Review

Administering Online Writing Assessments in English Language Teaching: Challenges and Solutions

Lailatul Abidah[1], Hartono Hartono[2]

[1-2]*English Language Education Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang, Indonesia*

ABSTRACT

In the digital age, assessment becomes one of the most important factors to consider when planning English courses virtually. In actuality, however, many English teachers struggle to manage and administer online writing assessments efficiently and successfully. This article will give a general overview of the difficulties associated with online writing assessments and their workable solutions. Qualitative principles of data gathering and analysis were applied to provide answers to the issues and served as valuable references. The finding reveals three main problems with online writing assessments: academic integrity, limited facilities and infrastructure, and a lack of digital literacy. However, despite the drawbacks of online writing assessments, students are gaining more benefits and knowledge in digitalizing education. Thus, practical solutions such as using task performance, particular strategies to overcome technical issues, and increasing teacher awareness of digital literacy must be properly implemented.

I. INTRODUCTION

Behind the pain left behind, the existence of the COVID-19 pandemic has altered and reshaped the landscape of world education (Abduh, 2021). Since the beginning of 2020, practically all education systems have moved from on-site to online learning (Al-Bargi, 2022; Zhang et al., 2021); English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been no exception. Educational institutions have turned to information and communication technology (ICT) for assistance when traditional teaching methods are no longer practical (Hazaea et al., 2021; Irza, 2021). Both students and teachers were compelled to participate in ICT-based instruction during the pandemic (Moorhouse & Wong, 2022)using an online survey of elementary and secondary school English language teachers (N = 73; education now cannot escape discussing online teaching and learning. Even after the COVID-19 pandemic has stopped, this modification has significantly impacted the English language learning designers can implement.

In fact, ICT-based learning was widespread in several developed countries before the pandemic, and research on online teaching remained a priority (Wu & Wang, 2021). Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted all teachers worldwide to implement digital learning, from instruction to assessment. Papadakis (2021) believes that the dynamic technologies of today provide participatory, immersive learning methods that mirror students' innate constructivist learning. Additionally, intelligent learning tools can develop an engaging and successful learning environment for instruction in academic contexts. At this point, the issue of how the assessment is carried out online becomes an interesting topic for research.

Assessment is the focal point of the teaching process, and efforts to collect information on teaching and learning process and outcomes to assess students' proficiency and learning systems are performing (Handayani & Syarif, 2021). As a result, assessments should not only present the outcomes of empirical research but also serve as an

effective teaching instrument to promote learning (Kulprasit, 2022). In the same vein, Anasee & Rhandy (2020)the student will be able to meet the challenges and demands of other science courses that are taught in the English language in the first-year program as well as the subsequent bachelor's programs. In order to prepare students for academic success, the tendency at most Saudi universities is to use international, mostly US or UK, publishers to provide the resources for its curriculum which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR held a similar viewpoint, arguing that assessment is crucial to the teaching and learning process since it serves as a baseline for teachers to identify and assess students' performance and accomplishment levels to track their progress. Additionally, it aids students in tracking their development and determining their degree of comprehension. Due to the importance of assessment in evaluating students' learning outcomes, it is pertinent for English teachers to design and administer online writing assessments in an effective manner.

However, writing assessments in which conducted remotely occur suddenly without adequate planning might be challenging for English teachers. Since designing student digital learning assessments is considerably different from face-to-face learning in terms of assessment methods (Rambe, 2021), those who typically administer written tasks to students in person for writing assessments must be able to design and implement an online assessments that is genuinely valid and reliable for measuring students' writing abilities (Handayani & Syarif, 2021). The absence of internet integration training for writing assessments and teachers' resistance to converting in-person activities to online settings are two significant obstacles for teachers that limit the use of online writing assessments (Al-Bargi, 2022). Nevertheless, all of these constraints can be addressed with the development of language assessment literacy, which needs knowledge and the capacity to internalize language assessment principles and comprehend the social context of language assessment (Anasee & Rhandy, 2020) the student will be able to meet the challenges and demands of other science courses that are taught in the English language in the first-year program as well as the subsequent bachelor's programs. In

order to prepare students for academic success, the tendency at most Saudi universities is to use international, mostly US or UK, publishers to provide the resources for its curriculum which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR. Thus, English teachers must be able to consider gaps and various assessment strategies that can be done remotely while accurately assessing students' writing abilities.

In light of the preceding backdrop, this paper aims to provide an overview of writing assessments dealing with a virtual environment, starting with exploring the principles in administering online assessments. In addition, this paper aims to investigate the obstacles English teachers face during online writing assessments and present ideas for designing online writing assessments for English teachers who may need help constructing a practical assessment. Three sorts of questions served as a guide for gathering the data:

(1) What are the concepts and principles to conduct online assessments?

(2) What challenges do English teachers face while assessing students' writing online?

(3) What feasible alternatives exist to overcome the problems in online writing assessments?

Subsequently, qualitative data gathering and analysis principles were applied to answer these questions and served as valuable references.

II. METHODS

The current research employs a library research under a descriptive qualitative methodology. The secondary data were utilized in the data collection process for this investigation. Seven journal articles have been selected and reviewed to answer the research questions of the current study, as mentioned in the Table 1.

The selection of articles considers several criteria: relevance to topics, publications in leading journals (indexed in Scopus or Scimago), and recency (publication of the most recent four-year-old articles). Herein, the researchers gathered relevant information about the concept of writing assessment and investigated the empirical results in online writing assessment studies. The researchers reviewed, characterized, categorized, and drew

Table 1. RQs and journal articles to review

RQs	Sources
The concept of online assessment	Al-Maqbali & Hussain (2022), Handayani & Syarif (2021), Joshi et al. (2020)
The principles to conduct online assessment	Joshi et al. (2020), Rahim & Fuad (2020)
Challenges in online writing assessments	Al-Maqbali & Hussain, (2022), Anasee & Rhandy (2020), Handayani & Syarif (2021), Hosseini et al. (2020), Wu & Wang (2021)
Solutions to cope the problems in online writing assessments	Al-Maqbali & Hussain, (2022), Anasee & Rhandy (2020), Handayani & Syarif, (2021), Hosseini et al. (2020), Wu & Wang (2021)

conclusions based on empirical evidences. Thus, an approach based on content analysis was employed to provide rigorous and exhaustive study results.

3. RESULT

Before conducting remote assessments, English teachers serving as assessors must have some knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles; this will make it simpler for them to provide adequate and relevant assessments.

The Concept of Online Assessments

Al-Maqbali & Hussain (2022) notes that online assessment is the process of developing, delivering, storing, or recording student assessment activities, responses, scoring, and feedback in a virtual setting. It is broadly referred to as any technique used to assess student performance in a fully online credit course and internet-based, provide feedback, or advance students' learning. These tests may be entirely online, like an online exam, or require online submission, such as an essay.

Online assessments can be taken on a range of platforms, including desktop or laptop computers, tablets, and iPad-style digital devices. It can also be administered in various multimedia formats, such as sound, video, graphics, and text document types (Handayani & Syarif, 2021). Thus, assessing student performance in the learning process using ICT, such as computers, laptops, and smartphones, in online mode through an internet connection is hence referred to as "online assessment."

As one of the most significant and effective components of the educational process, assessment gives observable proof of learning, gauges student progress, and shows comprehension of the curriculum (Joshi et al., 2020). According to them, the primary goal of online assessment is the same as that of traditional assessment; it might take the form of awarding marks, attaining learning outcomes, obtaining certification, and getting formative feedback for students. Therefore, the utilization of online assessment within a pedagogical setting should not be seen as merely an additional activity to be completed. Hence, its use must be based on academic reasons and supported by diverse online learning approaches in school curricula, departments, and institutions to enhance the students' learning experiences.

The Principles in Administering Online Assessments

Learning designers should use multiple criteria when designing tests for efficient online assessments. Rahim (2020) provides several guidelines for English teachers to follow when constructing online assessments that adhere to the principles. Evaluating the online assessment's context is the first thing. For the online assessment to be practical, English teachers as course developers must include the crucial prerequisites: instructor and institutional preparation. Institutional regulations, assets, and behavior all impact its readiness. On the other side, teacher readiness is just as crucial. Consequently, they must learn effective assessment methods to implement the available online tools. The second step is for the course designer to confirm that the assessment tasks correspond to stated learning goals. The assessments should be structured to use the given instructional objectives as their foundation. Thirdly, the assessment must take into account the various student circumstances. English teachers should be fully conscious of this diversity to avoid stereotyping students who lack proper support for online learning. Lastly, the assessors should design formative and summative assessments in a proper ratio.

In more detail, Joshi et al. (2020) referred to the pedagogical online assessment guidelines, modeled by the Canadian association for community education (figure 1) as guidance to educators who want to conduct online assessments successfully.

Fig 1. Pedagogical online assessment guidelines

Apart from being valid, reliable, and focused on learning objectives, good online assessments must also vary according to the needs of students. In addition to using different online platforms, various learning styles beyond surface learning, such as problem-based learning, portfolios, simulations, and many others must be considered. In addition, the entire assessment process must be based on students' competency and carried out with the proper mechanism, namely by providing frequent and timely constructive feedback. In the meantime, authenticity is defined as original assessments, avoiding copyright violations, and referring to a well-designed evaluation in students' real-time situations. Thus, some training is necessary for assessors to create online practice assessments.

Challenges Faced by English Teachers in Online Writing Assessments

By gathering various sources of data relevant to the research topics, and investigating the empirical results in online writing assessment studies, the researchers found several challenges English teachers face in online writing assessment, including 1) academic integrity, 2) limited facilities and infrastructure, and 3) the need for digital literacy.

(1) Academic Integrity

The first is the problem of cheating or students' academic dishonesty. Many researchers agreed that the issue of cheating and plagiarism in online assessments represents the greatest obstacle to managing and implementing a distance learning environment (e.g. Al-Maqbali & Hussain, 2022; Handayani & Syarif, 2021; Hosseini et al., 2020).

Using numerous monitors and cell phones, impersonation, taking screenshots, and transmitting information to friends are just a few examples of the various cheating techniques that may be used during examinations (Handayani & Syarif, 2021). In addition, In addition, according to Hosseini et al. (2020), many students utilize Google or other search engines on their laptops and mobile devices to obtain solutions to teacher-assigned tasks. This renders the assessment invalid and unreliable, as it cannot gauge the actual capabilities of the students.

(2) Limited Facilities and Infrastructure

An issue that frequently emerges, particularly in emerging nations, is the limited facilities and infrastructure for online learning. In addition, technical constraints in online writing are also a concern. Wu & Wang (2021) reported that those who view ICT as a performance appraisal channel focus on weaknesses in ICT technology features such as "poor signal." They only use ICT because it is the only method available for carrying out assessments during COVID-19, and they see ICT as nothing more than a technological tool.

Meanwhile, students who experience technical difficulties during online assessments are just some

of the ones who find the situation stressful; teachers must also deal with student complaints. Technical concerns become problematic when remote monitoring software is employed in assessments. It is essential to highlight that remote surveillance software's technical infrastructure was not widely established during the COVID-19 outbreak (Hosseini et al., 2020). The widespread adoption of online platforms may exacerbate hardware- and software-related technical problems.

(3) Need for Digital Literacy

The final issue is the need for digital literacy and proficiency in using learning tools (Anasee & Rhandy, 2020)the student will be able to meet the challenges and demands of other science courses that are taught in the English language in the first-year program as well as the subsequent bachelor's programs. In order to prepare students for academic success, the tendency at most Saudi universities is to use international, mostly US or UK, publishers to provide the resources for its curriculum which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR. This pertains to the relative scarcity of contextual information in online writing assessments, the insufficiency of experience teachers have with online writing assessments, the digital skills needed by both students and teachers, and the utter lack of online writing skills in the writing school education system.

Wu & Wang, 2021 reported that there is a strong connection between learning practices and the personal characteristics of teachers, including their educational backgrounds, years of teaching experience, professional knowledge, teaching expertise, and beliefs. This individualization and belief on the part of teachers is intimately tied to how they embrace information and communications technology (ICT), and the usage of such things as teaching tools. However, online assessment becomes something challenging if they are used to doing conventional assessments. Likewise, students with limited familiarity with online assessments will face worry (Hosseini et al., 2020).

Practical Solutions to Overcome the Problems in Online Writing Assessment

Emergent problems emerged as education moved toward using technology and collaborative learning platforms; many scholars addressed the problems and looked for solutions. Some of the solutions discussed below are closely related to some of the challenges described in the previous section.

(1) The Solutions to Academic Integrity

Dealing with students' academic integrity, English teachers should have efficient strategies to lessen attempts at cheating (Handayani & Syarif, 2021). Besides that, policies on academic integrity can raise students' awareness of the value of being truthful (Hosseini et al., 2020). According to reports, the two most important objectives of any effort to resolve problems with academic integrity should be prevention and education.

The previous studies reported that schools with academic integrity commitments are less likely to disclose students who cheat on assessments. The results also demonstrate that cheating can be less common if students are exposed to its adverse effects on a regular basis. The definition of academic dishonesty and its repercussions should be made clear to students by teachers, who should also provide an academic integrity policy to prevent students from cheating on exams. To solve these issues, teachers must acquire pedagogical knowledge for online assessment. Hosseini et al.(2020) recommend teachers to create authentic questions that are not derived from a question bank; this is what prompts students to search for solutions on Google. They also suggested doing virtual proctoring where students are required to turn on the camera.

(2) The Solutions to Limited Facilities and Infrastructure

There are two ways to reduce technical issues when taking online assessments (Hosseini et al., 2020). Initially, teachers should consider the grace period option for submitting assignments, such as an additional ten minutes in an exam that reminds students to finish the test within the designated grace time. The extra warning period aims to address potential technical problems or Internet crashes.

Secondly, be ready for technological difficulties by making a strategy in advance and outlining the tools' technical requirements, such as the software used during the online evaluation.

It is crucial to educate students about various technological issues they might encounter and how to fix them. Educating students about anticipated technical problems and their fixes could significantly reduce complaints from them.

(3) Solutions to the Need for Digital Literacy

One of the most critical roles of 21st-century teachers in this digital age is to assist students in adjusting to the new testing environment. It includes integrating information and communication technology (ICT) and providing a seamless changeover from on-site assessments to online assessments (Hosseini et al., 2020); this also answers the challenge of teachers' need for digital literacy. Thus, in addition to internalizing the fundamentals of language assessment, teachers should also be aware of the social and historical background of language assessment in a digital environment (Anasee & Rhandy, 2020)the student will be able to meet the challenges and demands of other science courses that are taught in the English language in the first-year program as well as the subsequent bachelor's programs. In order to prepare students for academic success, the tendency at most Saudi universities is to use international, mostly US or UK, publishers to provide the resources for its curriculum which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR. Even, teachers in the twenty-first century must acquire this digital literacy skill in order to keep up with extremely rapid technology advancements.

A study conducted by Wu & Wang (2021) revealed that most respondents agreed that teachers' attitudes toward ICT and their ICT knowledge and proficiency would impact online performance assessments. Previous researchers have proposed several online platforms that can be easily used in writing assessments, namely the use of learning management systems (*Moodle, Google Classroom)* and social media (*WhatsApp Group, Facebook*). Meanwhile, several types of assignments that can be used in online writing assessments include essays, e-portfolio, and quizzes.

On the other hand, Al-Maqbali & Hussain (2022) emphasized the role that students play as a crucial stepping stone on the path to a successful transition to online learning. Students need to have enough abilities in information technology (IT) as well as time management in order to successfully navigate the assessment issues presented by the move to online learning. The information technology abilities of learners are absolutely necessary to ensure that they will be able to successfully manage their education in an online setting.

IV. DISCUSSION

Since each mode of assessment has its own charaSince each mode of assessment has its own characteristics, the switchover from face-to-face to online tests represents a change in the assessment scheme. Hence, English teachers must reconsider texts and the criteria by which they can be evaluated in light of the transition from traditional textual writing to electronic textual writing. Specifically, they must consider the kinds of skills, fundamental knowledge of writers, and specific strategies required to be literate in a technological environment (Anasee & Rhandy, 2020).

Teachers regard cheating as the primary issue, which is largely irrelevant in remote assessments (Şenel & Şenel, 2021). Although English teachers do not object to the online remote writing assessment in and of itself, they express concern when the students are not monitored (Al-Bargi, 2022). Teachers questioned the accuracy of the online written work and the validity of remote and unsupervised writing assessments compared to in-person assessments. Nevertheless, task performance is one of the effective techniques used in online assessment (Rambe, 2021). It can prevent students from cheating or plagiarism and be used as an exact test that produces reliable results and scores. For example, the teacher can provide a problem-based learning that students must complete within a particular time frame.

Online peer feedback is a promising writing assessment approach to enhance students' understanding of and ability to write argumentative essays (Latifi et al., 2021); It is a form of writing that is frequently used to encourage students to think critically. Previous research has demonstrated that argumentative essay writing adds more to learning than other types of writing since it takes a high level of cognitive processing and higher-

order thinking skills. When writing argumentative essays, students must recall their prior knowledge of a specific issue, investigate new information, and explain their conclusions from their perspective. Obviously, this might be one of the efforts to prevent plagiarism and cheating in students' online writing tasks (Noroozi et al., 2022).

Pertaining to limited facilities and infrastructures, Hazaea et al., 2021 found that In low-tech nations, the issues associated with online assessments stem from a lack of infrastructure and pedagogy. Accordingly, English teachers should research the relevant online resources, learning management systems (LMS), and various writing assessment models (Khansa & Mukaromah, 2022) might be conducted easily by their students. These decisions also were made in response to multiple factors, such as students' motivation, digital proficiency, and familial or personal circumstances, all of which may have made conciliation more challenging (García-Alberti et al., 2021). As a consequence, teachers are currently required to leave their comfort zone since conventional

writing assessment no longer meets the educational demands of students. In this situation, English teachers must focus on expanding their knowledge and literacy, exploring various resources to facilitate more adaptive online writing assessments.

Along with examining students' writing deficiencies and skill development, teachers must possess "digital literacy" skills. These skills refer to the knowledge and ability to use technology to write across multiple media types, including graphics, audio, video, and hypertext. Thus, teachers can also select a variety of technological tools and options that their students in online writing assessments can effectively utilize In addition, teachers can specify the precise actions to take when administering online writing assessments. Thus, Zhang and his colleagues (2021) suggested English teachers must adjust their assessment methods and improvise during the learning process due to the dynamic nature of classroom situations.

Moreover, Handayani & Syarif (2021) proposed several procedures to manage online writing assessments effectively (figure 2).
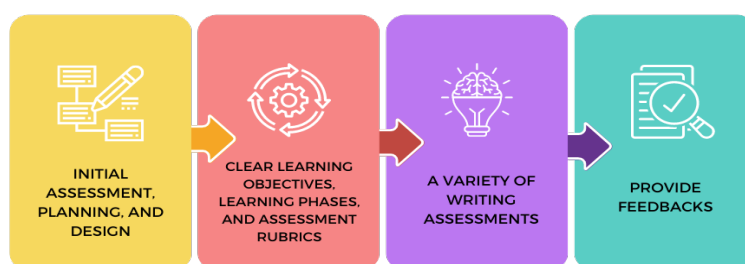
Fig 2. The procedures to administer online writing assessments

Initial assessment, planning, and design are the first steps. The teacher should construct a type of written test that is planned for students from the beginning of teaching. The assessment must cover both the learning objectives and the curriculum-based content. Additionally, English teachers must be able to create learning objectives, learning phases, and assessment rubrics that are crystal clear. The directions provided in the test ought to be comprehensive, logically organized, and simple for students to understand. In order to guarantee that all students have equal access to material, online writing tests for students should also provide areas for them to post questions, such as discussion boards. The teachers can decide to employ a variety of writing assessments to give students a chance to show what they have learned in several different

contexts. Lastly, the teachers should provide feedback that helps students improve the quality of their writing and make suggestions for future enhancements.

V. CONCLUSION

Along with the changing demands of the times, the educational environment continues to evolve, as reflected in how work is performed. It means that whenever there is a paradigm shift in education, teachers must be prepared to design an effective pedagogy based on the needs of their students, including conducting practical assessments. The shift from on-site to online learning presents an opportunity for professional growth and to improve teaching competence in both environments, given the challenges that emerged

during the COVID-19 pandemic that required the transformation of online learning. Due to these circumstances, teachers benefit considerably from online teaching and learning in terms of knowledge and experience, especially in light of the concerns of this study, namely investigating the issues English teachers have in online writing assessments and proposing some practical answers. As we know, writing assessments in an entirely online context is a different experience. While this is happening, students are also gaining from it by learning more about how education works in a digital world. They can experience different platforms accessible for online writing assessments. The authors recommend that future researchers review more literature on efficient techniques for assessing online writing, particularly those that address the problem of an unfair assessment caused by students' dishonesty.

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BIOGRAPHY

Lailatul Abidah, S.Pd In 2012, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in the English language education department, teacher training, and education faculty at Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang. In 2013, she began teaching English at a private Islamic junior high school in Siak regency, Riau Province, for two years. Then, since 2015 to the present, she has been serving as a civil servant at SMKN 1 Bunga Raya. Currently, she has an opportunity to pursue her master's degree in the English language education department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang batch 2021, funded by BPI (Beasiswa Pendidikan Indonesia). She has published a book with her colleagues entitled "Bunga Rampai: Berelasi Dengan Kolega Guru" (2020, ISBN: 978-623-6713-87-7). Her first journal article, entitled " Improving Distance Learners' Writing Skills through Comic Strip Creation: A Project-Based Learning," was published in 2022. She is interested in undertaking research in all areas of the teaching and learning of English, particularly those concerning technology and ICT-based learning.

Assoc Professor Dr. Hartono, M.Pd is a lecturer at English Language Education Department, Postgraduate Program of the University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM), Indonesia. Currently, he is the head for Center for Education Development and Policy. He was born in Kediri, East Java, in 1962. He got his bachelor degree from IKIP Malang, East Java in 1986 and master degree at the same institution in 1993. In 2001, he got Summer Institute Fulbright scholarship at New York University in the United States of America. Then, he continued his study for his doctoral degree at State University of Malang, Indonesia in 2009. When doing his research project for his dissertation, the Indonesian government granted him a Sandwich Program at Curtain University, West Australia. So far, he has published several books, among others English for Civic and Law (UMM Press, 2019); English for Animal Husbandry (UMM Press, 2020); English for Agribusiness (UMM Press, 2022) and articles such as "Language: A mirror of Society and Its Application to English Language Teaching" (Linguistics and Culture Review, 5(1), 93-103, 2021); "Learning Life Skills through English Materials: Integrating Life Skills in English Pedagogy" (ASIAN Journal of Community Engagement, 6(2), 262-277, 2022).