

**Investigating students' Attitude towards Online Assessment during the Pandemic of Corona Virus Disease 19**



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**Summary:**

The emergence of the CoViD 19 pandemic compelled teachers to use overlooked tools that have existed throughout technological advances such as desktop and laptops, interactive whiteboards, tablets, projectors..etc. Teachers can use Google meet, Google classroom, office 365, zoom and Moodle to teach and assess synchronously and asynchronously. Assessment, in general, is an important process in which teachers evaluate students and use the obtained data to adjust students' learning and inform teaching. This study aimed to investigate students' attitudes towards online assessment. The surveyed sample consists of 39 didactic and applied languages students of master one at Belhadj Bouchaib Ain Temouchent University. The selected research tools in this study were an online questionnaire and interview addressed to three teachers of English. Results revealed that the students' attitudes towards online assessment were negative due to various factors mainly the poor quality of the internet.

**Keywords:** Attitude; assessment; E-learning; Google forms; ICT; language learning; online assessment.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Law and Eckes (1995) define assessment as gathering data on students' performance and knowledge. According to Law and Eckes (1995), assessment is recognized as one of the central features of teaching in which different methods are used to obtain information at

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different times and settings. Those methods were either upgraded or improved due to technological advances. In Algeria, since the introduction of ICT in universities, the use of different ICT tools was limited. However, universities were closed due to the disruption of the COVID 19 pandemic and there was a need to keep the learning going. Owing to this pandemic, face-to-face instruction was suspended and E-learning was sought as an alternative since the teaching and learning process can still occur without the need for physical presence. Many studies focused on E-learning problems in the Algerian universities; Benharzallah (2019) concluded in his research that the distance education system is limited to a course sent to their students via email. Guemide and Maouche (2020) claimed that the success of e-learning depends mostly on the mastery of ICT tools.

With E-learning, teachers were required to assess their learners online. Boubekeur (2021) states that online assessment differs from traditional assessment and is not entirely implemented in Dr. Moulay Tahar University of Saida, Algeria due to its complexity for both teachers and students. From this point of view, we can notice that many reasons have direct effects on the success or failure of an online assessment. Students' attitude is one of those reasons. Hence, this research addresses the following research questions:

- a- What is students' attitude towards online assessment?
- b- What are the factors influencing online assessment?

To answer the research questions, two hypotheses are formulated

- a- Students have a positive attitude towards online assessment.
- b- Poor Internet quality is the main factor influencing students' attitudes.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Online Assessment**

Assessment is a process of measuring a person's knowledge, comprehension, capabilities, and skills (Cronbach, 1971). According to Huba and Freed (2000), assessment for learning and instruction is a process of collecting instructional information and reviewing the instructional process through multiple methods. The purposes of assessment are focused on finding ways of improving instruction designing suitable and feasible learning objectives, and confirming to what extent learning objectives have been reached. Kellough and Kellough (1999) argue that assessment is to deal with what is taught as well as what is learned.

There are two types of assessing students: summative and formative assessment. To distinguish between the two types, Robert Stake (Scriven 1991:169) simply explained: "When the cook tastes the soup, that's

formative: When the guests taste the soup, that's summative."

Assessments play a major role in students' experiences within a course, as the main objective of assessments is to reveal students' understanding of the course (Boud, 2010). Using assessment efficiently can have a major impact on students' learning (Shepard 2000; McTighe & O'Connor 2005).

Using ICT in assessment is currently common where it uses digital devices, which help to construct assessment tasks for students. According to Middleton & Spanias (1999, cited in Nguyen, et al., 2006, p. 254), "assessment provided on the web-based medium allows students to have more control over their practice and to receive immediate reinforcement that can help build their intrinsic motivation and improve their confidence"

Online assessment can lift the restricting obstacles of time and space for those unable to be present in one place. It can be time-saving and provide immediate feedback, (McCormack & Jones 1997; Hammond et al. 2011; Sang et al. 2011).

There are Different tasks, which teachers can use with ICT tools to assess students. Computer-Based Assessment (CBA) is an assessment, which is both distributed and controlled by a computer (JISC, 2007). The application of CBA can be seen in both types: formative and summative assessment. We can include multiple-choice questions (MCQs) or other 'objective' question types, essays and short answers.

CBA can offer instant feedback and make tests available at any time. The same assessment questions can be used differently by randomizing those questions. The students' performance Feedback is automatically delivered to them on a question-by-question basis, or for the whole assessment.

CBA can offer a range of tasks that paper and pen assessments cannot do like using videos and audio. According to Bull and McKenna (2004), CBA can widen the range of assessing students' knowledge and at the same time extend the assortment of assessment methods, provide more objectivity and consistency and reduce bias

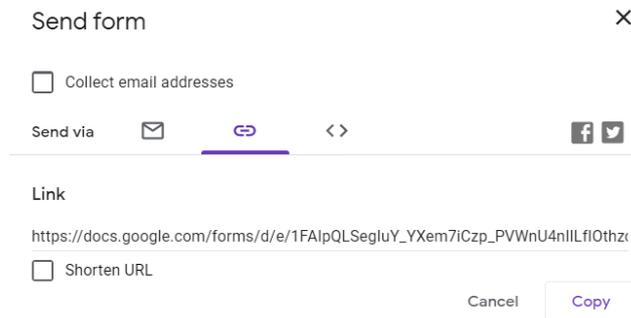
Various platforms such as Moodle and Google Forms are used for assessing learners online.

## **2.2 Google Forms**

Google Forms is one of the free web-based used to make online surveys and quizzes. The form can be sent through a link via email, or

embed it into Facebook and Twitter. Data gathered using the form is stored in a spreadsheet<sup>1</sup>.

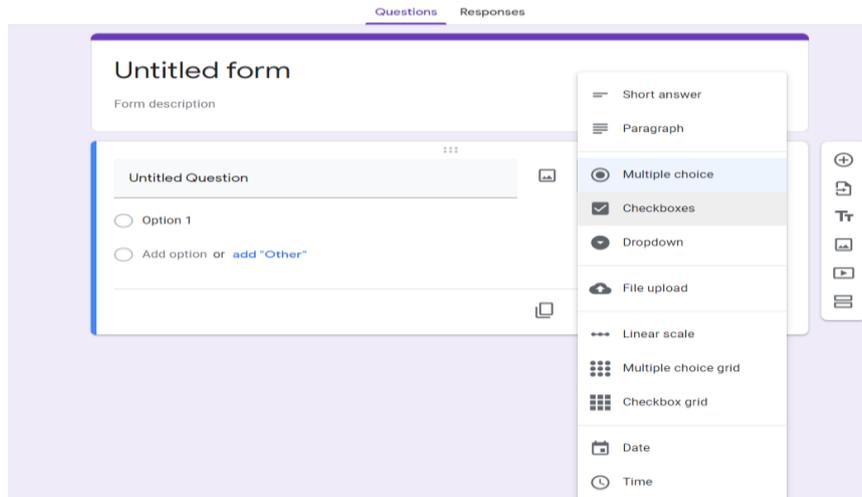
**Figure 1: Different Options of the Administration of the Online Quiz**



**Note: Adapted from Google Forms: <https://docs.google.com/forms/>**

Google Forms allows using both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Different types of questions are used in Google Forms: short answer, paragraph, multiple-choice, checkboxes, dropdown, file upload, linear scale, multiple choice grid, checkbox grid, date and time<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 2: Different Types of Questions Offered by Google Forms**



**Note: Adapted from Google Forms: <https://docs.google.com/forms/>**

### 3. Methodology, Results and Discussion

To collect data from Master one Didactic and applied languages at Belhadj Bouchaib Ain Temouchent University concerning their attitude

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.google.com/forms/about/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://support.google.com/docs/answer/6281888?hl=en&ref\\_topic=6063584](https://support.google.com/docs/answer/6281888?hl=en&ref_topic=6063584)

towards online assessment, the study was based on a quantitative and qualitative model. To carry on the survey, a quantitative tool, i.e., a questionnaire was put online for automatic processing and instant results. The qualitative tool, i.e., an interview was added to gain more insight about the online assessment from the point of view of teachers.

A sample of 96 students of master one of didactics and applied languages had the choice to sit for either a traditional test or an online one. However, only 39 students participated in the online test. After the administration of the online test, those students were asked to evaluate their first experience in online assessment.

A google form questionnaire was used in the study. It was composed of two parts. The first part included materials used in answering the online quiz and which type of internet was used in addition to an evaluation of their connection. While the final part composed of eleven items was intended to seek their attitude towards online assessment. Five-point Likert scale was used in this part (5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neutral, 2 = disagree, 1= agree).

The online questionnaire link was shared through a meeting in google classroom and all students gave their responses in three days.

An online interview was conducted with three teachers of English at the department of English at Belhadj Bouchaib University. The online interview was intended to gather more details about students from teachers' perspectives. A set of five questions composed the online interview. The questions are as follows:

- 1- What is your initial feedback about the process of E-learning in general and online assessment in particular?
- 2- To which extent do you think students are ready for the online assessment?
- 3- What are the difficulties encountered when using the online assessment system by students?
- 4- What did students like most when taking an online test?
- 5- Which component or area needs to be improved most?

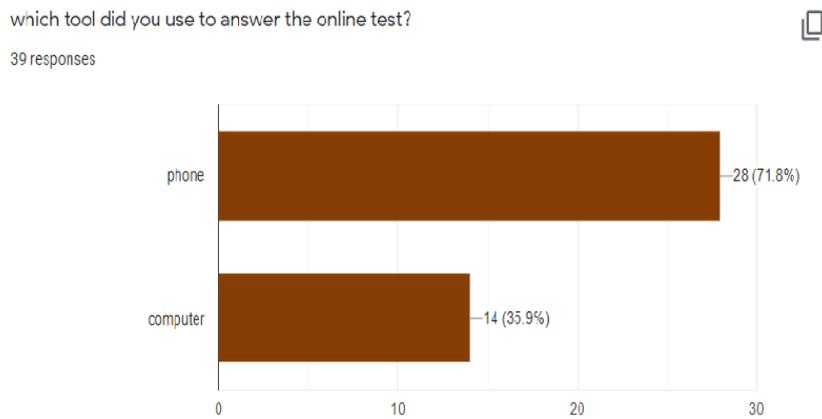
The participants of the online interview were two female teachers and one male. They were permanent teachers at the department of English at Belhadj Bouchaib AinTemouchent University and they had prior experience in e-learning in general and online assessment in particular. their teaching experience as university teachers varied between four to five years.

The online interview was conducted on two different platforms:

messengers (an application owned by Facebook) and Google meet depending on their availability.

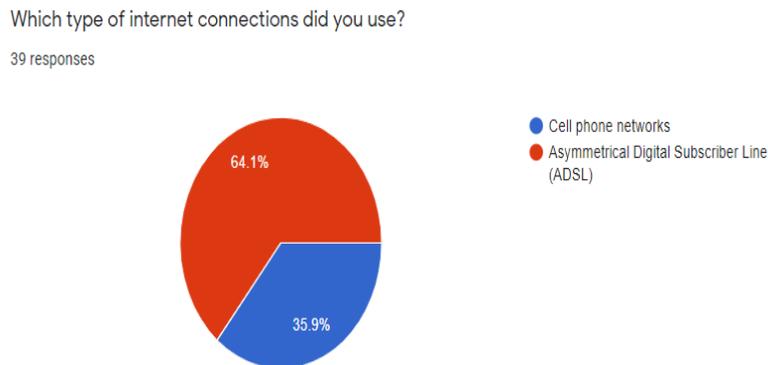
Concerning the first research tool which was an online questionnaire, the results of the online questionnaire revealed that 71.8% of students used their phones to answer the online test while 35.9% used their computers.

**Figure 03. Material Used to Answer the Online Test**



Participants were asked about the different types of internet connections they used. Their answers were as follows: 64.1% of participants said they used the Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber line (ADSL) while 35.9% of participants said they used cell phone networks.

**Figure 04 Different Types of Internet Connections Used**



The following question was addressed to participants to evaluate their internet connection. Results are shown in the following table

**Table1: Descriptive Statistics on the Quality of Internet Used by Students**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Evaluate your Internet connection	39	1	5	2,74	1,019
(total)	39				

**Note: 1 very dissatisfied, 2 dissatisfied, 3 neutral, 4 satisfied, 5 very satisfied**

The five-point Likert scale is considered an interval scale. Hence, from 1 to 1.8, this means very dissatisfied. From 1.81 to 2.60, this means dissatisfied. From 2.61 to 3.40, this means neutral. Moreover, from 3.41-4.20, this means satisfied and finally from 4.21 to 5 means very satisfied. Students were asked to evaluate their internet connection whether cell phone networks or Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL). The mean of this item is found (mean= 2.74) which revealed that students were neutral. The following section was addressed to the participants of the study to find out their attitude towards online assessment.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the Attitude towards Online Assessment**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
the online test for misclear and simple	39	1	5	3,31	1,260
students do not need to have technical skills to answer the online test	39	1	5	3.41	1,163
the allocated time for the online test is suitable	39	1	5	2,44	1,373
the online test is appropriate for all students	39	1	5	2,85	1,368
the online test provides feedback of my answers automatically	39	1	5	3,46	1,335
the online test is not biased	39	1	5	3,18	1,121

<b>the online test reduces stress exams</b>	39	1	5	3,00	1,395
<b>the online test reduces cheating</b>	39	1	5	2,72	1,255
<b>the online test improves the quality of learning</b>	39	1	5	3,18	1,355
<b>the online test can be used in all modules</b>	39	1	5	2,52	1,335
<b>the online test can replace the traditional one</b>	39	1	5	2,51	1,295
<b>(total)</b>	39				

The five-point Likert scale is considered an interval scale. Hence, from 1 to 1.8, this means strongly disagree. From 1.81 to 2.60, this means to disagree. From 2.61 to 3.40, this means neutral. moreover, from 3.41-4.20, this means to agree and finally from 4.21 to 5 means strongly agree.

The mean of the first statement is (mean=3.31) which indicated that students were neutral about the clarity and simplicity of online tests. The mean of the second statement is (mean= 3.18) which revealed that students agreed with the statement that online tests did not need technical skills to answer the online test.

The mean of the third statement is (mean=2.44) which showed that students disagreed with the statement that the allocated time for the online test is suitable. In addition, students were neutral with the statement that online tests were appropriate for all students as the mean of this statement is (mean= 2.85)

Students agreed with the statement that online tests provided automatic feedback to their answers as the mean is (mean=3.46). However, their answers concerning the bias of online tests were neutral as the mean of this statement is (mean=3.18).

According to the Cambridge dictionary (2021), anxiety is a human feeling of nervousness towards a certain situation. Anxiety can be seen as a psychological symptom, which happens when any human being can feel nervous in unfamiliar situations (Yoon, 2012). In education, sitting for an exam is one of the reasons to cause anxiety for students. Students' answers were neutral in the statement that online tests reduced stress exams as the mean is (mean=3.00). Moreover, students disagreed with the statement that online tests reduced cheating as the mean of this statement is (mean= 2.72).

The mean of the statement that online tests improved the quality of

learning is (mean= 3.18) which showed that students were neutral. In addition, students disagreed with the statement that the online test was suitable for all modules as the mean is (mean= 2.52). Finally, students' answers concerning the statement that online tests could replace the traditional one were not positive as the mean is (mean=2.51)

The second research tool used was an interview addressed to three teachers of English at Belhadj Bouchaib AinTemouchent University. Their answers were as follow:

First Question: What is your initial feedback about the process of E-learning in general and online assessment in particular?

Participant one: "E-learning is the New trend fueled by the CoViD 19 pandemic. It's supposed to be a time, place, and money saver. However, most teachers haven't been trained for it and many students don't have an internet connection at home as well as a PC. I stay skeptical as to online assessment. It will never reflect the learner's real level since cheating is somehow easier especially if the test includes direct questions. Thus, to avoid such problems the teacher should consider asking the right questions."

Participant two: "E-learning is a very good initiative if taken seriously. It failed because no serious efforts have been put into training both students and teachers. Teachers consume more time as detectives because plagiarism checking websites are not provided. Online assessment is a total failure. Most of the students plagiarize; therefore, the results do not reflect reality. There is no room for improvement with fake results. It can only work if the student is assessed face to face through the camera. That can work a bit."

Participant three: "e-learning failed miserably as students were careless and not interested despite our efforts. Online assessment as a consequence did not work at all as most students complained and I had to give them a home assignment for grading."

Second question: "To which extent do you think students are ready for the online assessment?"

Participant one: "Students are ready we just need to provide them with a good network, PCs and teachers should mind the type of questions."

Participant two: "They are not ready. They are ready to plagiarize not to be assessed. I have been doing this before CoViD and I have got the same results."

Participant three: "most students were against the idea to be assessed online."

Third question: "What are the difficulties encountered when using the online assessment system by students?"

Participant one: "The quality of the network and the fact that most students are using their G4 network were the most common problems mentioned by these latter."

Participant two: "It's according to the system the teacher is following: If it is written one: most likely they are going to cheat If it is a combination of written and face to face that can work since the teacher can test the students and see their reactions live. They can use a weak internet connection as an excuse to avoid attending. If it is a quiz limited by time: they will most likely say: no internet connection and would pass the answers to their friends. The greatest difficulties they encounter generally are weak internet connection or weak skills on using technologies even though they have studied this during their first-year secondary school."

Participant three: "Since most students own either a computer or a smartphone, they can be assessed easily. However, students are mostly rebellious and against anything new. The common difficulty is the quality of internet that not only students complained about but also the whole population. Yet, students always used it as an excuse."

Question four: "What did students like most when taking an online test?"

Participant one: "They have more time It's like an open book exam, everything is available so no stress. The cheating option is available as well."

Participant two: "The fact that they were at home. They avoided this official setting of classroom tests and being watched by a teacher."

Participant three: "being free at home and the chance to cheat."

Question five: "Which component or area needs to be improved most?"

Participant one: "As far as I'm concerned the type of questions is the most important component. The teacher should forget about using direct questions. The strength of the network seems also important."

Participant two: "Training. Taking it seriously."

Participant three: "introducing online assessment at this time of the pandemic was not ideal since psychologically speaking, students were not ready. Teachers need more training on how to use ICT tools effectively. We took in-service training for a whole year yet the program did not have a

course on how to use online assessment. For students, they need also to train in one hand and on the other, they need to be more responsible and tech savvies .hence instead of wasting time on using their smartphones for fun, they could use to improve themselves.”

The overall results of this study revealed that Didactics and Applied Languages master 1 students had a negative attitude towards online assessment. This result was confirmed by their teachers as the interview results exhibited that teachers felt their students were not interested at all in educational technologies despite their efforts. One teacher claimed that most of his students were against taking an online test. The first hypothesis was not confirmed. The result of this study is incompatible with the study of Berg and Lu (2014) which showed that Taiwanese students had a positive attitude towards online tests.

Previous studies showed that many reasons contributed to a negative attitude towards assessment. Yoon (2012) explains that facilitating anxiety produces positive effects on learners' performance, but too much anxiety may cause poor performance. This means that anxiety must be reduced to facilitate language learning. The results of the interview showed that teachers agreed with this idea as they claimed that students were less stressed at home while sitting for an online test.

Another reason that can be linked to this negative attitude was teachers' lack of confidence in online assessment reliability as all teachers claimed that cheating was much easier and cannot be controlled. The results are compatible with the results of Bojovic et al. (2020) and Chakraborty et al. (2020) as they stated that teachers had no faith in online assessment. The relationship between teachers' mistrust of online assessment and students attitudes can be connected as Chakraborty et al (2020) found out that students favoured face-to-face interaction as a reaction to their teachers who did not rely on online assessment techniques.

Teachers claimed that the poor quality of the internet can be a reason for this negative attitude; however, a teacher claimed that students used the quality of the internet only as an excuse to avoid assignments though students responses were impartial.

It was hypothesized that the poor quality of the internet was the main factor influencing students' attitudes. Hence, the second hypothesis was confirmed as well. The results of this study are compatible with the

study of Guemide and Maouche (2020) who found out that students who had poor quality of internet faced difficulties in accessing online courses. In their opinion, Internet debit is a key factor that controls Internet access and availability.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to investigate the students' attitude towards online assessment as a support tool during the pandemic of CoViD 19. Students of Belhadj Bouchaib University of Ain Temouchent, in general, and Didactics and Applied Languages Master 1 students, specifically, were not exposed to the online assessment process before the pandemic. Overall, since this was their first experience in online assessment, students' answers varied between disagreed and neutral. The results of this study can be a starting point to improve the quality of E-learning in general and online assessment in particular since students' negative attitudes can be a problem against the efforts of the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education to implement e-learning as a measurement during the pandemic. Using technology in Algeria is still in progress. However, to ensure the success of online assessment in the future, students' perceptions and attitudes need to be considered and changed positively. In this age of technology, students need to be exposed more to this additional support of online assessment without neglecting the traditional one.

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## 6. Appendices

### Appendix I

Questions Responses 39

### Questionnaire

This questionnaire is a part of the study investigating the Effectiveness of Online Assessment During the Pandemic of Covid 19. Case Study of Master one Didactic and applied languages at Belhadi Bouchaib University.

Email \*

Short answer text

which tool did you use to answer the online test? \*

- phone
- computer

Questions Responses 39

Evaluate your internet connections

- very dissatisfied
- dissatisfied,
- neutral,
- satisfied,
- very satisfied

Questions Responses 39

tick the box based on your level of agreement. \*

	strongly disagr...	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
the online test f...	<input type="checkbox"/>				
students do not...	<input type="checkbox"/>				
the allocated ti...	<input type="checkbox"/>				
the online test i...	<input type="checkbox"/>				
the online test ...	<input type="checkbox"/>				
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