Creative techniques for online learning assessment

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ABSTRACT

Online learning has been becoming a solution for schools, institutions, and universities that cannot run face-to-face learning. During the online learning process, there are challenges that stakeholders including teachers and lecturers often face. One of the challenges is in choosing assessment techniques which in this case is related to English learning assessment. Thus, the objective of this study is to elaborate some effective techniques for English learning assessment. Qualitative research was applied as a research design conducted at the English Education Department of the Institute for Islamic Studies of Padangsidimpuan. Ten lecturers of the English Department were chosen purposively as respondents and interview was used as a data collection technique. Then, data were analyzed through qualitative data analysis in which the data were described and elaborated in detailed ways. The findings revealed that there were many techniques that could be applied in English assessment methods. Among the methods are online tests using Google form application, discussion, and problem-solving, writing essays and summary, online presentation, multimedia presentation, mini-research, voice thread, storytelling, recording performance, online interview, and making content on social media. The study also unveiled that lecturers' creativity is needed to create an objective and effective assessment for online learning.

Keywords: *Creative techniques; Online learning; Assessment*

1. Introduction

Online learning has been becoming a solution for people who are engaged with distance teaching and learning approach. Indonesian government through the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Indonesia has forced teachers and students to have

online learning since the emergence of corona virus in March 2019. This policy is stipulated in the government rule number 4 in 2020 about the education rule during the emergency of Corona Virus disease (covid-19) deployment. Indirectly, the schools as the agents of education have to follow the rules and change the daily routine from face to face learning to online learning. Of course, the schools stakeholders have to prepare needs for its demand.

Related to the online learning, there have been lots of problems happening including the unavailability of supporting network (Swan, 2017), the teachers' limited knowledge toward the online learning systems, students' lack of motivations (Al-Hujran et al., 2013), students' economic aspects (Rana, 2015), and ineffective learning assessment (Gaytan & McEwen, 2007). In terms of learning assessment techniques, designing the students' online learning assessment is very different from the face to face learning. Through online learning, there are some assessment techniques that every teacher needs to pay more attentions. Then, using various ways of assessment to assess students' online learning is really suggested (Christopher, Thomas, & Tallent-Runnels, 2004; Robles & Braathen, 2002; Sanchis, 2001). In fact, designing learning assessment for online instruction is a challenge for teachers because it creates issues about its effectiveness, cheating, plagiarism, and identity verification (Byrd & Lott, 2003; Heberling, 2002; Gaytan & McEwen, 2007).

The first problem related to originality of the assessment is about cheating and plagiarism. Due to the use of Internet, technology, and other accessible devices, it becomes quite easy to get matters or contents, either in written, visual or audio form, on any topic of interest (Hasan & Khan, 2018). It means that the students can find lots of resources from the Internet and copy the related information that they need for completing their academic works. With this phenomenon, there will be two possibilities that the assessment will be good or not. The fact that students copy the information from the Internet during online learning can lead students to do plagiarism and cheating.

To avoid students' dishonesty in online learning, teachers are encouraged to provide sessions for discussion to know students' general proficiency toward certain lessons. Then, the teachers also should design a kind of assessment that leads students to write ideas or opinions with their own styles (Singh & Pan, 2004), yet again the originality of the ideas becomes problems for teachers to recognize whether the ideas belong to the teachers' real students or other people. That is why discussion needs to be done during online learning to offer opportunities for students to participate and to determine students' capacity related to the lesson. Related to the techniques of assessment that lead students to create original ideas, teachers are suggested to use new and authentic assessment like project-based assessment (Olt, 2002).

Another issue that appears and must be solved about online assessment is related to verification of identity (Byrd & Lott, 2003). In this case, obtaining pictures and signatures from all students are suggested to do by the teachers in the online learning (Alexander, Truell, & Bartlett, 2002). Moreover, teachers are suggested to hold

examinations using pictures or video based assessment like using zoom while doing the test. From the ideas stated previously, it is assumed that there will be a tendency that students will ask someone like friends, relatives, or hired person to do the test during the online assessment. To solve this problem, the teachers can use pictured or video-based assessment like recording the activity and having a test on zoom.

The challenge from online learning assessment also comes from the teachers' inability to ask students to do online group assessment (Swan, 2017). Group presentations are assumed to be difficult to do considering the students' time to have real-time interaction and their varying Internet capabilities and speed. Then, it is also difficult for students to engage and participate due to their "isolated" homes. From the statements above, it is concluded that it is impossible for students to have online group assignment because they may come from different places that make them cannot meet, engage, and interact well. Even, few of the students may come from isolated places where they cannot get good access from Internet and technology.

Looking at the background of the problems elaborated above, this study aims to investigate creative ideas of online learning assessments as solutions for problems related to assessments during online learning process. Two types of questions guided the ways of how the data were obtained; (1) What were assessment techniques used by the lecturers in online learning? (2) What were effective ways of assessment used for online learning? To answer those questions, qualitative principle of data collection and analysis were implemented.

2. Literature review

The discussion below is related to some kinds of assessment that can be used by the teachers to create effective online learning assessment.

2.1. Modified traditional assessment

There are many examples of traditional assessment tools which can be used, modified, and implemented in the context of online learning assessment. They are solving problems, thought-provoking discussion questions, essay exams, working well with each other, projects that require students to demonstrate proficiency in content knowledge, and communicating effectively (Henning, 2003). For example, the teachers can ask students to make a project like field research while working together with friends. During the field research, the students need to record all activities including interviewing people and observing objects, and so forth.

2.2. E-Learning assessment

Orlando (2011) proposed some techniques of E-learning environment. The assessments are: (a) Blogs; a Google application where students can post writings, essays, pictures, videos, links, and activities that teachers can easily grade and give feedback, (b) Papers; students' writing that can be published on blogs, journals and can

be commented by others, (c) Group Assignment; asking students to work in a small or big group to do certain task like solving real case study, (d) Discussion; an activity when students comment each other like discussion on blogs, FB, and the like, (e) Wikis; "a media for publishing group projects and task, and assessing teamwork cooperative work and team building", (f) Teaching modules of students, (g) Voice thread; "making slides of PowerPoint with videos, photos as well as giving narration to make a presentation in multimedia", (h) Digital storytelling; uploading "videos or photos then adding a voiceover to create five-to-ten-minute digital stories to illustrate a point".

2.3. Alternative assessments

Types of assessments included in this part are "authentic, performance, and portfolio assessments". If they are applied well, they will give evaluation information related to students' performance (Christopher et al., 2004; Gaytan & McEwen, 2002).

Regarding some types of assessments stated in the previous sections, this study tries to collect the data by referring the indictors of assessment given by the experts. In other words, there are three kinds of assessment aspects that would be investigated and analyzed from the research participants.

3. Method

A qualitative approach was applied in this study with the type of descriptive qualitative research. Particularly, this study described kinds of language assessment used by the teachers in online learning. The research in this study was conducted in English Education Department or *Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI)* of the State Institute for Islamic Studies Padangsidimpuan (IAIN Padangsidimpuan). In fact, one of the institutions that have to run online learning is the English Education Department of State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN Padangsidimpuan). For lecturers, teaching students in online learning is a challenge task because they have to provide some teaching components including designing the assessment that can measure students' learning achievement objectively and effectively. Moreover, to limit the discussion in this study, two types of data were collected and analyzed i.e. data related to kinds of assessment that the lecturers used in online learning and techniques of assessment that they applied to get effective and objective assessment.

Ten lecturers of English Education Department were chosen as respondents and interviewed to get data needed. The research in this study was done through several stages of the process that began from (1) Data collection; (2) Presentation of data; (3) Data reduction; and (4) Conclusions based on the principles of qualitative data paradigm. The process of choosing the respondents was done by using purposive sampling technique because all of them did online learning and of course online assessment. Then, data collection technique used was structured interview.

4. Findings and discussion

There are two parts of findings and discussions that were described in this study, namely teachers' assessment techniques used by teachers and effective techniques of learning assessment in online learning.

4.1. Language assessment techniques used by teachers during online learning

Related to this type of data, ten lecturers of English education department were interviewed and these are the elaboration of data related to it. As it is mentioned in the background of this study, there were ten techniques of language assessment that become indicators of assessment techniques used by the teachers. They were multiple choice quiz, essay test (Henning, 2003), discussion or problem solving, summary, research based paper, recording and videotaping of performance, online presentation, storytelling, and creating content in social media like *YouTube, Facebook, blogs* (Orlando, 2011; Gaytan & McEwen, 2002). Thus, kinds of assessment techniques used by the lecturers in online learning are elaborated below.

4.1.1. Google form application test

Among the ten lecturers interviewed, three of them used quiz in a form of multiple choice quiz through Google form. The lecturers used this technique to measure students' theoretical knowledge and comprehension toward the material and contents of the lesson such as in *pragmatics and education basic concepts*. In fact, this technique was used for the mid and final term of tests because this test is regarded easy to correct and it helps lecturers to set students' time during the test.

4.1.2. Essay test

The second technique of assessment was essay test in which six of the ten lecturers used this through WhatsApp and Google classroom application. The lecturers posted some questions (WH-questions) and asked students to answer with the set time and students answer the questions and send them on time. This kind of assessment was used for measuring students' achievement in mid and final test. Again, the lecturers perceived that it was easy to do and to handle.

4.1.3. Discussion and problem solving

Then, as a weekly assessment assessed students in every meeting, it was found that classroom discussion and problem solving were chosen as a favorable technique. Usually, the lecturers began the lesson by posting some questions, problems, and related issues on WhatsApp or Google Classroom and let students give their opinions. This was to see students' involvement and understanding toward the subject being taught. Also, the lecturers could see how many students participated and engaged in the learning process. In fact, the lecturers said that not all students wanted to attend the online learning and the discussion was used as an attendance or absence during online learning.

Even, one of the lecturers used this technique as the most dominant measurement of students' achievement in a semester.

4.1.4. Online presentation

In addition to weekly assignments, students' online presentation was also used by seven lecturers. In a condition, the students worked in groups yet separately and each group member posted a video of his/her presentation and the lecturers asked the students to ask questions and comment to the answers.

4.1.5. Writing summary

While the groups were assigned to make an online presentation, the rest of students were assigned to write a summary as a report that the students have read the materials before learning it in online learning. Through this assessment, the teachers would believe that students learnt autonomously before the lecturers discussed it. Related to this technique, six lecturers applied it in online learning.

4.1.6. Online interview

Online interview was also used by one of lecturers to measure students' comprehension at final test. She did online interview via video call application to every student and she thought the result was very objective. Authentically, with this test, the lecturer could see students who had good scores on test and vice-versa. In addition to the final assessment technique, there were also two lecturers who assigned students with mini research or research based papers.

Moreover, this study also found that there were differences between assessment techniques to assess theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. It was known that techniques of assessment stated in the previous section were mostly used by the lecturers to measure students' understanding and comprehension toward subjects related to theoretical knowledge like in the subjects of *basic concepts of grammar, translation, TEFL, and morphology*. In contrast, it was also conveyed that the lecturers used different techniques assessment to assess students' practical knowledge like measuring students' competences in *micro teaching, and research* subjects.

4.1.7. Skill performance/practice

The following explanation is related to assessment techniques applied by the lecturers to deal with practical knowledge evaluation. Related to practical knowledge assessment, asking students to do real practice or show their performance at certain skills was the most chosen technique comparing to others. In that case, the students were assigned to record their performance like micro teaching activity and load it on WhatsApp and Google classroom group or make it as social media content like in Facebook and YouTube. In fact, eight of ten lecturers used this technique and they

perceived that it is very objective to measure students' certain skills. The description of techniques used by lecturers is shown on table 1.

Table 1
Language assessment techniques used by teachers during online learning.

No	Assessment Techniques	Numbers of Lecturers Who Used it
1	Discussion/problem solving	8
2	Practice/performance	8
3	Online presentation	7
4	Essay test	6
5	Writing summary	6
6	Multiple choice test with/out Google form application	3
7	Online interview	2
8	Mini research/research based paper	2

Table 1 shows that discussions in terms of problem solving and doing practice/performance were used by most of the lecturers (eight lecturers) in English education department of IAIN Padangsidimpuan. Then, from the ten lecturers, 7 lecturers used online presentation followed with essay test and writing summary. Finally, a few lecturers used multiple choice (three lecturers), online interview and research based paper (two lecturers) as assessment techniques in online learning.

4.2. Effective techniques of language assessment in online learning

The second finding is related to effective techniques of language assessment in online learning. To get the data, ten lecturers were interviewed to know their opinions about effective techniques to be used as language assessment in online learning. Effective techniques here mean types of assessment that can prevent students from cheating and plagiarism and can be used as an authentic test that produce reliable result and scores.

Looking at the lecturers' preference to the use of assessment techniques mentioned previously, it is shown that many lecturers frequently choose to assess students using performance task, which is recorded through video, and they also preferred problem solving or discussion as weekly assignment. Thus, this study regards those two techniques as the most effective techniques of language assessment in online learning in context of English department of the Institute for Islamic Studies of Padangsidimpuan.

This study revealed that there were differences between language assessment used in measuring theoretical and practical knowledge. To assess students' theoretical knowledge, all lecturers agreed with the effective use of online presentation as language assessment. In that case, every student takes turns to present one of contents or materials from the book and record their explanation through video. Then, presenters

will load the videos on social media like YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp group and the rest of students will ask questions and comments to it.

Many lecturers also perceived that carrying out a test via Google Form Application is an effective technique to assess language in which multiple choices and essay test can be designed using automatically allocated time, random questions and certain set condition. In addition to the previous explanation, online interview is also regarded effective and two lecturers agreed with this technique because the lecturers can see and know objectively students' ability in answering the test.

In contrast, based on the interview results, it was known that essay test (WH-questions) and writing summary of the content are regarded not effective because the students tend to cheat their friends and copy the answers from the resources. However, one lecturer thought asking students to answer the test using their own words is one of the solutions to avoid cheating and plagiarism in online test. Again, the problem is sometimes the lecturers cannot recognize which students are categorized good and bad in language, so it cannot guarantee the authenticity of the test result.

The second data elaboration is related to effective technique used to assess students' practical knowledge. It was found that all lecturers agreed that doing real practice and showing their performance are the most effective techniques for language assessment. The students did practice like in micro teaching subjects and loaded it in social media like in YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp group, so it is easy for lecturers and other students to see and give feedback. Through this technique, the lecturers could see the authenticity of students' skills, and competences on the content being taught.

From the finding elaborated previously, it is stated that the lecturers preferred discussion and problem solving as a weekly assessment. It is really needed because the lecturers sometimes get difficulties to recognize their students. Thus, with this weekly assignment, they can know at least general capabilities of their students in online learning. In fact, through discussion, the students can participate and engage the learning process actively and let the lecturers familiarize with their identity. Thus, the online learning is not perceived as only product-oriented instruction but also process-oriented learning. Related to this idea, Zacharis (2009) said that having problem solving will foster students' participation and it creates students' participation and communication in online learning environment.

Then, that making a video or recording of students' performance and real practice was also the most favorable technique of language assessment related to practical knowledge, as Orlando (2011) wrote in his book saying that turning students into teachers can be the best way to produce and assess learning. It means that asking students to practice teaching like in micro teaching and publish the result is the most effective way to make students successful in learning. Wiechetek (2018) also saw the benefits of using instructional video in e-learning which is assumed that video content

published on global video-sharing websites can be a source of valuable information and can be used to increase effectiveness of learning processes.

Looking at the benefits of recording students' performance and skills through video, it is perceived that there are advantages that lecturers and students can take. The lecturers could see students' real and authentic ability in online learning and of course it avoids plagiarism and cheating among the students. Then, students also can use video to record their interactive presentation in certain materials during online learning. That is why to assess students' theoretical knowledge, lecturers also could ask students to make online interactive presentation. Finally, video lets students view actual objects and realistic senses, to see sequences in motion, and to listen to narrations (Wiechetek, 2018).

Moreover, this study also argues that giving an online test like via Google form application to assess students' knowledge and comprehension is also another alternative technique which this study perceives it as one of the effective ways to avoid material cheating and plagiarism during the test in online learning (Kearns, 2012). This test is assumed effective because the test makers can randomize the questions which every test taker will have different question in different numbers. In line with this idea, Budhai (2020) suggests to make various types of questions randomly as one of the ways to avoid cheating in online learning test.

6. Conclusion

There are some points that can be concluded from this study. The first, there should be effective techniques used by the lecturers to overcome problems related to online learning assessment like cheating and plagiarism which lead to less objective result and scoring. Then, using more than one assessment technique is required in online learning like the use of portfolio as one of the assessment types. Moreover, there should be an authentic principle of assessment given to students to get more reliable result of the test like the implementation of practice task to assess students' learning. It means that an effective assessment must be related to learners' involvement in real life activity such as real teaching practice if the subject is about teaching methodology.

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