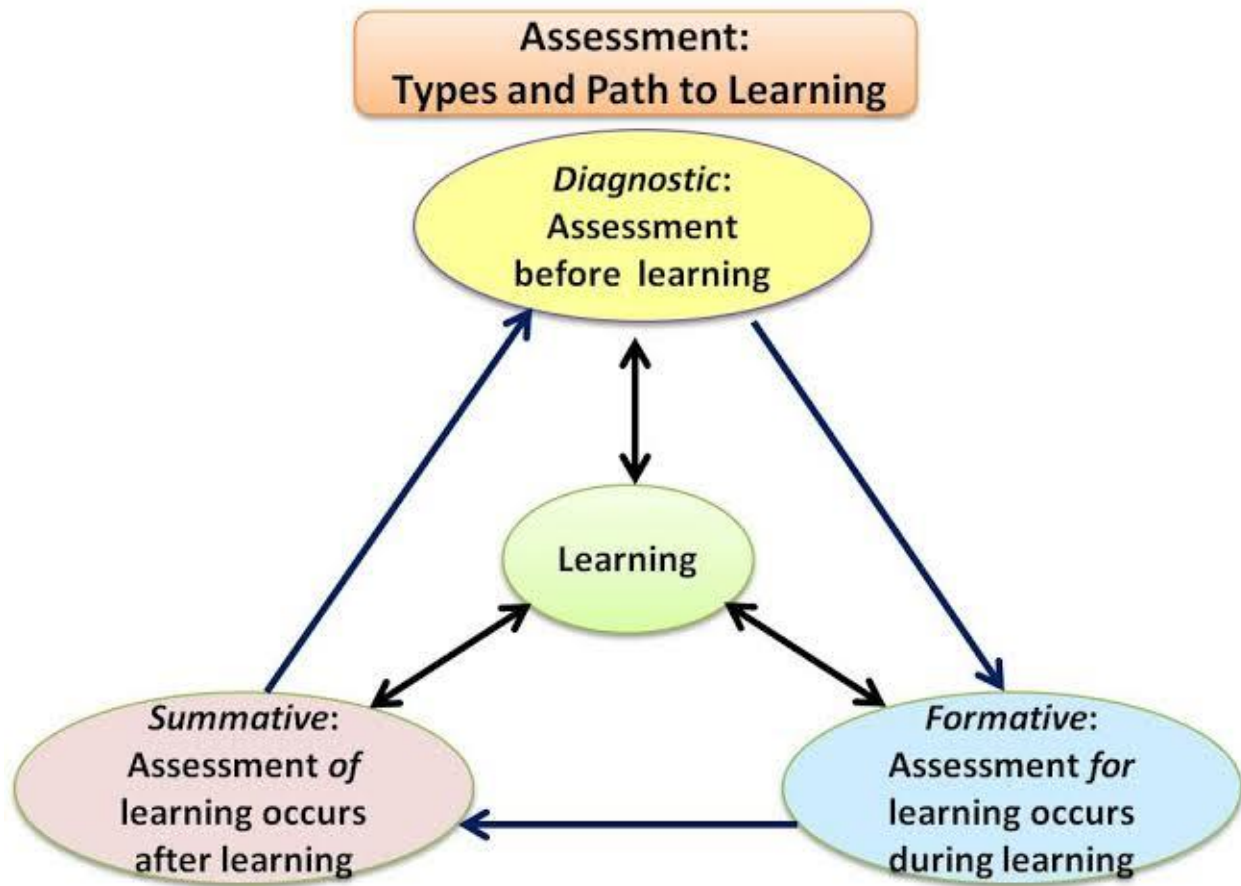


Figure 2.1: Assessment: types and path to learning adopted from Deubel(2025)

1.4 Online assessment Vs E-assessment

Hadi (2024) showed that both terms are tightly related and used interchangeably by researchers but there is a slight difference in terms of the internet's availability, while the online assessment refers to any activity or process done using the internet, electronic assessment are produced by computers, smartphones or any other electronic devices without being necessarily connected to the internet. Based on this distinction online assessment can be defined as a type of electronic assessment (e-assessment).

1.5 In higher education, online assessments:

Higher education institutions internationally are adopting numerous forms of online assessment to meet with rising demands and technological advances. The availability of e-assessment platforms such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Google Classroom has made it easier to conduct out exams, assignments, and conversations online (Alruwais et al., 2018). These platforms

generally come with features for automatic grading, plagiarism detection, and immediate feedback which can enhance the learning process.

However, relates to such as academic dishonesty, lack of computer skills among learners and professionals, and technical limitations occur (Wang et al., 2021). Instructors also face difficulty setting up fair and valid assessments that fit with learning outcomes in online settings (Nguyen et al., 2020). Despite such worries, research indicates that online exams can encourage student engagement and foster self-regulated learning if designed effectively (Gikandi et al., 2011).

1.6 EFL Context and Assessment Challenges:

Assessing language proficiency online brings particular impediments. EFL learners generally need vast and interactive assessments to evaluate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills effectively (Hamp-Lyons, 2007). Online settings, however, may lack the immediate affect and contextual degree of engagement in real life, especially in speech assessments (Cheng & Fox, 2017). Moreover, some students have anxiety about speaking, which can be got worse in virtual situations where communication sounds formal (Horwitz, 2001). On the other hand, some researchers claim that asynchronous assessments provide learners more time to think about and produce responses, which promotes language acquisition (Anderson, 2008).

In EFL classes, teachers need to carefully select technological tools that encourage authenticity, interaction, and feedback. Further, digital storytelling, oral recordings, interactive quizzes, and peer reviews are commonly used in online language assessment (Zhang & Zheng, 2021).

1.7 The Shift to Online Assessment during COVID-19

The COVID-19 epidemic pushed the shift to internet-based learning and evaluation globally. Universities were driven to rapidly switch from paper-based examinations to digital formats without previous training (Dhawan, 2020). This change highlighted both the advantages and the constraints of online evaluation. Many higher education institutions abroad have identified problems related to academic dishonesty, increasing student stress, and technological obstacles (Hodges et al., 2020). Conversely, certain research emphasized that online evaluations promoted a more flexible, student-centered evaluation (Rapanta et al., 2020).

In the Algerian context, the crisis showed the fragility of the digital education system. However, it also encouraged faculty members to investigate new instruments and teaching

methodologies (Hamdi et al., 2021). The experience of unexpected remote instruction has facilitated the enhancement of digital competencies and the ongoing normalization of online assessment.

1.7.1 Online Assessment in Algeria

In the Algerian higher education system, the integration of online assessment has been inconsistent and basically reactive, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Universities were forced to adopt technological resources immediately, regularly without appropriate instruction or equipment (Hamdi et al., 2021). While platforms like Moodle were adopted in numerous universities, including Saida University, their application has not been consistent or productive.

A study conducted by Belmekki and Lakhal (2022) showed that both instructors and students in Algerian institutions saw online assessment as important but struggled with challenges such as internet access, digital skills, and exam format. Furthermore, the lack of established guidelines and assessment norms made the process unclear and unreliable.

Despite all of this, this outbreak offered an opportunity for Algerian universities to reassess their methods of evaluation and assessments. Hybrid techniques and mixed learning models have started to emerge as interesting answers (Boumediene & Chellali, 2022). However, more remains to be done to ensure equity, reliability, and validity in evaluation methods across institutions.

1.7.2 Teachers' Attitudes towards Online assessment in Higher Education

The move towards internet-based testing at university level has attracted mixed reactions from teachers, spanning from favorable to unfavorable. Teachers have appreciated the ability of technology to support assessment strategies with richer feedback and flexibility. For instance, Sönmez et al. (2020) cited that teachers perceived online formative assessment to be helpful in monitoring students' learning and changing teaching accordingly.

However, this shift has not been without its issues. There have been concerns raised by certain educators about the fairness and equity of computer-based tests. Technical problems, academic honesty issues, and the impersonal nature of virtual settings have been cited as significant drawbacks (García-Peñalvo et al., 2020). Furthermore, the quick transition to online modalities during the COVID-19 pandemic left educators at risk of feeling unready, leading to increased stress levels and feelings of diminished competence in instructional practices (Sönmez et al., 2020).

While this is so, there has been increased awareness of the demand for professionalization and institutional backstopping so that educators attain the essential know-how and instruments to make valid online assessments. Through attention to these issues as well as resolving them through appropriate training, institutions have the ability to obtain greater favorable dispositions among educators regarding online assessment ultimately as a means to increase the quality of education provided in virtual space.

1.7.3 Students' Attitudes toward Online Assessment

Students' perspectives are crucial in assessing the efficiency of any evaluation strategy. Research reveals that students generally have different views about online assessment. While many welcomed the flexibility and accessibility of online assessments, others expressed worries about fairness, technical issues, and the lack of feedback (Yusuf & Al-Banawi, 2013).

A study by Kearns (2012) indicated that students value rapid corrections and clear instructions in online assessments. In EFL contexts, students may also worry about miscommunication and misinterpretation of instructions, especially in speaking and writing assignments (Cheng & Fox, 2017). In Algeria, Belmekki and Lakhal (2022) find that students were generally aiming to participate in assessments conducted in an online setting but lacked trust in the system's ability to ensure fairness. These perceptions are influenced by technological literacy, previous experience with online technologies, and the quality of instructor support.

1.8 The role of Technology in Assessment

Technology plays essential function in facilitating, administering, and improving online tests. Tools like Quizlet, Edmodo, Socrative, and Google Forms allow instructors to develop engaging and diverse test types (Alruwais et al., 2018). Advanced platforms may also possess adaptive testing and instantaneous analysis, which facilitate monitoring students' performance and providing individualized and personal feedback (Redecker & Johannessen, 2013).

In language instruction and testing, artificial intelligence (AI) has been applied more and more to give computerized feedback on writing coherence, grammar, and pronunciation (Warschauer & Grimes, 2008). However, ethical concerns about data privacy, bias, and reliability must be considered. Yet, in Algeria, the use of such tools remains limited due to the absence of financial constraints, training, and infrastructure deficiencies (Boumediene & Chellali, 2022).

Small-scale projects hold promise, especially in those departments with committed staff and digitally competent students.

1.9 Advantages and disadvantages of online assessment in Higher Education

The transition to internet-based testing in higher education learning has brought a mix of pros and cons. On the positive side, it offers an aspect of flexibility that other types of assessment lack. Students can write tests or submit assignments at convenient times for them, especially when balancing other activities like work or family (Paudel, 2021). This aspect of flexibility provides accessibility in learning for more students.

Another advantage is the way feedback can be given immediately to students. Most online software enables instructors to leave comments or grades in a matter of seconds, allowing students to learn from their errors more quickly (Ifenthaler & Greiff, 2021). Several platforms also permit the integration of multimedia, something that can turn assessments interactive and more engaging, particularly for students who are visual or auditory learners (Gašević et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, there are problems with online testing. The most common among these is academic dishonesty. It may be difficult to ensure students are not cheating since they are not directly being watched (Tria, 2020). Some students will resort to unauthorized resources or working together while in examinations, compromising the process' validity. Another problem is access; not everyone has equal quality of internet or necessary digital hardware. Members from marginalized groups may even struggle just to participate in exams, which brings inequality (Paudel, 2021). Technical problems like system crashes or inconsistent connectivity can also cause fear and hamper performance.

In addition, internet testing can also restrict student-teacher interactions. When questions are raised up, students may not receive instant responses, and that could influence the students' ability to comprehend a topic. Moreover, there's a fear of missing out on acquiring soft skills such as communication or collaboration since those are sometimes cultivated in one-on-one or human interactions (Gašević et al., 2022).

1.10 Online Assessment Tools in Higher Education: Strengths and Weaknesses

The use of digital instruments in higher education has transformed assessment practices with advantages as well as challenges. Moodle and Google Forms are some of the popular platforms due to their availability and ease of use.

1.10.1 Moodle

Moodle, a learning management system that is open-source, provides instructors an assessment toolset that includes quizzes, assignments, and forums. Among its features of flexibility is the ability to generate various types of questions, in addition to automatic grading, which can potentially introduce efficiency in large classes. Moodle also supports formative assessment with immediate feedback, which promotes learning among students (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023).

However, Moodle's complexity is discouraging to some learners and their teachers. The initial setup and navigation may require extensive training, and technical issues may interfere with the evaluation process (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023).

1.10.2 Google Forms

Google Forms offers a user-friendly interface for creating quizzes and surveys and is thus a prime choice for administering quick tests. Its concurrent data collection as well as easy integration with other Google Workspace tools make the evaluation process straightforward. Google Forms are accessible across a variety of devices, hence inclusive (Ugboaja et al., 2021).

Google Forms, on the other hand, lacks extensive functionality concerning advanced test features. It lacks the extent of fine analysis and security features that exist in advanced software, which restricts its use in high-stakes testing (Ugboaja et al., 2021).

1.11 Theoretical Framework for Online Testing in Higher Education

History of the tradition in higher education has been greatly influenced by pedagogical theory and technology developments. Online testing, as a category of educational testing, needs a robust theoretical framework to ensure effectiveness, validity, and congruence with learning outcomes.

1.11.1 Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory indicates that students construct knowledge from experience and reflection. From the perspective of online testing, the theory is keen to highlight how tests ought to be designed to promote critical thinking and active learning. Interactive tests such as project assignments and discussion boards enable the students to engage with content in a manner that reinforces deeper understanding (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023).

1.11.2 Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy provides a hierarchical classification of cognitive skills, ranging from basic recall to complex analysis and creation. Thus, applying the taxonomy to online testing guarantees that tests are created to test multiple levels of cognitive processes. For instance, multiple-choice questions can be employed to test recall, whereas essays and case studies can be employed to test analysis and synthesis capability (Millet & Dinç, 2022).

1.11.3 Formative and Summative Assessment Frameworks

Formative and summative tests differ most importantly when developing effective online tests. Formative tests, such as quizzes and peer evaluation, provide ongoing feedback and support learning development. Summative tests, such as final exams and projects, assess cumulative knowledge and skills. The balance of both types of tests in online settings enhances learning outcomes and provides comprehensive summaries of student performance (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023).

1.11.4 Digital Competency Frameworks

The DigCompEdu framework outlines the digital competences educators require to apply technology in instruction and assessment appropriately. It includes selecting appropriate digital tools, developing digital assessments, and making digital assessments accessible and inclusive. Adhering to such frameworks ensures online assessments are not only pedagogically sound but also technologically capable (Scanlon, 2018).

1.12 Global Best Practices in Online Assessment

Amid the constantly shifting digital landscape of education, best practices for OA have evolved to make it more fair, reliable and inclusive. One major current tendency in higher education systems worldwide is moving away from strict summative evaluation towards more formative, continuous, and student-oriented assessment methods (UNESCO, 2020). Such approaches promote continuous feedback and reflective learning with opportunities to improve and work toward learning goals, especially when it comes to virtual learning contexts (Gikandi, Morrow, & Davis, 2011).

UNESCO (2020) underscores that it is crucial to develop inclusive assessment systems that address all learners' diversity, including learners with disabilities and those living in low-

connectivity areas, in order to ensure accessibility and equity. These techniques range from form using a variety of media formats such as braille, etc., through the employing assistive technology and the design of assessment on the basis of the concept Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Ellis & Bliuc (2016) argue that schools in Australia and the UK are already deploying learning management systems (LMS), e-portfolios, and real-time analytics, and that they are “moving toward a more open and personalized model of assessment in which every student’s learning can be systematically evaluated against the learning aims and objectives of the course.”

Furthermore, academic integrity and trust remain primary issues. In the interest of fairness and integrity, schools from around the world employ systems such as plagiarism detection software (e.g., Turnitin) and secure online proctoring systems (Jordan, 2020). These measurements, with explicit rubrics and real activities, produce assessments that are valid and reliable in showcasing what students now can do.

Global best practice As for Algeria, this involves enhancing the quality of the online assessment at the higher education level, especially for international practices, as well as remediating existing local infrastructure and training weaknesses.

1.13 Conclusion

While digital assessment has witnessed a development, improving online assessment procedures is a step in the right direction to promote the quality of EFL teaching. The literature suggests that a successful integration is depends on the design, technology, teacher and student readiness.

Understanding the philosophical rationale becoming familiar with the philosophy behind authentic assessment, as well as its strengths and limitations, helps teachers transform assessment into a more productive venture. Within the Algerian context, there is a need to come up with a balanced pedagogically-sound vision for OA; this is not just a way of doing things, but also a route to releasing the power to the students and enhancing the inherent value of the learning process.

Second chapter

Research

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter tackles the methodology of this research. It's divided into two sections. The first section provides theoretical context. It defines research as well as research methods and research tools. Furthermore, the second section is devoted to fieldwork, in which the researcher presents the research design of this study by selecting the research methods and describing the research tools that aid in data collection to answer the research questions. This section, in particular, provides a description and purpose for each research tool, identifies the sample and population studied and summarizes the structure and content of each tool.

2.2 Definition of Research Methodology

Research methodology and research design are two terms that are often confused as one and the same. Research methodology is the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining, and predicting phenomena (Goundar, 2012). Whereas Creswell (2008) argues that research design is the plan, and procedures for research, that span the decisions from a broad assumption.

2.2.1. Research Approaches

Due to the variety of research approaches that differ depending on the research subject, researchers must consider the appropriate research approach that suits their research, where they can use the quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approach.

2.2.1.1. Quantitative research approach

The quantitative method refers to information gathered from specific tools based on numerical data and analyzed by specific statistical methods such as experiments. Dornyei (2007). Quantitative research, according to Gass and Mackey (2005), "generally begins with an experimental design in which a hypothesis is followed by data quantification and some sort of numerical analysis is carried out" (2005, p. 2). This means that the quantitative approach is concerned with numbers or scores derived from the analysis of a specific quantitative tool, such as a test.

2.2.1.2. Qualitative research approach

The qualitative research method refers to the quality of the results obtained from research tools. It has nothing to do with numbers. Dornyei (2007) defined qualitative research as open-ended and non-numerical data that the researcher analyzes without using statistical methods, such as an interview designed and analyzed by the researcher using qualitative research analysis. On the other hand, Gass and Mackey (2005) regard qualitative data as impossible to count because it is based on abstract results that are interpretive rather than statistical, such as an observation based on the target population's attitudes or behaviors regarding a particular issue.

2.2.1.3. Mixed method approach

It is a strategy in which the researcher will collect, analyze, and combine quantitative and qualitative research in order to understand the research problems. It can also open up new avenues of investigation that add to the evidence. As a result, Borkan (2004) clarifies that "mixed methods not only expand the toolbox; they also allow for the synthesis of research traditions and provide the investigator with additional perspectives and insights that are beyond the scope of any single technique." The combination of methods offers the researcher new perspectives and a broader scope of research.

2.2.2 Population and Sample

The target population of this study consists of ten teachers and master one students (35students) at the Department of English at the University of Dr. MoulayTahar, Saida.

2.2.3 The Research Approach of this Study

In order to answer the pre-stated research questions and validate the research hypotheses, the researcher chose two fundamental tools that are mixed methods research of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Because it is appropriate to the nature of the study as well as it allows obtaining information about the tackled issue.

2.2.4 Data Gathering Tools

The researcher used two data gathering tools; the first tool is a semi-structured questionnaire addressed to master one' students. Then, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 10 teachers at the Department of English language at Dr. Moulay Tahar University of Saida.

2.2.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a systematic and necessary tool for gathering primary population data of interest for theoretically based research. It is an extremely useful educational tool. as Mbeki said, "I think that probably the most important thing about our education was that it taught us to question even those things we thought we knew" (p. 1).

2.2.4.2 Description of the Questionnaire

The researcher opted for a primarily structured questionnaire that incorporates some open-ended questions, allowing for limited qualitative input., given its potential to provide more comprehensive data. It contains nineteen questions, divided into five sections, each addressing a specific aspect of the study's primary theme. The researcher starts with a brief introduction for the students, inviting them to honestly share their answers. And emphasizing on the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. The first section of the questionnaire aimed to uncover the participants' background information and their experience with online assessment, including their digital literacy level, exploring how frequently students used online platforms for educational purposes, identifying the respondents' level of prior experiences with digital assessment formats, measuring how regularly OA is implemented in them

2.2.5 Interviews

The interview is the second research tool utilized by the researcher to gain comprehensive insights into the teachers' perspectives on their general experience with OA, the Effectiveness and Fairness of OA, the integration of AI in the OA and the its future

2.2.6 Description of the interview

The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview including some open-ended and closed-ended questions with university instructors teaching EFL. The interview was designed to

explore their opinions on the current practices of OA, their practices, and the challenges that confront them in the context of Algerian HEI.

Teachers were also invited to share their perceptions of how well, fairly and reliably online assessment tools work and how engaged and successful students are during online tests. The interview also examined whether they received any training or assistance from the school and what they believe about students' preparation for such tests.

As explained earlier, the student questionnaire focused on students' attitudes and experiences and the interview was aimed at gathering deeper information on teachers' actual observations, professional reflections and pedagogical suggestions about online assessment in EFL classroom Courses.

In this chapter we have described the methodology used for investigating the current status and the possibilities of improving online assessment practices in Algerian higher education, more specifically among first-year EFL Master's students in Saida University. It was divided into two main parts. The first described the research design, population, detail of sampling and data collection instruments (student questionnaire and teacher interview). Data collection and analysis the second part detailed data collection and analysis.

The selected method made it possible to explore more deeply the perspectives of both learners and educators with respect to online assessment. The combination of quantitative aspects from the questionnaire and qualitative thoughts via interviews facilitated a comprehensive and balanced insight on the topic under scrutiny. This chapter therefore is reserved to address the research questions and to explore the assumptions raised in the study introduction

Chapter three

discussion and further recommendations

3.1 Introduction

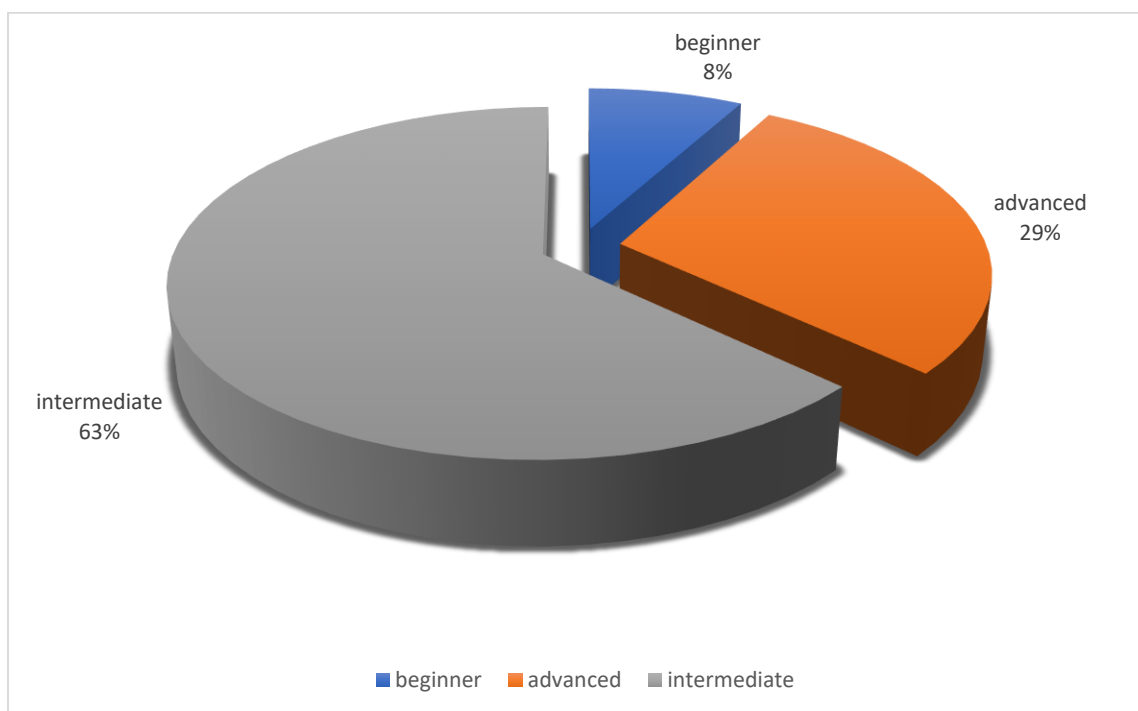
This chapter contains the analysis and discussion of collected data through the questionnaire and interviews, in which it presented the current practices, challenges and perceptions of online assessment in Algerian higher education contexts, particularly with first-year EFL Master's students and teachers at Dr. Moulay Tahar University. In addition to the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, it also offers possible suggestions and recommendations that the findings could lead to when improving online assessment and its practices, and dealing with the challenges identified.

3.2 Questionnaire Analysis

The accurate examination of research results plays a significant role in bridging the gap between theory and practice. In this sense, the analysis section is a critical aspect that supports the researcher in verifying or rejecting the hypotheses. As previously noted, the study employed a questionnaire consisting of several questions that the researcher studied to acquire a deeper grasp of the subject under inquiry.

Section One: Experience with online assessment

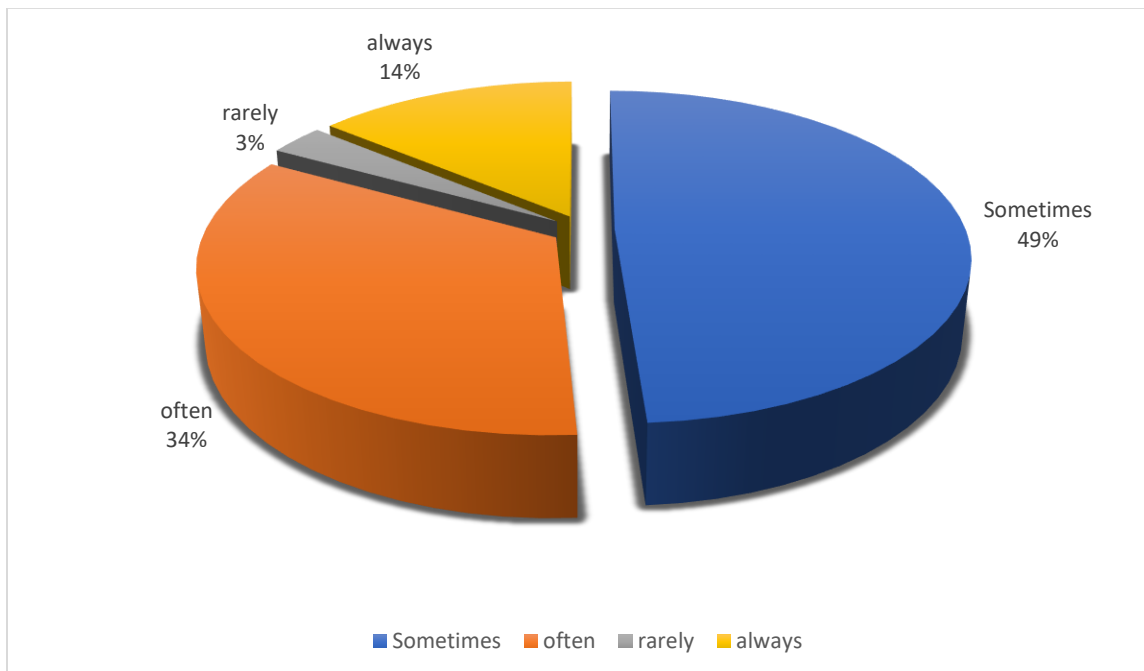
Q1. What is your level of digital literacy?



Pie-Graph3.1: students' Self-Reported Levels of Digital Literacy

The researcher commenced the section of “Experience with Online Assessment” by a question that aims to uncover the level of digital literacy of the participants ,The responses on this question reveals that the majority of students (63 %) considered there level of technological proficiency as an intermediate one while 10 students have an advanced level and only 3 students are beginners

Q2.How often do you use online platforms for educational purposes?



Pie-Graph3.2: Frequency of Online Platform Usage for Educational Purposes

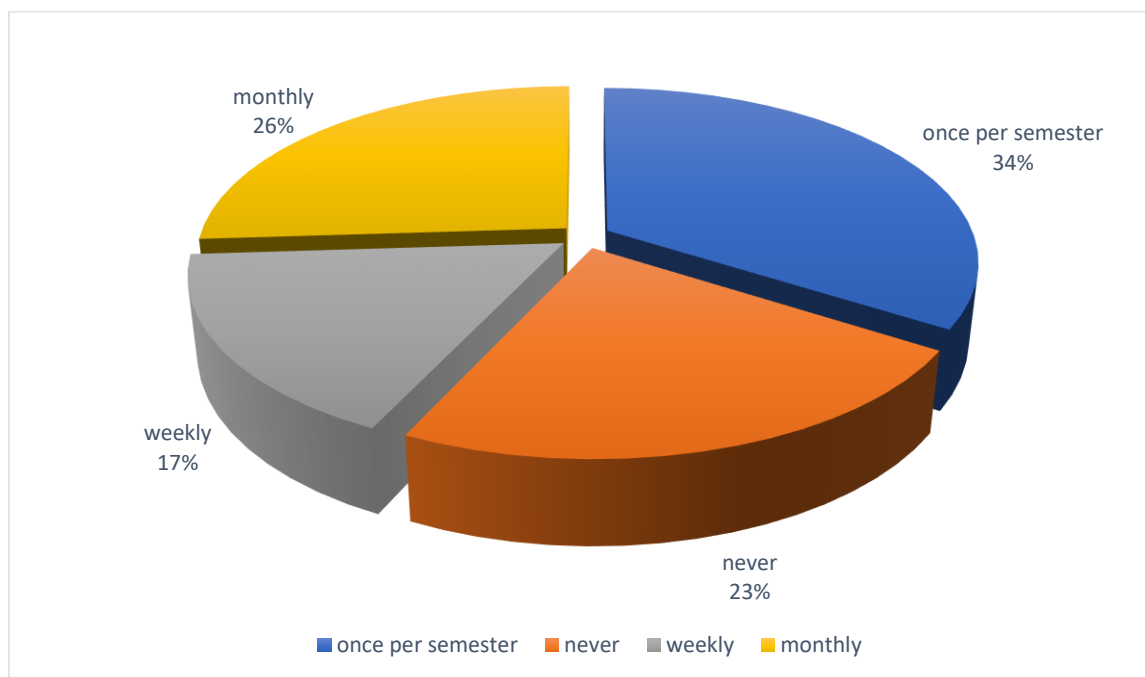
The answers to this question show the frequency of online platforms usage for educational purposes: more than 83% of students used technological platforms for research goals occasionally ,5 students mentioned that they rely always on those platforms in their studies while only one student avoid depending on those online tools

Q3. Have you previously taken an online assessment?

Table .3.1 Participants' Prior Experience with Online Assessment

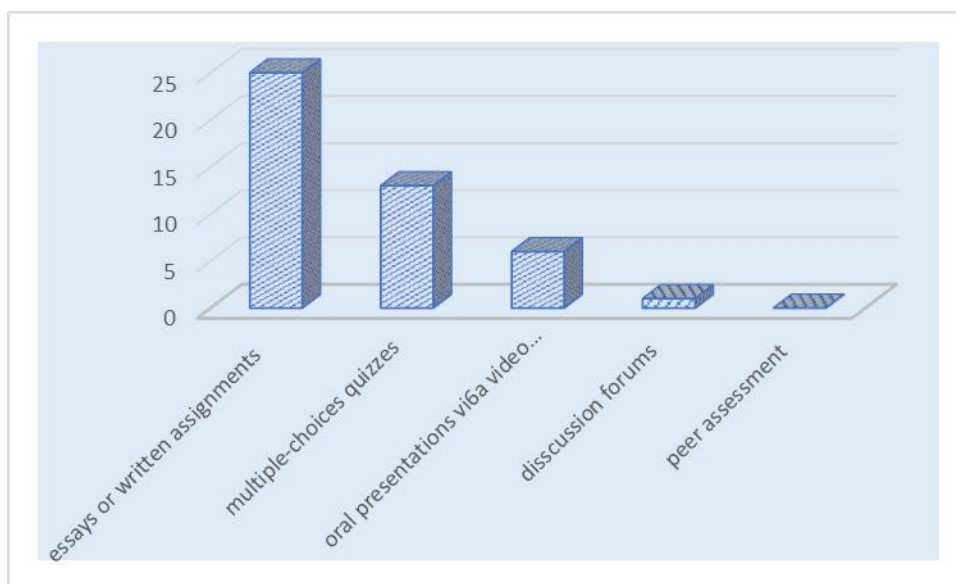
| YES | NO |
|-----|----|
| 33 | 2 |

The third question was about the previous experiences of the questioned students with OA and it shows that the 33 out of 35 students have experienced OA before.

Q4. How often do you take online assessments in your courses?

Pie-Graph3.3: Frequency of Online Assessments in Participants' Courses

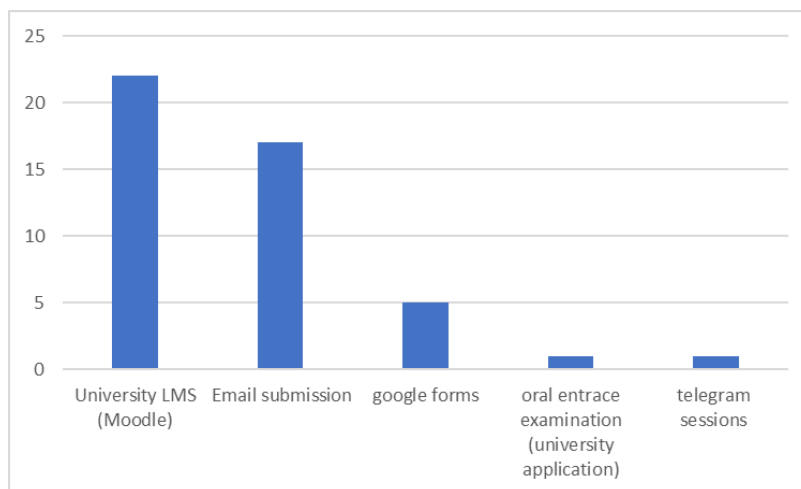
The researcher asked about the frequency of having a OA during the course period 34% said that they have one online test per semester ,26% have a monthly online exam while 8 students answered by the absences of Online exams

Q5. Which online assessment methods have you experienced?

Bar-Graph 3.1: Online Assessment Methods Experienced by Participants

This question aimed to test which online method is most used by instructors. The results reveal that teachers tend to test their students through essays or written assignments or multiple-choice quizzes. Only 5 students mentioned that they have experienced oral presentations via video conferencing, while discussion forums and peer assessment in the online context are rarely used by teachers.

Q6. How do you usually take online assessment?



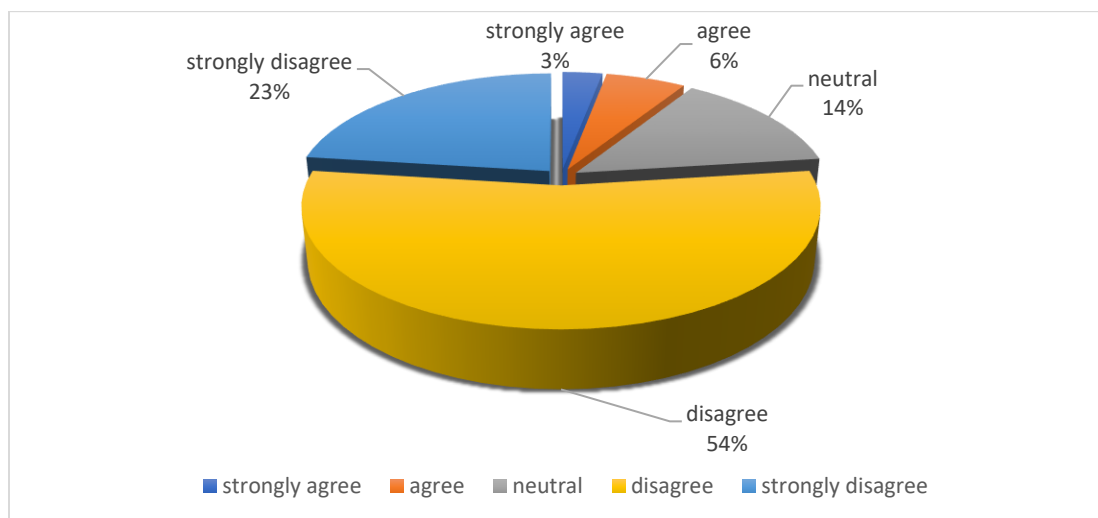
Bar-Graph 3.2: Modalities Through Which Participants Take Online Assessments

In the following question, the researcher asked the students about the most commonly used platform for taking their online exams. Their responses indicate that the university's LMS (Moodle) is the most utilized tool, followed by email submission and Google Forms tests.

two of the surveyed students mentioned in the 'others' section that they experienced having online sessions through Telegram and oral entrance examinations (university application).

Section two: Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Online Assessment

Q7. Do you feel that online assessments accurately reflect your knowledge and skills?



Pie-Graph3.4: Students' Perceptions of the Accuracy of Online Assessments in Reflecting Knowledge and Skills

In the second section of the questionnaire which was devoted for teachers and students' perspectives and attitudes toward OA, Students were asked how OA matched their knowledge and abilities. Of the 35 pupils that responded, a notable portion (27 students) said that OA does not fairly reflect their knowledge and ability. While five individuals remained neutral, some students acknowledged that online examinations have clearly shown their present degree of knowledge.

Table 3.2: Key Perceived Differences Between Online and Traditional Assessments

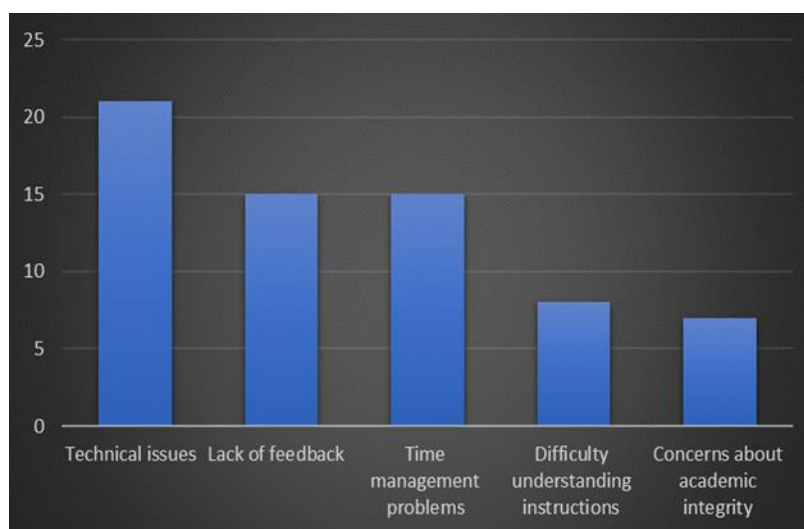
| Theme | Sample Responses |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Cheating & Academic Integrity | Students are more likely to cheat on online exams U can cheat easily in online assessments Cheating opportunities and AI-based tools use Traditional ones are more honest |
| Reliability & Validity | Traditional assessments are more reliable Traditional assessment is more valid, reliable, and accurate Accuracy, validity |
| Interaction & Engagement | Traditional assessments are face-to-face, so students are obliged to interact In class, it seems more serious |
| Time & Flexibility | Online assessments reduce time and effort Gaining time, easy access Saving time and energy More helpful for those with jobs |
| Learning Value & Creativity | Online assessment boosts creativity and tests skills Traditional assessments are more effective in enhancing critical thinking |
| Pressure & Stress | Traditional assessments put pressure on the students in terms of time Online one is more flexible |
| No Difference / Neutral Views | There is no difference A big difference |

The table below presents the responses to the 8th question regarding the primary distinctions between online and traditional methods of assessing abilities. The collected data reveals several

differences across various comparative themes, including reliability, time management, opportunities for cheating, student engagement, and creativity. Additionally, it addresses the mental state and stress levels associated with each method. A few students noted that there are no significant differences and that both assessment frameworks are similar.

Q9. What are the main challenges you face when taking online assessments? (Select all that apply)

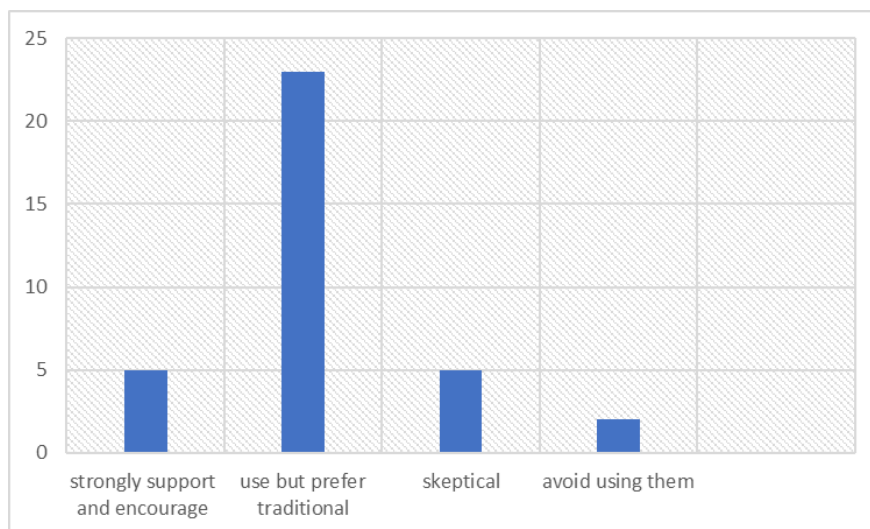
Other responses: The fact that we lack practice in using technology for school



Bar-Graph 3.3: Main Challenges Faced by Students During Online Assessments

The researcher asked students to identify the key setbacks they encountered during online tests. The most significant barrier, based on the students' responses, was weak digital infrastructure, mentioned by 22 students, along with the absence of instructors' feedback and challenges with time management that could influence their performance. Another issue cited was the difficulty in understanding instructions due to the flawed design and inadequate format of the virtual assessments. Additionally, 7 students expressed concerns about academic integrity and its important impact. In the "others" section, one student noted that the lack of digital practice in school was also a problem.

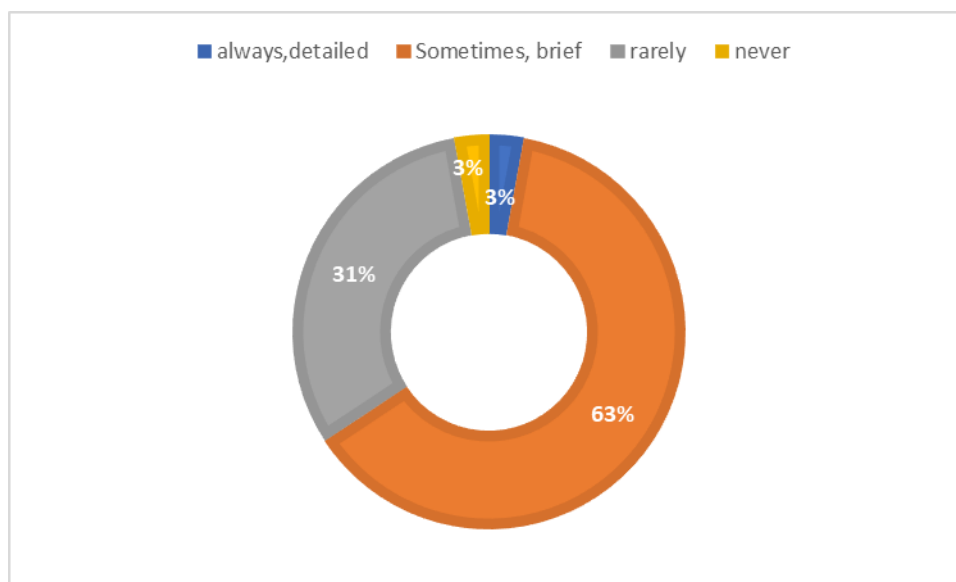
Q10. How do your teachers perceive online assessments?



Bar-Graph 3.4 :Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Online Assessment

The tenth question focused on the perceived views toward OA. Over 60% of the responses reflect instructors' inclination towards traditional assessment methods, whereas five responses demonstrate educators' support of digital integration, and two further responses suggest that some teachers avoid utilizing such technological formats.

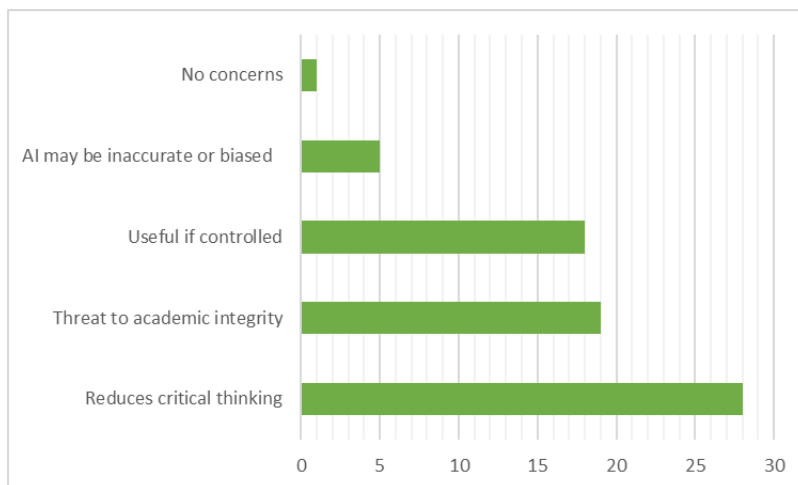
Q11. How often do your teachers provide feedback on online assessments?



Pie-Graph 3.5: Frequency of Teacher Feedback on Online Assessments

The researchers aimed to ascertain the frequency of comments and feedback; according to the answers, teachers infrequently provide a reaction. 63% of the responses indicated that lecturers occasionally gave succinct feedback, while other students asserted that their teachers never offered feedback. Only one student noted that teachers gave detailed suggestions.

Q12. what concerns do teachers express about AI in assessment?



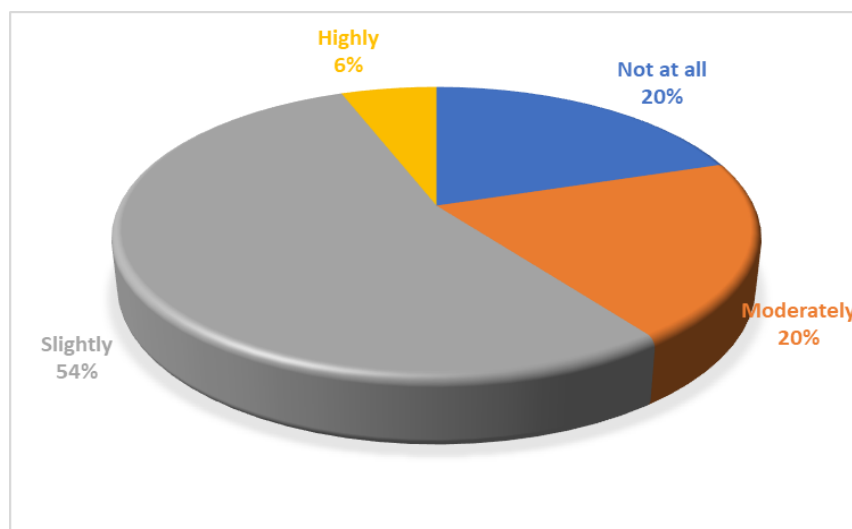
Bar-Graph 3.5: Teachers' Reported Concerns About AI Use in Assessment

In this bar graph, instructors' concerns about employing the AI in OA are presented; 28 replies reveal that teachers raise concerns about menaced academic integrity and that AI lowers critical thinking.

Some answers noted that AI may be wrong or biased. While some teachers exhibit no concerns about this subject, roughly 20 students' answer suggested that teachers consider AI valuable if carefully supervised.

Section three: Effectiveness of Online Assessment

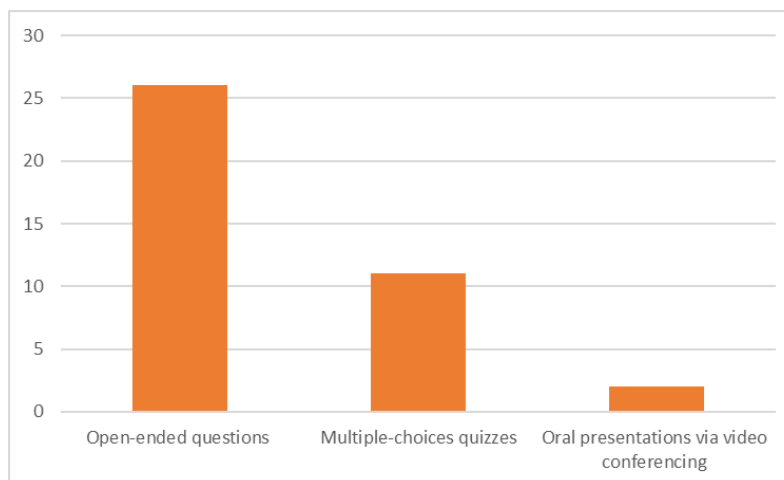
Q13. How well do online assessments contribute to your learning process?



Pie Graph3.6: Students' Perceptions of the Contribution of Online Assessments to Their Learning

The first question in the third section of the questionnaire “**Effectiveness of Online Assessment**” concerned the contribution of OA to the participants' learning process. The findings show that 54% of respondents agree that OA does not contribute to the teaching process. 40% indicated that it has a moderate impact on their learning path, while only 6% (7 students) stated that OA had no bearing on their educational process.

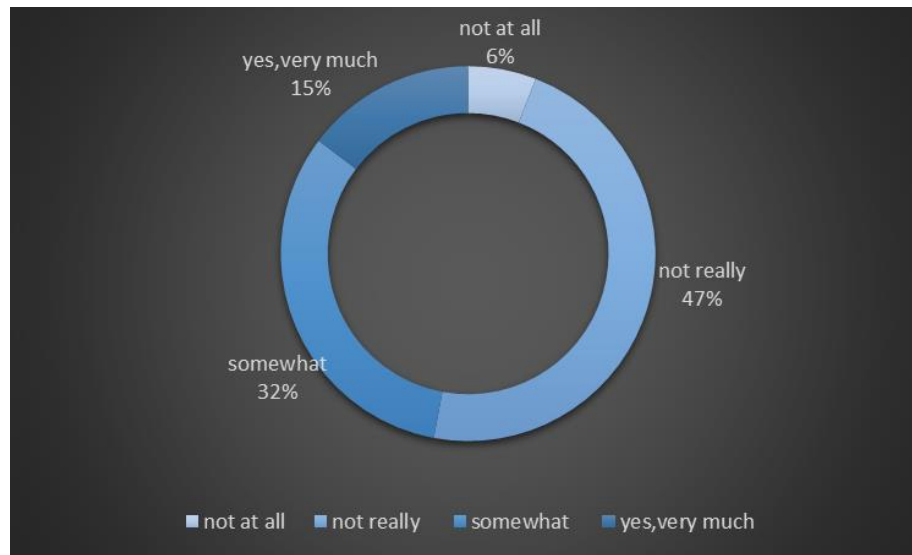
Q14. Which type of online assessment do you find the most effective for learning?



Bar-Graph 3.6 : Students' Views on the Most Effective Types of Online Assessments for Learning

The participants were also asked about the most effective tool of OA they had experienced before; 26 answers showed the effectiveness of open-ended questions followed by multiple-choice quizzes, and only two students chose oral presentations via video conferencing as an effective type of OA. This suggests that while students appreciate the interactive nature of open-ended questions and quizzes, they may find video presentations less engaging or effective for their learning.

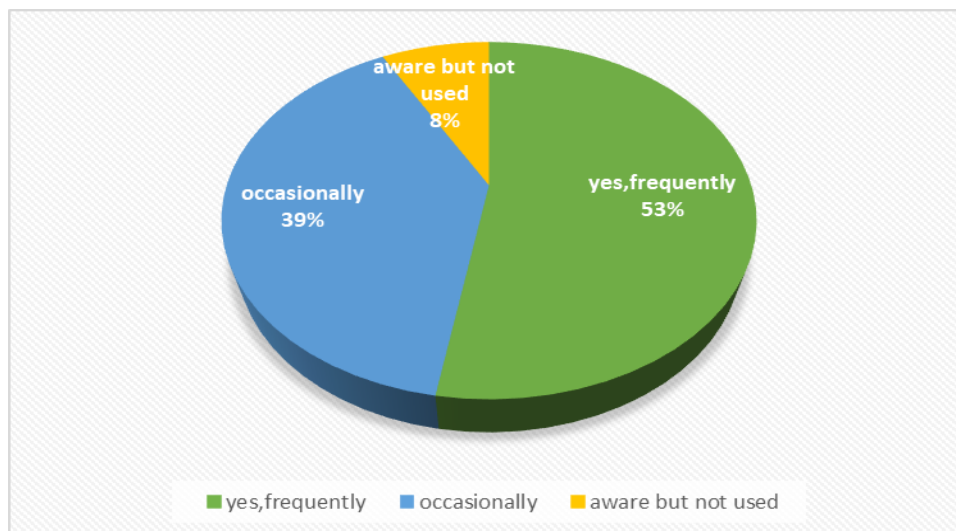
Q15. Do you believe online assessments encourage critical thinking?



Pie-Graph3.7 : Students' Beliefs About Online Assessments Encouraging Critical Thinking

This question aims to check if students perceive OA as an influencing factor on their critical thinking or no, The majority of participants (around 53%, combining “Not really” and “Not at all”) expressed doubt or disagreement that online assessments encourage critical thinking. A significant number (32%) responded with “Somewhat,” indicating that while online assessments might foster some level of critical thinking, many students do not find it highly effective. Only 14% of the responses show that few students strongly believe online assessments promote their critical thinking.

Q16. Have you ever used AI-based tools for academic assessments?



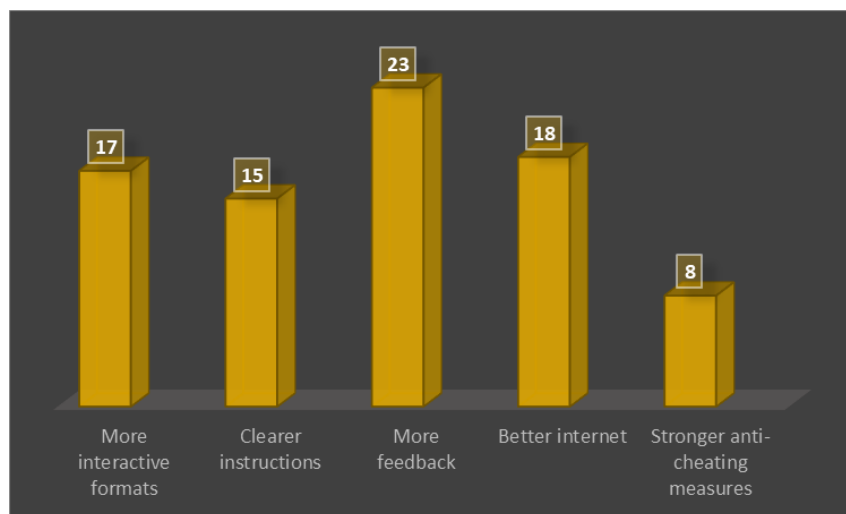
Pie Graph3.8 : Use of AI-Based Tools by Students for Academic Assessment Purposes

In the final section of the questionnaire, the researcher asked about AI and its prevalence in academic settings. Fifty-three percent of participants responded with "yes, frequently," 39% answered "occasionally," and only 8% (2 students) indicated that they were aware of AI but did not use it.

suggests that while there is considerable awareness of AI among students, there is a notable gap in its practical application in their academic work. The findings imply that many students recognize the availability of AI tools but may not be fully utilizing them to enhance their learning experiences.

Section four: Suggestions for Improvement

Q18. What improvements would make online assessments more effective for you?

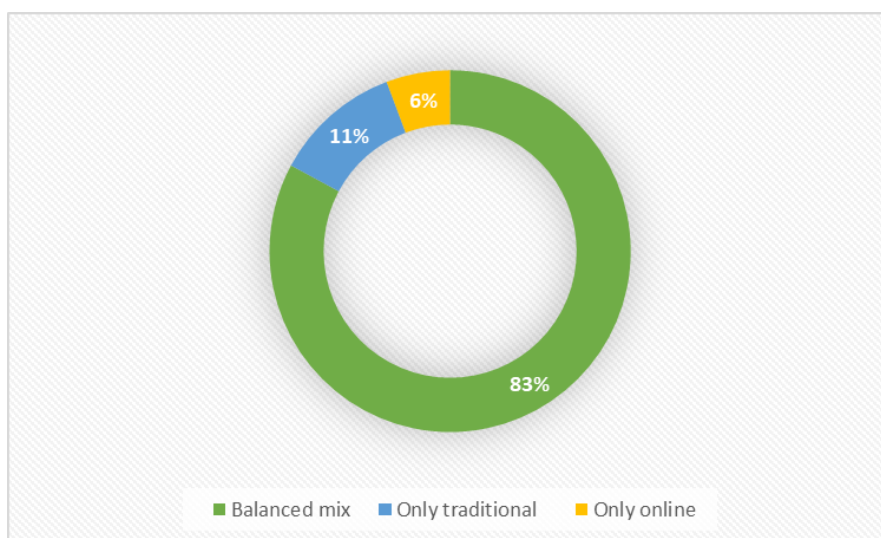


Bar-Graph 3.7: Suggested Improvements to Enhance the Effectiveness of Online Assessments

The researcher at this level suggested some improvements and asked the students surveyed to select which ones would make the OA more effective. The goal was to gather feedback on the proposed changes to enhance the overall learning experience. By involving students in this decision-making process, the researcher hoped to a sense of ownership and engagement in improving the educational approach.

Most students' responses indicated a desire for more feedback from their teachers on their work (23 responses). Better internet access and more interactive formats were also recommended by the respondents, followed by requests for clear instructions (15 responses) and 8 responses advocating for stronger anti-cheating measures.

Q19. Would you prefer a combination of online and traditional assessments in the future?



Pie-Graph3.9: Students' Preferences Regarding the Combination of Online and Traditional Assessments

the last question was about students' preferences in the future and it revealed that the majority of participants (83%) are with the adoption of balanced mix between traditional and online assessment while 4 students prefer the traditional way and only 2 respondents prefer only the online methods

3.3. Results Interpretation

This study is of significance in that the results revealed first-year EFL Master's students' perspectives on the use of online assessment in Algerian HE. The responses to the first question indicate that the majority of students tend to think that online examinations are of little usefulness or of average relevance to their learning. This moderate perceived usefulness could also be indicative of an ongoing transition process towards online platforms and possibly the use of more interactive or personalized assessment methods to fully facilitate students' learning. This is consistent with the study of Benabed (2022) where students and teachers acknowledged the need for online evaluations, but doubtful on their efficacy to reflect students' learning attainments in their entirety learning outcomes

When asked what kind of assessment students felt was most beneficial, open-ended written responses received the highest number of votes, followed by group projects and oral presentations. This tendency implies a preference for students toward activities that involve working critically with ideas (which are frequently constrained and less open in closed format examinations, for instance multiple choice quizzes). This is also in line with the study conducted by Hichour (2022) in which EFL teachers in Algeria mentioned using summative assessments (e.g. written assignments and projects) when conducting online teaching.

With regard to effectiveness, the majority of participants mentioned that they are "not very effective" when adopted online and the majority of reasons provided were related to the notion of flexibility they appreciated and perceived but also noted limitation to the feedback or knowledge interaction. Oddly, when asked whether these tests promote critical thinking, the answers were split: many people answered somewhat or not really, and a smaller group answered yes, very much. This difference highlights the importance of creating assessments that are intellectually engaging and that push students to think critically. This contention is supported by Mehdaoui's (2022) research which brought to the fore that EFL learners at the University of Tiaret are deficient in some of the basic prerequisites for literature literacy, indicating a shortfall in top-level thinking assessments.

Regarding the use of AI tools in evaluations, most participants answered that they use in a frequently or sometimes, and a minority answered that they were aware but did not use. This points to a growing dependence on AI-driven technologies, which, while potentially improving performance, also raises questions of academic integrity. Indeed, when it comes to concerns about AI and assessments, the top stories are about threats to academic integrity, a decrease in critical thinking, and the bias or inaccuracy that can come from AI. A picture of AI as potential was drawn by many students, but they also hinted that it would have to be managed, and this seems to indicate a complex perception about the advantages and disadvantages of AI. Although concrete research work on AI tool utilization in Algerian EFL contexts is scarce, general concerns regarding the presence of AI on assessments is of increasing interest in the overall educational research community.

The outcomes likewise signify that students favor a mixture of traditional and online assessment procedures. This preference reflects their interest in taking advantage of the flexibility of digital portals and the contrast of personal assessment. In terms of improvements, the most common comments were for clearer instructions, more engaging formats and a better anti-cheating policy. This feedback is a signal for more transparency, involvement and fairness in the course of evaluation. Hammal et al. (2023) noted that EFL instructors identified benefits and obstacles of online assessment and focused on engagement and academic integrity of tests. Students also described the feedback quality and quantity as the most crucial element for improving student experience of online assessment. Furthermore, barriers such as unstable access to the internet were consistently raised, indicating that infrastructure concerns remain as a barrier to effective implementation. Bentaleb (2024) also reported similar challenges in the Algerian HE system where teachers and students had difficulty in terms of the absence of ICTS and poor internet connection during the transition to online learning.

In conclusion, there is recognition amongst students that practicability and need for online assessment, in particular post-COVID-19, but only if it is designed in a more considered way, and with better communication and blended models that truly support learning. It parallels more general education conversations around pedagogical practice that combine technology advancements with humane evaluation practices. Senouci (2022) claimed that teachers thought

online assessment was good but there were challenges in terms of how to implement it, risks of cheating and the inability to assess certain skills in the online mode.

3.4 Interview analysis

A detailed thematic analysis of ten university teachers' interviews about online assessment in Algerian higher education is provided in this section. Three main categories comprise the analysis:

1/ General experience with online assessment

2/ Fairness and effectiveness

3/ future prospects and recommendations

3.4.1 General experience with online assessment

There were a wide range of experience levels with online assessments. according to the interview, most of questioned teachers acknowledged using online assessment only during the pandemic “COVID19” or occasionally, although some reported using it frequently, particularly in formative evaluation or blended settings. In most cases, teachers expressed a preference for traditional “face-to-face” assessment due to trust and quality concerns

Multiple-choice tests and essays were among the assessment instruments mentioned. Additionally, one of the respondent’s teachers talked about using GoGrader; others talked about other automated grading tools or platforms like Moodle and Google Forms. Despite this, a lot of teachers pointed out that poor infrastructure and the lack of student’s responsiveness were the main barriers to consistent implementation.

The absence of proper training and institutional support was a raised concern also. Numerous educators stated that they either received no training at all or merely cursory introductions to online resources to use assessment tools, some had to rely on online research and self-training. The adoption of increasingly sophisticated and trustworthy online evaluation approaches was supposed to be impeded by this lack of preparation.

3.4.2 Fairness and effectiveness

Skepticism about the validity and fairness of online tests was a prominent theme in all of the answers. Due to widespread plagiarism, excessive use of artificial intelligence, and student collaboration during unsupervised tasks, teachers expressed concern that online formats do not accurately reflect students' true abilities.

While some teachers made use of tools like grammar checkers and plagiarism detectors, the majority lacked institutional support or access to dependable similar software. Others used their knowledge of students' writing styles to identify and detect their dishonesty. Everyone agreed that unless stronger monitoring mechanisms are put in place, academic integrity cannot be ensured in an online setting.

in terms of effectiveness several factors were considered as limiting:

Technical challenges (such as poor internet access or platforms issues)

Low student engagement

Inadequate task design

Tracking one's identity and performance can be challenging.

According the answers of some educators, well-designed assessments that include project-based tasks and open-ended questions may offer more deeper insights into students' comprehension and understanding. These only worked well, when paired with hybrid formats or real-time monitoring.

3.4.3 Future prospects and recommendations

Despite the difficulties, the majority of educators concurred that the continuous digital transformation in Algerian higher education will probably lead to an increase in online assessments. Students' preference for flexible formats and the move toward blended and hybrid learning models were considered to be important factors. However, support for this transition was conditional. All Teachers emphasis on several key improvements to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of online assessment, most important ones are:

The Institutional support, teachers training, better assessment design and AI regulations

While Some educators believe that unchecked AI use could reduce the role of the teacher and make education overly reliant on automated systems. Others contended that AI should be integrated in a controlled and pedagogically sound manner rather than replacing teachers.

In conclusion

Overall, the analysis shows that Algerian university instructors are open to online assessment. Although its potential advantages like effectiveness, adaptability, and scalability are recognized, significant questions still surround its legitimacy, equity, and viability from a technical standpoint. The results suggest that a well-rounded, carefully regulated hybrid model is required, in which online resources complement conventional evaluation methods rather than take their place. Online assessment has the potential to transform from a short-term emergency measure into a legitimate and long-term educational approach with the right institutional investment and training.

3.5 Results interpretation

The implementation, difficulties, and potential of online assessment were the main topics of this study, which investigated the experiences and opinions of Algerian EFL university instructors. The results show a complicated relationship between institutional support, pedagogical approaches, and technology infrastructure that both significantly aligns with and deviates from previous research.

3.6 General experience with online assessment

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was among the options, while (to the best of our knowledge) most of the online assessment writers had little, and often negative, experience. Their reluctance to continue online after the pandemic suggests a preference for traditional “face-to-face” evaluations. Such a perspective is in line with Hichour (2022) who discovered that Algerian EFL teachers, although recognizing online tests as useful during the pandemic, were skeptical about their effectiveness and reliability.

Despite acknowledging benefits, including flexibility and efficiency in terms of time, teachers expressed reservations with the lack of student engagement and the difficulties associated with the learning environment and the technological tools and system (Moodle) used. These issues resonate with Benabed's (2022) study which highlighted that although there can be advantages of online assessment in terms of logistics, the success of such assessments relies heavily on the digital literacy of the teacher and student.

3.6.1 Fairness and effectiveness

The integrity of online assessments was the most pressing concern of teachers. Many repeated occurrences of plagiarism, illegal unauthorized collaboration and AI tool abuse raised questions around the trustworthiness of online overall evaluation. This reflects worldwide concerns since research has shown that un-proctored online testing can promote academic dishonesty (Newton & Draper, 2024).

Compounding these problems in Algerian higher education institutions are the lack of effective proctoring systems and ineffective plagiarism detection tools. Highlighting the importance of enhanced detection systems and redesigned assessment, Roesch et al. (2024) note, the eruption of AI generated content has “increasingly complicated the life of a teacher to find student real work

3.6.2 Training and Capacity Building for Institutions

Results indicate considerable variation in institutional commitment to, and professional development for, the conduct of online assessments. Several also commented that they did not have confidence in correctly using digital assessment tools because they received inadequate or no training in how to use them. This undermines the provision of support from government which barely meet such needs (Zekri and El Moussaoui, 2023) while pointing out insufficient training and technical support are primary barriers toward effective online teaching and learning in Algeria.

Inadequate institutional investment in infrastructures and professional development will minimize the potential benefits of online assessment, with the implication that full solutions (which include regular training, technical support, and resources) will be required.

3.6.3 Future prospects and recommendations

Educators agree that – due to the digital preference of more recent student generations – using digital exams in higher education has become an expectation, whether it's accepted or not. Care must be taken in such integration to avoid the adoption of technology that detracts from, rather than adds to, educational quality or equity.

It was indicated that established guidelines about the use of AI would need to be developed, as well as that the system would need to be more user-friendly and equipped with the means to verify academic integrity. Haddadi & Zidane (2023) indicate that moral frameworks and policy implications are as indispensable as technological readiness in ensuring effective absorption of AI in education.

3.7 General interpretation of results

To investigate the efficacy application of OA in Algerian higher education, case of the first-year EFL Master's students at Saida University, two main data collection tools were adopted, a students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews. How these instruments were used in combination led to rich findings and quick comprehension of student experiences as well as instructor thoughts.

The survey was designed to ascertain students' attitudes, difficulties, and advantages of online assessment. Findings indicated a mixed though generally tentative online evaluation acceptance. Convenience and flexibility, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, were cited as reasons for doing so by many students. Doubts were also cast about the validity and fairness of the tests and their technical reliability. His findings corroborate with those of Kearns' (2012), who highlighted that although online assessment affords the opportunities for creative development, it also has to contend with real challenges in preserving standards of academic integrity and assessment quality.

To supplement these findings, a series of teacher interviews were also conducted exploring teacher perceptions in relation to online assessment practices, issues, as well as strategies that teachers employ to assure the effectiveness of online assessment. Most teachers agreed with the usefulness of online resources for ensuring continuity when faced with a crisis at the time that they were being used, but also expressed concerns about levels of student engagement, digital divides and the risk of cheating. These answers are in accordance with the criticisms by Reedy et al. (2021), claiming institutional support and digital literacy could be obstacles to the success of online testing endeavors.

Both importantly, singled out a deficit between the promise of online assessment in theory and in practice. Even though students appreciate the flexibility, they are dubious about how equitably their knowledge is being assessed. Teachers meanwhile called for professional development, clear instructions and a hybrid model mixing online and face-to-face.

This is consistent with the report of Alruwais et al. (2018), who call for more “coherent and pedagogically defensible frameworks” for digital assessment.

The survey results also demonstrated that students commonly lacked feedback, care and bad interaction, and the interviews indicated that teachers often found it challenging to afford quality feedback for each individual because of time and platform restrictions. The overlap between students' and the teacher's viewpoints here highlights the importance of formative feedback in online learning (Nicol, 2009, Gikandi et al. (2011).

Of note is both educators and students also suggested a number of improvements to online assessment. These strategies included investing in teacher training, implementing user-friendly and safe platforms, broadening the modalities of assessment through project-based and collaborative activities, and guaranteeing access to digital devices. Some teachers also supported the implementation of AI-driven tools to help in the grading and feedback process, subject to ethical safeguards. These approaches complement the moves proposed by Aydin (2020) and Rasheed et al., (2021) that readers can further explore for a new assessment culture to be established in HE, that of the need for ongoing professional development to develop effective online assessment practice in HE, website usability and policy level support.

In conclusion, the results obtained by both instruments indicate that online assessment has become an indispensable element of contemporary higher education in Algeria, more so in the wake of COVID-19, and rests on resolving various pedagogical, technical, and organizational challenges. Students and teachers both believe in the importance of fair, clear and well-supported assessment methods that help drive learning and uphold academic integrity. These interpretations are congruent with those commonly found in the literature on online assessment and provide interesting insights into the Algerian EFL context, from both a theoretical and practical point of view.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the study explored both student and teacher responses and identified some strengths and weaknesses regarding online assessment. Though some students and professors acknowledged the flexibility and accessibility of online assessment, many others emphasized continuing issues including, technical limits, limitations in training, and concerns about the reliability and fairness of the assessment. Based on those findings, a number of recommendations for the practice of online assessment were proposed, including enhanced training for instructors, better technological applications, and clearer assessment guidelines, in order to improve the use of online assessment. These recommendations are designed to inform policymakers, educators, and institutions in the creation of a fair and reliable system of online assessment in Algerian higher education.

3.9 Suggestions and Recommendations

3.9.1 Enhancing Online Assessment in Algerian higher education

According to the study and interpretation of the students' questionnaire and the teachers interviews, we have noticed that the use of online assessment has been adopted more in the Algerian higher education – especially when it comes to assessing university students' achievements (since – post and during – the period of the COVID-19 pandemic) but still there are pedagogical and technical challenges. When dozens of students and educators praise it there are also hurdles that are cited that make it less effective than it could be.

As a result, this section is devoted to the summary of a series of viable options and strategies, derived from the most important findings of the study. The guidelines are intended to assist educators, institutions and policy-makers in enhancing online assessment practice, and mitigating the challenges which emerged from the investigation. Concentration will be given to the main issues outlined by the respondents as students and teachers of English so as to contribute to a less biased, fairer and more pedagogically sound online assessment platform implemented across Algerian EFL contexts.

The results of this research demonstrate that the obstacles of assessment online are multiple to both EFL instructors and first-year Master's students. These issues cover from technical issues, lack of experience with digital resources, and fear in fairness of evaluation and academic integrity to emotional pressure. On the basis of these findings, this chapter puts forward a list of evidence-based advice to improve the online assessment in the context of Algerian higher education.

These recommendations fall under two broad categories, namely Recommendations for Teachers and Recommendations for Students, and the last category is Institutional and Policy-Level Recommendations.

3.9.2 Suggestions for Teachers

Participate in Professional Development opportunities

Majority of the interviewed teachers informed they had little or no training on online assessment. To address this:

- Universities should deliver regular workshops on e-assessment tools, design principles and digital pedagogy.
- Consider covering formative and summative online assessment, the use of rubrics, and managing academic integrity.

Gikandi et al. (2011) explain that “successful online assessment requires informed design and evaluation practices that cannot be achieved by simply adapting paper-based tests for an online environment.

Developmental and Task-Specific activities

And instead of using rote multiple-choice testing, teachers should bring testing into the realm of real-life language use:

- Tasks such as video talks, oral interviews and reflective journals are better at assessing communicative competence.
- Rubrics “serve not only for assessment purposes but also for learning when used as feedback” (Andrade, 2000).

Provide timely and constructive feedback

Quality of feedback is one of the most potent but often forgotten measures of assessment. Dozens of students said they received either nebulous feedback or no feedback.

- Teachers should give specific, actionable feedback that will help students perform better next time.
- If you can put it in zeros and ones, do it and reference that in your comment. • Always use rubrics that include narrative comments alongside the scores.
- Record themselves giving audio/video feedback, or follow up live when possible.

‘Good feedback is not only about correcting errors, but also about pointing the way for future learning, promoting self-regulation and creating confidence’ (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006,; p199).

Promote academic honesty

To curb cheating in online examinations:

- Have individualized tasks and open-book formats that measure critical thinking.
- “These can be accompanied by brief verbal follow-up interviews to help confirm that students are the authors.
- Encourage a culture of integrity by explaining how academic dishonesty affects grades and the community.

King et al. (2009) emphasizes that there is an increase in academic dishonesty among students who perceive those instructors do not supervise and/or create tests in a strategically way.

Provide Student's emotional support

Besides, teachers should realize the psychological obstacles that students encounter in an online environment, such as examination tension:

- Provide sample exams or practice runs.
- Offer rewards and helpful feedback.
- Offer to take questions beforehand, and give a window for submission.

As Pekrun (2006) states, emotions such as anxiety can result in learning with interference, which the teacher must address through supportive teaching styles.

3.9.3 Suggestions for Students**Promote Digital Literacy**

Online assessment is problematic for some students, as they do not have the technical resources or familiarity with their use. To improve:

- Students must proactively test assessment platforms (e.g. Moodle, Google Forms on them their preparation and demo sessions).
- Universities should launch training sessions and guides to help bridge this digital gap.

According to Hodges et al. (2020), “lack of technology readiness is a top reason for low performance on online learning.

Master Time and Prepare Efficiently

Many students expressed last-minute preparation and timing confusion. Students should:

- Schedule studies ahead of time.
- Track tasks with time-tracking tools or apps.
- Follow some of the example links for mock assignments to practice the forms and know what to expect.

Redei (2002, p.30) notes that anxiety may be lessened if students feel that they are in control and adequately prepared.

Maintain Academic Integrity

Some students said that they had shared answers or been helped during exams given over the internet. Though technical fixes can help, personal accountability is a must:

- Students should realize that cheating is failing themselves.
- Schools should have honor codes and make students pledge on their honor before taking exams.

Means et al. (2013) emphasize that student involvement and ethical conduct are more intense in places where self-regulation and trust are encouraged.

Seek Help When Needed

It should be no problem for students to:

- Get in touch with teachers if you have questions about grading.
- Command special time or technical assistance if a compelling case for it is made.
- Talk to friends or counselors when you're feeling inundated.

Support systems have to be actively engaged, not just made available.

NYON, Switzerland (Reuters) - Europol said it expects to have helped the game, played mainly in southeast Asia, to reach illegal profits of 200 million euros per match.

3.9.4 Policy and Institutional-Level Recommendations

Develop a unified national framework for online assessment

In the absence of a common policy, there is misinformation and variance. Therefore:

- Ethics and practices of online assessments should be provided by the Ministry of Higher Education.
- Inevitably, each institution needs to have its own clear policy concerning the format and timing of estimations, the method of grading and proper academic conduct.

Alruwais et al. (2018) highlight that institutional clarity is key to the success of making e-assessment efficient and legitimate.

Provide flexible, diverse, and personalized assessment methods

Students and teachers alike favored a blended assessment strategy:

- For low-stakes assessments, use online tests, and for high-stakes assessments, use face-to-face exams.

- Let students decide when they can between online and in-person options.

Hybrid models provide flexibility of giving the exam with a format of a traditional examination (Means et al., 2013).

Promote Innovation and Additional Studies

More research needs to be done in experimenting and validating the online assessment techniques:

- Universities must encourage pilot projects for AI-enabled assessment, gamification and self-pacing modules.
- Feedback from students and staff should be encouraged and should contribute to co-designing improvements.

Further research Future research could investigate the long-term effects of digital assessment on student performance and motivation

General conclusion

The unprecedented emergence of online assessment has become increasingly common in the educational landscape, especially after COVID-19 forced institutions to transition from traditional in-person assessments to online formats of assessment. For many institutions throughout Algeria, the COVID-19 pandemic presented opportunities alongside a host of challenges surrounding the transition of assessment types. The study was set to examine the current issues with online assessment and what practices are in place if any, but also what kind of considerations, ramifications and concerns affected both teachers and students. The study simultaneously offered keys to how online assessments could become fair, reliable, and lastly possibly engaging, particularly for First Year Master EFL students at Saida University. To present clarity, this study was based on two research questions:

1. What are the challenges with current online assessment methods in the Algerian university?
2. How can online assessments be enhanced to ensure fairness, consistency, and students' engagement?

The study findings reported some benefits related to online assessments with flexibility, access and technology, however the factors related to were multiple. There were issues surrounding: explicit guidelines or information around online assessments, cheating, incongruent student engagement, inconsistent marking practices, and the loss of student involvement with testing and studying online. Students reported varying degrees of disconnection from any tests that they are completing online, a lack of clarity around assessment purposes or expectations, and the psychological uncertainty related to completion and response during the assessment with technology issues. Teachers reported being equally challenged with the online assessment instrument, like making assessments reliable as to content and process of evaluating for fairness across a range of students' behaviors outside of the anticipated university conditions of learning.

Teacher interviews underscored training and institutional assistance, plus pedagogical change, as critical to online assessment effectiveness. The findings confirm that effective online assessment will not occur purely through technology, but must involve solid plan development and student-centered approach.

While there were setbacks during the research process - member access to certain participants, time issues, gaps in literature on online assessment in Algeria - the research contributes to knowledge and potential action for the field. It brings forward the voices of both learners and educators, and identifies the need for teachers, and policy-makers to come together to design assessment practices that are tech-savvy, and pedagogically sound.

In sum, this study explored an ever-changing picture of online assessment, and the ongoing need to improve it. The issues addressed in this study, and the plans to adapt where appropriate will facilitate development of more inclusive and equitable assessment systems in Algerian universities, which engage with, and are considerate of both teaching, and learning.

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Appendix

Appendix A: students' questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward online assessment and improvements in order to enhance it in the Algerian higher education.

Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Experience with Online Assessment

1. What is your level of digital literacy?

- a) Beginner ☐
- b) Intermediate ☐
- c) Advanced ☐

2. How often do you use online platforms for educational purposes?

- a) Never ☐
- b) Rarely ☐
- c) Sometimes ☐
- d) Often ☐
- e) Always ☐

3. Have you previously taken an online assessment?

- a) Yes ☐
- b) No ☐

4. How often do you take online assessments in your courses?

- a) Never ☐
- b) Once per semester ☐
- c) Monthly ☐
- d) Weekly ☐

5. Which online assessment methods have you experienced? (Select all that apply)

- a) Multiple-choice quizzes ☐
- b) Essays or written assignments ☐
- c) Oral presentations via video conferencing ☐
- d) Peer assessments ☐

- e) Discussion forums ☐

6. How do you usually take online assessments?

- a) University LMS (Moodle.) ☐
- b) Google Forms ☐
- c) Email submission ☐
- d) Other (please specify) ☐

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Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Online Assessment

A.Students :

7.Do you feel that online assessments accurately reflect your knowledge and skills?

- a) Strongly disagree ☐
- b) Disagree ☐
- c) Neutral ☐
- d) Agree ☐
- e) Strongly agree ☐

8. Compared to traditional in-person exams, do you find online assessments:

- a) More effective ☐
- b) Less effective ☐
- c) Equally effective ☐
- d) Not sure ☐

9. In your opinion, what are the key differences between online and traditional assessments?

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10. What are the main challenges you face when taking online assessments? (Select all that apply)

- a) Technical issues (poor internet connection) ☐
- b) Difficulty understanding instructions ☐
- c) Time management problems ☐
- d) Concerns about academic integrity ☐
- e) Lack of feedback from instructors ☐

- f) Other (please specify)

B. Teachers:

11. How do your teachers perceive online assessments?

- a) They strongly support and encourage them ☐
- b) They use them but prefer traditional assessments ☐
- c) They are skeptical about their effectiveness ☐
- d) They avoid using them whenever possible ☐

12. How often do your teachers provide feedback on online assessments?

- a) Always, with detailed comments ☐
- b) Sometimes, but not very detailed ☐
- c) Rarely, only a grade is given ☐
- d) Never ☐

13. What concerns do teachers express about AI in assessment? (Select all that apply)

- a) AI may be inaccurate or biased ☐
- b) AI could reduce students' critical thinking skills ☐
- c) AI threatens academic integrity ☐
- d) AI can be useful if properly controlled ☐
- e) teachers do not express concerns about AI ☐

Effectiveness of Online Assessment

14. How well do online assessments contribute to your learning process?

- a) Not at all ☐
- b) Slightly ☐
- c) Moderately ☐
- d) Highly ☐

15. Which type of online assessment do you find the most effective for learning?

- a) Multiple-choice quizzes ☐
- b) Open-ended written responses ☐
- c) Group projects ☐
- d) Oral assessments via video ☐

16. Do you believe online assessments encourage critical thinking?

- a) Yes, very much ☐
- b) Somewhat ☐
- c) Not really ☐
- d) Not at all ☐

17. Have you ever used AI-based tools (e.g., Grammarly, ChatGPT, Turnitin) for your academic assessments?

- a) Yes, frequently ☐
- b) Yes, occasionally ☐
- c) No, but I'm aware of them ☐
- d) No, I've never used them ☐

Suggestions for Improvement

18. What improvements would make online assessments more effective for you? (Select all that apply)

- a) Better internet infrastructure and accessibility ☐
- b) More interactive and engaging assessment formats ☐
- c) Clearer instructions and guidelines ☐
- d) More opportunities for feedback ☐
- e) Stronger measures against cheating ☐

19. Would you prefer a combination of online and traditional assessments in the future?

- a) Yes, a balanced mix ☐
- b) No, I prefer only online assessments ☐
- c) No, I prefer only traditional assessments ☐

Appendix B: teachers' interview

General Experience with Online Assessment

- 1.Can you describe your experience with online assessments?
 - How often do you use online assessments in your courses?
 - Which types of online assessments do you implement
- 2.What are the main advantages and disadvantages of online assessments compared to traditional paper-based assessments?
- 3.In your opinion, do online assessments accurately reflect students' knowledge and skills? Why or why not?
- 4.Have you received any training or institutional support for designing and implementing online assessments?
 - If yes, what kind of training/support?
 - If no, what kind of support do you think would be helpful?

Effectiveness and Fairness of Online Assessment

- 5.How do you ensure fairness and academic integrity in online assessments?
 - Do you use plagiarism detection tools?
 - What are the main challenges in preventing cheating?
- 6.How do students generally respond to online assessments?
 - Do they find them easier or more difficult than traditional assessments?
 - Have you noticed any change in student performance?
- 7.What factors influence the effectiveness of online assessments in higher education?

Future of Online Assessment

08. How do you see the future of online assessment in higher education?
 - Do you think it will become more widely adopted? Why or why not?
09. Would you support the integration of AI in online assessments if proper guidelines and regulations were in place?
10. What recommendations would you give to improve online assessment in Algerian higher education?