

# The Challenges of Online Assessment amidst Covid-19 Pandemic Disruption: The Voice of EFL Lecturers

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## The challenges of online assessment amidst covid-19 pandemic disruption: The voice of EFL lecturers

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15

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### ABSTRACT

Since the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government of Indonesia through the Ministry of Education and Culture has shifted the assessment mode from face-to-face into online assessment following the policy of online teaching and learning process. This conversion can essentially encourage the lecturers in higher education to reflect on and improve their assessment methods that are novel, stimulating, and practical for them. On the other hand, various kinds of challenges are likely to encounter by lecturers in carrying out the online assessment. This study aims to find out the challenges of online assessment in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic disruption, and the solutions to meet these challenges. Qualitative method in a case study design was used to achieve the objectives of this study. The data were collected through in-depth interview and observation from two EFL lecturers at a state university in Palembang as the participants. The data were analysed by using thematic analysis. The findings revealed five primary challenges of online assessment: uneasiness, technical problems, time-consuming process, late submission, and academic dishonesty. Each of the challenges in the findings was followed by the solutions to deal with those challenges done by the participants.

**Keywords:** *Challenges of online assessment; Online assessment amidst Covid-19 pandemic; The voice of EFL lecturers*

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## 1. Introduction

The whole world was shocked by the sudden pandemic of the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) in late 2019. This pandemic has forced the Indonesian government to issue a policy for the Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) in order to minimize the spread of Covid-19 in society. Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Culture responded well to this by issuing Circular Letter No. 3 of 2020 which contained a policy of learning from home through online learning due to nationwide school and college closure throughout Indonesia. This policy proclaims that to minimize the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, all teaching and learning activities, including assessment should be carried out online through the use of information technology. Even until now, the daily cases of Covid-19 in Indonesia are still increasing over time. Therefore, educational institutions are recommended to carry out online teaching and learning activities and assessment as well.

Responding to the policy, conducting online assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic disruption is crucial thing to do because teachers and/or lecturers have a responsibility to monitor the progress of their students learning and also the achievement of educational objectives. Mulyasa (2018) points out that “assessment conducted by the teacher is used to measure the students’ attitude improvement in which based on the National Standard of Education and on the Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture Number 23 of 2016” (p. 170). Hence, all educators need to regularly carry out classroom assessment as part of their duty to improve student learning (Mirizon, 2021). Moreover, the 2013 curriculum in school and KKNI-based curriculum in higher education require both teachers and lecturers to have an expertise in assessing their students either in assessment *for* learning or assessment *of* learning in order to help them be able to develop themselves. Advantageously, with the development of technology in this digital era, both teachers and lecturers are assisted so that they have bigger opportunities to carry out both teaching and learning activities and assessments relatively easy through an online learning environment.

Converting assessment administration from traditional to online mode can actually inspire lecturers in higher education to reflect on and improve their assessment methods that are novel, stimulating, and practical for them. Moreover, various advantages of online assessment are revealed in several studies. Khan and Khan (2019) state that using online assessment might save the lecturers’ time and reduce their burden to assess large student number. Moreover, the online assessment provides accessibility and flexibility for students to have the exams. This helps the students, especially in remote areas, to do exam in their location without coming to class, and they may take exam whenever they are ready as long as before the due date (Alruwais et al., 2018; Crisp, 2011; Osuji, 2012; Weleschuk et al., 2019). Besides, online assessment provides immediate feedback comparing to paper test, which helps lecturers to improve the quality of feedback for their students in any different format like written, audio, or even video (Weleschuk et al., 2019; Westhuizen, 2016).

Apart from the potential advantages of the online assessment being discussed above, various kinds of challenges are likely to be faced by lecturers in conducting online assessment. Yulianto and Mujtahid (2021) assert that online assessment consumes a lot of internet data, which has an impact on internet connection limitations, especially in remote areas. Besides, Kumar and Sajja (2020) argue that carrying out online assessment makes lecturers feel uncomfortable due to the new adjustment of the current technological tools. Furthermore, direct feedback from the lecturers to their students is also missing since they are no longer grading students' assignment (Kearns, 2012; Khan & Khan, 2019). At last, the online assessment might raise a new challenge for lecturers when it comes to maintaining students' academic integrity as students are free from exam supervision so that they can cheat and/or plagiarize from the internet (Adzima, 2020; Mellar et al., 2018; Perwitasari et al., 2020).

In regard to the explanation above, it can be assumed that the implementation of online assessment which is categorized as novel in schooling may present lots of challenges compared to its benefits. In consequence, a number of researchers have investigated the area of the challenges of online assessment in various countries, such as in United Kingdom (Alruwais et al., 2018; Timmis et al., 2016), in Oman (Al-Maqbali & Hussain, 2022; Guangul et al., 2020), in Saudi Arabia (Alsadoon, 2021), and in United Arab Emirates (Ali & Al-Dmour, 2021). These studies highlight that it is critical to classify the challenges teachers and lecturers encounter when implementing online assessments and to draw attention to effective assessment practices they have applied to overcome these challenges. In the Indonesian secondary school context, similar findings were also found (Aburumman, 2021; Perwitasari et al., 2020; Widiastuti et al., 2021; Yulianto & Mujtahid, 2021). In relation to that, there has been much research on the challenges of online assessment in the Indonesian secondary school context. However, the one related to the higher education context is still limited. Therefore, this study was aimed at; (1) exploring the challenges of online assessment administration in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic disruption in higher education context, and (2) exploring the possible solutions to overcome these challenges. Hopefully, this research would be beneficial for lecturers in higher education as their reference in implementing the online assessment. They can get some information about the challenges that are most often faced by lecturers, and the appropriate follow-up actions in responding to challenges so that the similar challenges can be prevented.

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1. Types of assessment*

Assessment is a central part of teaching and learning process, as it determines whether or not the goals of teaching and learning are met. Popham (2017) defines assessment as a procedure used by the teacher to obtain information that includes the measurement of students' achievement (the knowledge and/or skills students acquired by students) and students' effect (the attitudes or performances in learning).

Additionally, Harlen (2013, as cited in Erwin & Muhsin, 2020) asserts purpose of assessment is keeping track, checking-up, finding-out, and summing up. Keeping track means the teacher collects information on students' progress through varied assessment techniques. Checking-up means the teacher checks the achievement of students' abilities during the learning process and whether students have mastered the material or not. Finding-out means the teacher finds out students' weaknesses in the learning process and provides alternative solutions. Summing-up means the teacher determines and reports the level of students' competencies.

Two main types of assessment: formative and summative are commonly conducted in the process of learning (Brown, 2003). Formative assessment, typically considered as assessment *for* learning, refers to evaluating students in the process of forming their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process and is typically done during the teaching and learning. Douglas (2014) argues that "assessment *for* learning is used to provide learners with information about their progress which they can use to guide their continuing learning or to provide teachers with information which they can use to guide course development and lesson planning" (p. 72). In the same view, Mirizon (2021) asserts that assessment *for* learning focuses on providing feedback for student improvement that helps students recognize what they can or cannot do so that teacher can anticipate what best to do. Meanwhile, summative assessment, typically considered as assessment *of* learning, refers to measurement of what students have understood, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction. This assessment *of* learning focuses on formal assessment to evaluate the learning achievement (Brown, 2003). Moreover, "assessment *of* learning does not emphasize on providing feedback for student achievement but rather focus on rating or comparing students' achievement" (Mirizon, 2021, p. 125). In other words, summative assessment evaluates and measures what students grasp in the learning situation after a learning period. To put it briefly, formative assessment is generally understood as interaction and feedback that is ongoing and that contributes to learning expertise, while summative assessment occurs at critical and designated points in the learning process and is usually attached to a grade. The following table 1 below compares formative and summative assessment.

**Table 1**  
Summative and formative assessment.

	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
<b>Grading</b>	Usually not graded	Usually graded
<b>Purpose</b>	Improve student: to give feedback to lecturer and students about how well students understand specific material	Judgment: to derive a grade, and allow students to work intensively with course material
<b>Focus</b>	Very focused on whether students	Less focused on specific skills or



	have acquired <sup>5</sup> specific skills or information; instead, allows students to demonstrate a range of skills and knowledge
<b>Effort</b>	Requires little time from lecturer or students; simple; done in class
	Requires more time from lecturer and students; complex; done outside of class

(Conrad & Openo, 2018, p. 17)

2.1.1. Online assessment

Traditionally, assessment is often in the form of a paper-based format, which is typically done in the face-to-face classroom during the regularly scheduled class time where students take the test with paper and pencil/pen while the lecturer monitors them during the test period. Unlike traditional assessment, online assessment refers to technology-based assessment which is typically done in a fully online environment supported by digital technologies such as laptops and/or computers. According to Weleschuk et al. (2019), online assessment is considered to be any means of evaluating student achievement and providing feedback in a fully online credit course. This assessment can be direct online exams or online submission only. In broader terms, online assessment means the use of digital devices such as computers, laptops, smart mobile phones, or other portable communication devices, to assist lecturers in the construction, delivery, storage, reporting, grading, and giving feedback on student assessment tasks in online (Crisp, 2011). Crisp (2011) further argues that online assessment can use a multitude of formats, including text documents or portable document formats, and multimedia formats such as sounds, videos, or images. In the same view, Benson and Brack (2010) define online assessment as the ways of implementing assessment practices in the online environment. They further provide four categories of the use online assessment that are available for both formative and summative assessment in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**  
Uses of the online environment for assessment.

Categories	Examples
1. Submission of items for assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Essays: discursive, descriptive, analytical</li> <li>▪ Reports: case based learning, problem based learning</li> <li>▪ Reviews: critical, analytical</li> <li>▪ Media: image, audio, video, presentation</li> </ul>
2. Automated assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multiple choice</li> <li>▪ Short answer</li> <li>▪ Calculation</li> <li>▪ Matching</li> <li>▪ Fill blanks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ quizzes</li> <li>▪ multimedia</li> </ul>	

3. Online discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ True/false</li><li>▪ Matching</li><li>▪ Drag and drop</li><li>▪ Simulations</li><li>▪ Forums: case analysis, project development</li><li>▪ Debates</li><li>▪ Allocated roles: lead, summarize, provoke</li><li>▪ Role plays</li></ul>
4. Web publishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ E-portfolios</li><li>▪ Webpages: blogs, wikis</li><li>▪ Shared documents: Google Documents</li></ul>

(Benson & Brack, 2010, p. 126)

### 2.2. Online platforms for online assessment

To foster online assessment successfully, lecturers are required to have readiness and willingness to use and adapt to different online platforms. Online platforms are defined as digital services that facilitate interactions between lecturers and their students via the internet. In Indonesian higher education context, there are numerous popular online platforms recurrently used by lecturers for online teaching and learning, including assessing their students. Predominantly, WhatsApp has become a popular platform which is widely used in the online learning process in universities, especially during Covid-19 pandemic (Coleman & O'Connor, 2019; Faizah et al., 2021; Tauhidah et al., 2021). The use of WhatsApp aims to create easy communication between lecturers and their students so that they can give the information and direction of the assessment, and also provide students to submit their works instantly (Khaleyla et al., 2021; Mpungose, 2020). Following WhatsApp, Zoom is the second most preferred platform, with Google Classroom and Google Meet coming in third and fourth (Basilaia, 2020; Purnawati & Nurhasanah, 2021; Tauhidah et al., 2021). Finally, lecturers use the Learning Management System (LMS) platforms which are designed and developed by their own college for conducting online assessment in synchronous and asynchronous, as well as submitting the tasks (Febliza et al., 2021).

### 16 2.3. Challenges of online assessment

Regardless of the prospective advantages of online assessment above, there are also reported numerous considerable challenges. First and foremost, the limitations of internet connection, particularly in remote areas, predominantly make online assessment activities disrupted and less effective. Likewise, the online assessment consumes a lot of internet data. As a result, most students will complain and experience less enthusiastic in doing the tests because of the lack of internet connection (Alruwais et al., 2018; Perwitasari et al., 2020; Widiastuti et al., 2021; Yulianto & Mujtahin, 2021). Additionally, Kumar and Sajja (2020) point out multiple challenges of online assessment as follow: (1) *Uneasiness*, many teachers who are not familiar with the current technologies, feel uncomfortable operating the online assessment; (2)

*Scepticism*, many teachers are sceptical/doubtful about the set standards of the available online assessment instruments (validity and reliability) in the Internet; and (3) *Dishonesty and plagiarism*, since students can accomplish the online assessment anywhere without face-to-face teacher supervision, the number of dishonesty and plagiarism increases.

In addition, with the implementation of the online assessment, students may perhaps experience the emergent disconnection between the teachers and them because the teachers no longer grade their coursework so feedback is missing (Khan & Khan, 2019; Perwitasari et al., 2020). Besides, some studies (Adzima, 2020; Mellar et al., 2018; Perwitasari et al., 2020; Yilmaz, 2017) found that the online assessment causes a new challenge for lecturers when it comes to maintaining students' academic integrity. Compared to traditional exams, the main problem faced in online exams was the cheating problem that could not be controlled. This can be meant that students may possibly copy and paste things they get from the Internet, or copy each other's answers in the assignments and projects, or even take tests together in pairs or groups. At last, Alruwais et al. (2018) summarize that the implementation of the online assessment in the educational institution may perhaps emerge some challenges as reported above when both teachers and students are not experienced/skilled with the technological devices and the process of the online assessment.

11

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research design**

This study employed qualitative method in a case study design. According to Creswell (2013), "qualitative method is the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 44). Furthermore, Yin (2009, as cited in Creswell, 2013) defines a case study as the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting. This case may be a concrete entity, such as an individual, a small group, an organization, or a partnership. At a less concrete level, it may be a community, a relationship, a decision process, or a specific project. In addition, Morrow (2007) states that "a qualitative study is useful when trying to deeply understand a participant's lived experiences, the significance of those experiences, and potentially a phenomenon that the experiences illustrate" (p. 209). A qualitative method in case study is considered as the appropriate design for this study because it explores the activities of participants or lecturers in their classes, and describes the phenomenon happening at the present time.

#### **3.2. Research site and participants**

Research site defines as the location where this research will be held (Creswell, 2012). This study took place in English Education Study Program a state university in Palembang due to the accessibility and familiarity with the site. Moreover, this study program also carried out online teaching and learning activity, including online



assessment during Covid-19 pandemic disruption. There were two lecturers of English Education Study Program a state university in Palembang being the participants of this study. These two participants were selected based on some considerations: (1) role as the resident lecturers, (2) referral from the head of study program, (3) willingness to the involvement, (4) teaching experience level as the junior lecturers, and (5) experienced in conducting online assessment.

### 3.3. Data collection and analysis

To attain the objectives of this study, the data of the study were collected using interview and classroom observation. Firstly, in-depth interview with semi-structured format of questions was used as the primary data collection to explore the apparent challenges faced by the two EFL lecturers during the implementation of online assessment in their teaching and learning process. The questions were adopted from the practice of online assessment in higher education (Benson & Brack, 2010; Conrad & Openo, 2018) and the challenges of online assessment (Adzima, 2020; Kumar & Sajja, 2020; Perwitasari et al., 2020). The interview was conducted virtually with two EFL lecturers through Zoom as the online platform. Secondly, online classroom observation was conducted to see whether what EFL lecturers reported in the interview really emerged in the implementation of online assessment. This observation was conducted for six times during two months period of data collection.

The data obtained from in-depth interview and online classroom observation note were analysed using thematic analysis through vivo coding. Saldana (2013) defines “vivo coding as a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, and used by participants themselves” (p. 590). This means that what words or phrases in the data record from transcriptions of the interview and notes of online classroom observation that the researchers select as codes are those that seem to stand out as significant or summative of what is being said. Towards the end, the researcher presented the results of the data analysis into description in findings section.

To check and ensure the consistency of the analysis, transcriptions of the interview were given to the participants in order to confirm their answers and to keep the trustworthiness of the study. They could see the interview transcription in order to recheck the originality of the answers and avoid the ambiguity or uncertainty of the interview results. In short, triangulation of the data obtained from in-depth interview and online classroom observation was carried out to get the credible and accurate conclusion.

## 4. Findings

The following are findings that answer the two research questions: (1) what challenges do the EFL lecturers encounter in the implementation of online assessment

in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic disruption?, and (2) how do the EFL lecturers cope with the challenges of online assessment?

#### 4.1. Challenges of online assessment and solutions to meet these challenges

Based on the results of thematic analysis, five themes related to the challenges of online assessment emerged, namely uneasiness, technical problems, time-consuming process, late submission, and academic dishonesty. Further, each of the challenges was followed by the solutions to cope with those challenges done by the two EFL lecturers in English Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University.

##### 4.1.1. Uneasiness

During the Covid-19 pandemic disruption, the EFL lecturers in English Education Study Program a state university in Palembang were demanded to carry out the assessment process online by utilizing technological advances, particularly devices and online platforms. This demand forced them to adapt to recent technological advances. However, the lack of familiarity with technology made lecturers uneasy in adapting technology to their assessment process. Regarding this first aspect of challenges on online assessment, the participant 2 of this study admitted that she was still digital-illiterate with the online platform since she was unfamiliar with its features, as indicated in the following quote.

So, the challenge is preparing the quiz especially in the new platform. When I am not familiar with its features, I must read and learn how to use the features one by one, and then do some trials and errors in doing the quiz. [Lecturer 2]

To cope with this challenge, the lecturer 2 used YouTube for finding out the easy way to make a quiz in the online platform. Not only that, she certainly needs to be digital literate with the feature of online platform before using it.

So, that's why I found out the easy way for making quiz on YouTube. There is a quiz generator and its tutorial. So, you just click the website and sign up, after that you just copy and paste the bank of the questions and choose what type of question you want, then the platform will generate them into quiz.... For the quiz, you have to be very digital literate with the feature of the online platform so that you can use it well. [Lecturer 2]

At last, the lecturers had never attended to a seminar or even workshop related to the online assessment field. Moreover, they also questioned the limited numbers of workshops and seminars on online assessment offered by the institution.

I joined open massive course outside, but not specifically about online assessment itself. It is a training specifically related to technology used. [Lecturer 1]

As far as I remember, I haven't joined any kind of seminar or even workshop in this faculty, hmmm, ya not yet! [Lecturer 2]

To cope with this issue, the lecturers took individual initiative to learn the online assessment practices with their teaching fellow.

For that, I learn more from my experience and based on what I have studied, and also learn and share together with my teaching fellow only like that. [Lecturer 2]

Interview excerpts above revealed that actually one of the lecturers realized that conducting online assessment with various online platforms was not comfortable to do due to unfamiliarity with the online platform and its features. Lecturers were aware to improve their online assessment literacy in order to be skilled to conduct online assessment effectively. However, lack of training programs about online assessment from the institution forced them to take individual initiative to improve their own literacy of online assessment practices by themselves.

#### *4.1.2. Technical problems*

This second aspect of challenges on online assessment during Covid-19 pandemic disruption outlines technical problems as the kinds of individual hindrances experienced by students which had no link with the facilities or funds from the institution. They are regarding bad internet connection and electricity problem, as revealed in quotes below.

Another problem when students do the online assessment is usually about internet connection. Therefore, they sometimes disappear or leave the Zoom meeting. [Lecturer 1]

You know, students sometimes say that they cannot do the quiz and other assessments because they have bad signal and the electricity is off. [Lecturer 2]

The results of the interview above were in line with the results obtained from observation. It was found that some students had trouble with their internet connection so they could not speak clearly especially when they delivered their ideas to the material and questions given by the lecturer. As a result, they were disconnected and removed from the online platform. This problem encountered by students was serious and might grow exponentially if not properly addressed. Therefore, to overcome this problem, the lecturers suggested the following ways.

When some students get unstable connection, I ask them to turn off their webcam because it is usually helpful. And if they leave the platform, I usually ask them to wait till the connection is stable and rejoin the meeting. [Lecturer 1]

I know how it felt when the electricity is off, and I know the signal is gone when the electricity is off. So, I just assume if it is the truth. So, if they request for the extended time, I will extend the time as long as they do the assignment and quiz. [Lecturer 2]

Furthermore, the lecturers also faced technical problem during the use of online platform, as shown by interview quote below.

Actually e-learning has videoconference feature called Big Blue Button, for us to conduct online assessment, but my students and I do not like it because the system is not really good. Sometimes students cannot unmute mic and turn on webcam. Sometimes they cannot share the PPT. And sometimes the website is under maintenance so we cannot access it. [Lecturer 2]

The result of the interview above was cohered with the result obtained from observations. It was revealed that the videoconferencing feature called Big Blue Button (BBB) in e-learning sometimes did not work properly. Both lecturers and students occasionally had trouble logging in, turning on and/or turning off their webcam, muting and/or unmuting their microphone, and sharing their PowerPoint. Furthermore, both lecturers and students could not access e-learning because it was under maintenance. To cope with this problem, the lecturers had to shift to the other online platform such as Google Meet and Zoom, as indicated in the following quotes.

We used Big Blue Button in e-learning as the online platform in the beginning, but due to some technical problems so I decided to switch to use Zoom because it is easier to use and it has many features especially the breakout room, polling, etc. [Lecturer 1]

So that's why I change the platform. I always use Google Meet because it is very simple, easy, instant, and free. [Lecturer 2]

The results of the interview and observations above indicated that both students and lecturers confronted common technical problems that appeared during the activity of the online assessment, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic disruption. These technical problems were related to the unstable internet connection, and problems with the electricity and the online platform (under maintenance) which frequently disturbed lecturers in conducting the test and students in accomplishing the test. To cope with these technical problems, the lecturers reallocated the activity to other preferable online platforms (Zoom and Google Meet). And then, they also asked students to turn off their webcam in order to get a stable internet connection or asked them to rejoin the meeting. In the end, the lecturers gave an extended time for students to do the assignments and quizzes.

#### 4.1.3. Time-consuming process

Regarding this third aspect of challenges on online assessment during Covid-19 pandemic disruption, it was apparent that the two EFL lecturers also faced difficulty



preparing the assessment instruments, especially quizzes on the online platforms they used because the preparation process took a lot of time.

Actually, one of the most challenging jobs in carrying out online teaching and learning as well as the assessment is in the preparation part. It's so time-consuming because you have to prepare many platforms in order to give various assessment activities. [Lecturer 1]

In terms of preparation, I'd say that it is not easy to do because it takes long time in some other parts like in designing the quiz especially in the e-learning. I must do it one by one, I mean you must type the questions and answers manually cannot copy and paste, and I must be very digital literate with all features. [Lecturer 2]

To solve this problem, the lecturers used other online platforms (Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Moodle) which they thought were easier and faster to prepare and use, especially in designing quizzes.

There are various online platforms that I use during the online assessment, but I do like using Kahoot! and Quizizz just like what you see in my class because they are quite easy to use. [Lecturer 1]

So, that's why I found out the easy way for making quiz on YouTube. There is a quiz generator called Moodle and its tutorial. So, you just click the website and sign up, after that you just copy and paste the bank of the questions and choose what type of question you want, then the platform will generate them into quiz. [Lecturer 2]

Similarly, the results of observations also showed that both EFL lecturers constantly used similar online platforms for quizzes after teaching and learning activities. Based on online classroom observations, Lecturer 1 frequently used Kahoot! and Lecturer 2 used Moodle when they conducted online quizzes. The results of the interview and observations indicated that preparing the assessment instruments, especially quizzes on several online platforms was considered a time-consuming process because the lecturers had to type the questions and answers on the platform in sequence. Therefore, selecting an online platform that had simple features for designing quizzes could be an alternative solution to help lecturers in solving assessment preparation problems, particularly reducing time spent on platforms.

#### *4.1.4. Late submission*

This fourth aspect of challenges on online assessment during Covid-19 pandemic disruption outlines that the two EFL lecturers confronted was that there was a delay in submitting assignment that must be submitted before the due date, as reported in the following interview excerpt.



Some students do not submit their assignments on time based on the due date given. They sometimes have various reasons such as no quota, blackout, and many assignments from other lecturers. [Lecturer 1]

There are a few students who are not punctually submitting their assignment. They ask for more extended time for the assignment submission. They always need time. [Lecturer 2]

To address this issue, the lecturer was actually very kind to the students by giving an extension of time to do the assignment.

Like it or not, I have to give additional time and days for them to submit their assignments. And usually I give them maximum three days to do that. Otherwise, they will not be given any scores. [Lecturer 1]

It will be my bad and I feel very cruel if I let my students miss the assignment and quiz. So, if they request for the extended time, I will extend the time as long as they really do assignment and quiz. [Lecturer 2]

The above quotes revealed that there were often delays in the submission of assignments done by students due to some excuses such as running out of internet data, blackout, etc. This made lecturers had to give extended time to students in order to finish and submit their assignments. This result of the interview was in line with the result of observations which revealed that the two EFL lecturers in every meeting asked students whether they had submitted their assignments (both individual and group assessments) or not. If there were several students who had not submitted their assignments, the lecturers gave them an additional day to finish and submit their assignments in e-learning. Otherwise, they would not get a score as a consequence.

#### *4.1.5. Academic dishonesty*

This last aspect of challenges on online assessment points out that the two EFL lecturers in English Education Study Program a state university in Palembang experienced that students often committed academic dishonesty such as plagiarism and cheating in doing the assignments, as seen below.

You know because everything is really easy to be browsed in Google, so the students often copy paste the question and find the answers. Ya I think it is about plagiarism since it always happened because they do it at home and we cannot supervise them directly. [Lecturer 1]

I am afraid the students cheat during the test because I cannot control them working from their homes. I do not know whether during the assessment they find the answers by themselves or they chat via WA group to cooperate to answer the questions. [Lecturer 2]

I cannot avoid cheating. I believe they only copy paste their answers from the internet. They type the question and find the answer, because I believe

that they can find anything in the internet and I cannot control everything since they are at home. [Lecturer 2]

To cope with this issue, the lecturers used some ways such as reformat the question items, give motivation, and use plagiarism checker, as reported below.

To avoid cheating and plagiarism, I usually prepare set of questions. I reformat the open-ended questions with personal experience based questions. So, the students have to tell and explain their own experience related to the questions given..... To minimize plagiarism, I usually use online plagiarism checker in Google. If I find too many similarities, I will decrease the score. [Lecturer 1]

I give students motivation every time I give them quiz and assignment. I always say that; (Learning is a process, learning is not instant, the grade is only a bonus for you. If you do not do it by yourself, if you are not honest with yourself, then it is your loss not my loss. So, it is useless that you get 100 if you know nothing what you are doing). I always give them this motivation in case it will influence them to do the assignment and quiz by themselves. [Lecturer 2]

Another solution for dealing with this challenge is I give them a time quiz. This can be useful for limiting cheating and copy paste activities. So, they have no time for research the answer in the internet and they will be in rush..... Generally, I use [www.plagiarismchecker.co](http://www.plagiarismchecker.co) for detecting plagiarism in my classes. I copy and paste their work on the website and the website tells me the percentages of plagiarism and uniqueness of the copied-pasted texts. [Lecturer 2]

Interview excerpts above revealed the common challenge encountered by the two EFL lecturers during the implementation of the online assessment was academic dishonesty. This occurred since the assessment process in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic disruption was done by students virtually at home, not face-to-face. This result indicated that the lack of supervision during the online assessment process caused students to commit cheating where they answered the questions together with their gadget and/or friends, and commit plagiarism where they simply copied and pasted the answers found in the internet. Hence, to diminish this academic dishonesty, the EFL lecturers gave motivation to build up student integrity awareness, modified the format of questions, and applied plagiarism checker.

## 5. Discussion

Referring to the findings of the first objective of this study, it is reasonable that the two EFL lecturers at a state university in Palembang confronted several challenges in the process of assessing their students in an online environment because they had just adapted to the implementation of online assessment since the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic in the last three years. As it was reported, they were admitted that they were initially unaccustomed with the online platform and its features. Moreover, they lacked

of training programs such as workshop and seminar about online assessment from the institution. This affected uneasiness or discomfort in carrying out online assessment. This finding was in line with previous studies reporting that many instructors felt uncomfortable utilizing the current technology tools during online assessment process, especially in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic due to their unfamiliarity and lack of understanding of the online assessment practices (Alsadoon, 2021; Kumar & Sajja, 2020; Yulianto & Mujtahid, 2021).

The following hindrance that participants met was the technical problems. These technical problems were related to the poor internet service, electricity failure, and maintenance of the Learning Management System (LMS) which kept students disconnected from completing assignments in the process of assessment. This finding was in line with some studies reporting that the limitation of internet connection also took apart to make assessment activities less effective. As a result, students were less enthusiastic about doing online assessment (Alruwais et al., 2018; Yulianto & Mujtahid, 2021). Subsequently, the technical problems above also triggered the emergence of another hindrance in terms of assignment submission. The lecturers complained that many students sometimes used these technical excuses with the purpose of submitting their assignment that exceeded the due date of submission. This finding was in line with Perwitasari et al. (2020) who found that many students did poorly on assignments or did not collect them on time.

Besides, preparing various kinds of assessment activities and instruments on online platforms was also assumed as the most challenging task to be done by lecturers. It was time-consuming in designing the assessment instruments, especially quizzes, as lecturers had to input the items of the quiz in sequence. Moreover, a variety type of quizzes should be applied in the online environment assessment, i.e., multiple-choice, short answer, matching, fill blanks, true/false, calculation, drag and drop, and simulations (Conrad & Openo, 2018). As a result, lecturers are demanded of their workload and time management.

The following challenge that participants faced was related to the assessment supervision. The ease of accessing online assessments, where students worked on assigned tasks remotely like at home, made lecturers unable to supervise student activities one by one while doing and completing assignments. This challenge occurred due to the lack of supervision feature like CCTV on the online platform used during the exams. Therefore, lecturers were worried if their students committed acts of cheating such as looking for answers via the internet and doing assignments with friends or family. This finding cohered with previous studies reporting the assessment activities carried out online are not able to measure the actual ability of students because the teacher cannot control how students do assignments, whether they are actually able to do the assignment or be done by someone else (Perwitasari et al., 2020; Tuah & Naing, 2021). Moreover, several studies (Abduh, 2021; Adzima, 2020; Kumar & Sajja, 2020; Perwitasari et al., 2020; Yilmaz, 2017) reported lecturers' dissatisfaction with the integrity of online assessment. Compared to traditional assessments, the main challenge

faced by lecturers in online assessments was the cheating and plagiarism problem that could not be controlled.

In regard to the findings of the second objective of this study, various practical techniques were applied by the two EFL lecturers in overcoming the apparent challenges of online assessment. First and foremost, to deal with the hindrance in terms of uneasiness in which the lecturers lacked of familiarity and understanding of online assessment practices, they did some efforts to broaden their knowledge of online assessment practices by joining training programmes such as workshops, seminars, webinars, and many more. Hence, the educational institutions should provide training programmes for lecturers to increase their capabilities in the implementation of online assessment, and to improve their abilities in using information technology (Alruwais et al., 2018; Kearns, 2012; Kumar & Sajja, 2020). This is essential because lecturers should always renovate their knowledge and skill, so the online assessment can be done more varied and applicable.

In the second place, the technical problem was one of the challenges that lecturers faced which is beyond their control. To confront poor internet connection during online assessment, the lecturers asked students to turn off their webcams in order to get a stable connection. However, this sometimes did not work, so they were asked to log out from the online platform and re-joined. Likewise, to deal with LMS maintenance, the lecturers shifted to the other online platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet which was practical to use. In relation to that technical problem, students used internet connectivity as an excuse for their inability to complete assignment and submit it on time. This challenge forced lecturers to give extended time so that students could submit their assignment and got grades. However, students sometimes made this as a habit. Therefore, it is crucial to implement penalties for late submission so that students are aware not to repeat it and becomes time disciplined.

Speaking about time-consuming assessment preparation, it would be efficient for lecturers to design varied tasks in the appropriate online platform which had simple features for designing the assessment tasks based on the needs and objectives of learning. Besides, to reduce students committed academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism, various techniques were applied by the lecturers as followed: (1) giving motivation to make students be aware of academic integrity, (2) modifying written exams from open-ended questions to personal experience-based questions, (3) applying plagiarism checker to detect the level of similarity of students' works. This finding was cohered with previous studies (Cahyadi et al., 2021; Holden et al., 2021) that the use of written exams in online assessment should be minimized, especially in certain subjects with high theoretical content. If written exams cannot be avoided, Turnitin and Plagiarism Check can be an option to detect the level of similarity of students' test results.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that the EFL lecturers at a state university in Palembang encountered several challenges in conducting online assessment. At first,



they lacked of understanding about the use of technological tools and systems, especially online platforms used for online assessments. Accordingly, it created other hindrance in relation to assessment preparation because lecturers spent a lot of time when they did not understand the practical use of the systems. Referring to these hindrances, lecturers are obligated to broaden their knowledge of online assessment practices by joining training programmes such as workshops, seminars, webinars, etc. Besides, numerous critical issues arose by students in accomplishing online assessments, such as poor internet connection and sudden power outages that made them unable to do and submit assignments punctually. To deal with this issue, the lecturers give time extension of assessment submission and implement penalties for late submission to make students disciplined. Furthermore, lack of online supervision during assessments, especially where students often turned off the camera and the absence of a cheating detection feature in the online systems, made them felt free to commit academic dishonesty such as cooperating each other in completing tasks and copying answers from the internet. Various ways applied by lecturers to reduce this challenge such as giving motivation of academic integrity awareness, modifying written exam questions, and applying plagiarism checker. As a final point, it is recommended that the authorities in the higher educational institutions are aware of the challenges encountered by lecturers in conducting online assessments by providing sufficient support so that similar challenges can be prevented.

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# The Challenges of Online Assessment amidst Covid-19 Pandemic Disruption: The Voice of EFL Lecturers

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