Preferences of Online Learning Assessment in Higher Education During the Pandemic Based on Perspectives of Students and Lecturers

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This research aimed to describe the preferences of online assessment in German Language learning from the perspectives of students and lecturers at Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. The research method was descriptive-quantitative and used included a survey questionnaire for 186 students and an interview guide for lecturers in relation to online assessment implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research results showed that the platforms preferred by students and lecturers for German Language learning assessment were WhatsApp Group, LMS, Google Classroom, Edmodo, E-mail, Google Drive, Padlet, and Zoom. The forms of assignments and tests applied for online assessment in German Language learning that were preferred by both students and lecturers were papers/articles, presentation, multiple-choice and true-false questions, essays/short answers, instructional video making, portfolios, projects, discussions, case studies, self-assessment, simulations or practicums, observations, and interviews.

Keywords: preference, online assessment, German language

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped education through digital transformation which has motivated the creation of various applications or virtual systems useful for remote learning and assessment (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Moorhouse, 2020). In some higher education institutions this digital transformation runs soundly, but in some others it has become a forced migration process as a crisis response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Hodges et al., 2020; Manfuso et al., 2020). Technology-based assessment in online learning allows students to have freedom in learning according to preferences of their own and to optimize learning activities (Dhawan, 2020; Febrianto et al., 2020). Education programs and assessment patterns that can optimize learning activities are important not only to monitoring how well education goals are achieved but also to measuring student success (Stiggins, 2002). It is critical to support online assessment implementation in higher education institutions in order to foster students' abilities in completing all the tests and tasks assigned as part of learning.

In practice, online assessment is difficult to perform and triggers a range of problems; it also takes more effort and time in its implementation and management than traditional assessment does (Conrad, 2006; Yulianto & Mujtahid, 2021). The lack of direct interactions between lecturers and students in online assessment implementation must be addressed properly for increased motivation, which will affect learning outcomes positively (Djuniadi, 2013; Ozuorcun & Tabak, 2012). Assessment in online learning barely has resemblance to traditional assessment and is yet to be able to maximize the roles of, as well as the relationship between, lecturers and students (Sun, 2011). Online assessment that is conducted synchronously causes students some problems related to assignment content and planning as well as to poor Internet connection (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020; Rinekso & Muslim, 2020). It is therefore necessary for lecturers to go through the stages of planning, process, and evaluation to arrange online assessment activities in anticipation of any obstacles that may arise in the assessment implementation.

Some problems that occur as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in language learning assessment generate a high degree of stress for both lecturers and students; one of such problems is the transition into technological use from direct-natured assessment (Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020). Digital assessment is manifested from online activities implementation that uses media or platforms synchronously and asynchronously to motivate students in learning and teaching activities and to support the implementation of virtual classes. Some learning platforms provide a room for collaboration or ideas sharing in performing a given task at a particular time. Synchronous or asynchronous assessment is selected correspondingly to lecturer and student needs. Such online-assessment-related needs can be figured out from student preferences in virtual classes. Student preferences play a central role in the learning process (Birenbaum, 2007). The aim of this article writing was to describe German Language online assessment preferences from the perspectives of German Language students and lecturers at Universitas Negeri Malang.

METHOD

This research used a descriptive-quantitative research method with data presentation in the form of percentages. The instruments used were a survey questionnaire and an interview guide. The survey questionnaire takes the form of a Google Form and was addressed to all students in semesters 2, 4, and 6 (n = 186), while the interview guide was addressed to lecturers of the German Department of Universitas Negeri Malang (n = 11). The data gathered from the survey and interviews in this research were to be analyzed to draw a link between the two instruments to find agreement between one statement and another, thereby giving an accurate picture of online assessment from student and lecturer perspectives. The Google Form questionnaire disseminated to students consists of 27 question items, while the interview guide used for interviewing lecturers consists of 21 question items. From the questionnaire responses tabulation and interview transcripts, clear data were generated and related to the evaluation of online assessment that had been implemented by lecturers as well as to student preferences in online assessments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preferences of Online Learning Assessment Based on Perspectives of Students and Lecturers

The responses to the survey questionnaire disseminated to students and the results of the interviews with German Language lecturers of Universitas Negeri Malang showed that students had differing preferences in online assessment and that lecturers applied varied online assessment models to find out student abilities in certain courses. The responses to the survey questionnaire indicated that it is necessary for students and lecturers to reach an agreement regarding the deadline and type of an assigned work. Such an agreement is needed as students frequently encountered such obstacles as unstable Internet network, overlapping assignments from other courses, and difficulties operating applications (Kristina et al., 2020).

As with students in general, these students also demanded information from lecturers in the form of blueprints of the elements to be assessed in the tests to be administered and the assessment rubrics to be used. Such a demand was expressed by 132 students. Regarding task assignment, 6 of 11 lecturers stated that they had informed students of the assessment direction at the meeting start and some additional information when the task was given to them. Provision of information on assessment elements and rubrics, which are part of the assessment blueprints, is a right every student is entitled to as they have the access to curriculum content, detailed, clear, and easy-to-understand information on abilities, materials used, and question forms used (Afrian et al., 2017). The interview results revealed that lecturers had fulfilled such demand in assessment practices, both offline and online; they had developed the directions from the planning, to the implementation, to the evaluation.

In line with (Pratama & Mulyati, 2020), 7 of 11 lecturers stated that they preferred offline over online assessment, and 85 students wanted offline assessment in German Language learning. The result of the previously referred to study was that teachers' preference for offline learning and assessment was stemmed in the direct interaction with students that it allowed and that students were also similarly in favor of face-to-face learning and assessment. Most lecturers said that offline assessment can test students' honesty in test or assignment completion. Both lecturers and students were inclined more toward offline assessment. To lecturers, online assessment often stumbles upon three common obstacles during its implementation, namely plagiarism, untimely/delayed work submission, and unstable Internet connection between one another (Saefulmilah & Saway, 2020).

The conditions in the current COVID-19 pandemic have compelled students and lecturers alike to transform into online assessment using digital assessment platforms. In practice, a plethora of online assessment platforms are available for lecturers' use virtually. Some of the said online assessment platforms much preferred are WhatsApp Group, LMS at UM named Sipejar-LMS, Google Classroom, and Edmodo, to name just a few. Online assessment platforms are the right option to be used by lecturers to keep assessment activities in virtual classes running. According to (Cakrawati, 2017; Cheng, 2006; Dodun et al., 2015), online assessment platforms are electronic-technology-based media that are used in user-friendly learning processes and that are possible to utilize as communication means between students and lecturers in and outside the class. Eleven lecturers mentioned that in conducting online assessment they used Zoom, Sipejar-LMS, Padlet, WhatsApp, E-mail, and Google Classroom. From the Google Form questionnaire results, it was found that 171 students wanted WhatsApp Group to be used as a communication platform with lecturers, while 92 wanted Sipejar-LMS. Google Classroom was preferred by 87 students, while 35 chose Edmodo. Five other students wished that communication with, and task assignment by, lecturers be conducted via E-mail, Google Drive, Padlet, and Zoom. Eleven lecturers said that they used WhatsApp Group to dispense tasks to students. WhatsApp Group was a dominant preference to students and lecturers as it comes with a variety of advantages that give ease to learning activities. WhatsApp Group has pedagogical, social, and technological benefits that support the delivery of certain announcements, the delivery of various ideas and learning sources, and online discussions (Amry, 2014). According to (Susilawati & Supriyatno, 2020), some WhatsApp Group advantages include (1) providing facility for collaborations online, both at school and at home, (2) being a free, easy-to-use application, (3) useful for sharing comments, texts, images, videos, voice notes, and documents, (4) providing facility for delivering announcements and publishing students' group works, and (5) making it easy to make and spread

information and knowledge through the various features available on WhatsApp Group. Such advantages were the reasons behind those students' preference for WhatsApp Group for online assessment.

Preferences for Assignment Submission

Online learning in German Language is carried out either synchronously or asynchronously. Synchronous assessment is assessment that is aided by video conferencing media or chatting applications that allow for live interaction in virtual classes, while asynchronous assessment is assessment that is carried out by teachers and students by other than simultaneous means (Hrastinski, 2008). As stated by (Lim, 2017), synchronous assessment using media can help learners develop social skills and involvement in learning effectively. Motycka et al. add that synchronous media enable live voice interaction, digital board, chat messaging, and content sharing to facilitate live assessment just as traditional assessment (Motycka et al., 2013). Interaction that is generated in synchronous assessment is said to be good as it is conducted live. Zoom is one of the platforms that can be used for synchronous online assessment. It became a preferred assessment platform to students, with 82.3% or 153 students expressing their preference for it. 45.2 percent or 84 students preferred Google Meet as a platform of online live assessment. 19.4 percent or 36 students preferred Sipejar-LMS, and 23.1% or 43 students did Google Classroom. Other 3 students wrote WhatsApp Group as a preferable synchronous platform for online assessment.

The activities conducted were linked to assignment submission access via certain platforms. Below is a diagram that describes students' platform preferences for assignment submission.

FIGURE 1
ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION PLATFORMS
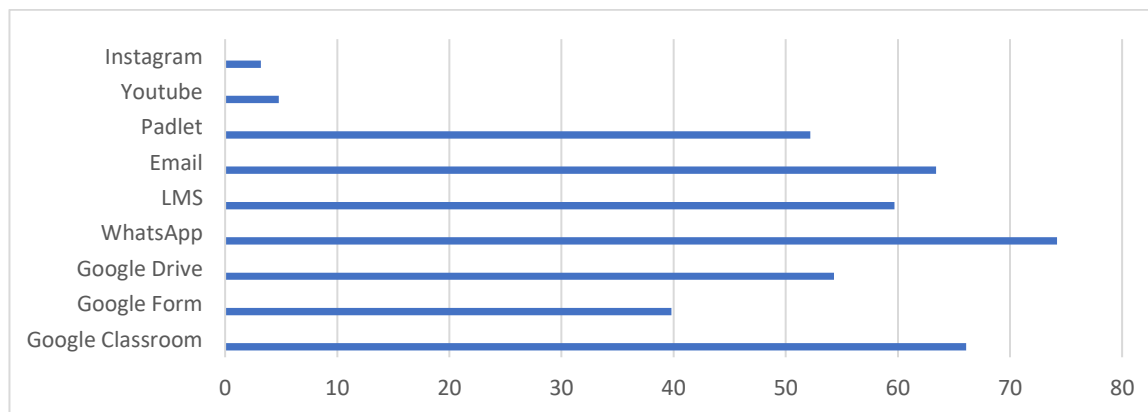
According to the diagram above, the platforms preferred by students for sending assignments were WhatsApp (74.2%), Google Classroom (66.1%), E-mail (63.4%), Sipejar-LMS (59.7%), Google Drive (54.3%), Padlet (52.2%), Google Form (39.8%), YouTube (4.8%), and Instagram (3.2%). Learning process and evaluation are a series of assessment activities that are conducted online. Online activity evaluation requires a platform that supports task assignment or test administration. Tasks and tests in online assessment are needed to figure out the achievement of the goals of learning (Zlatović et al., 2015). Below is a diagram that shows the platforms preferred by students for task assignment or test administration.

FIGURE 2
**TASK ASSIGMENT/TEST ADMINISTRATION PLATFORM**
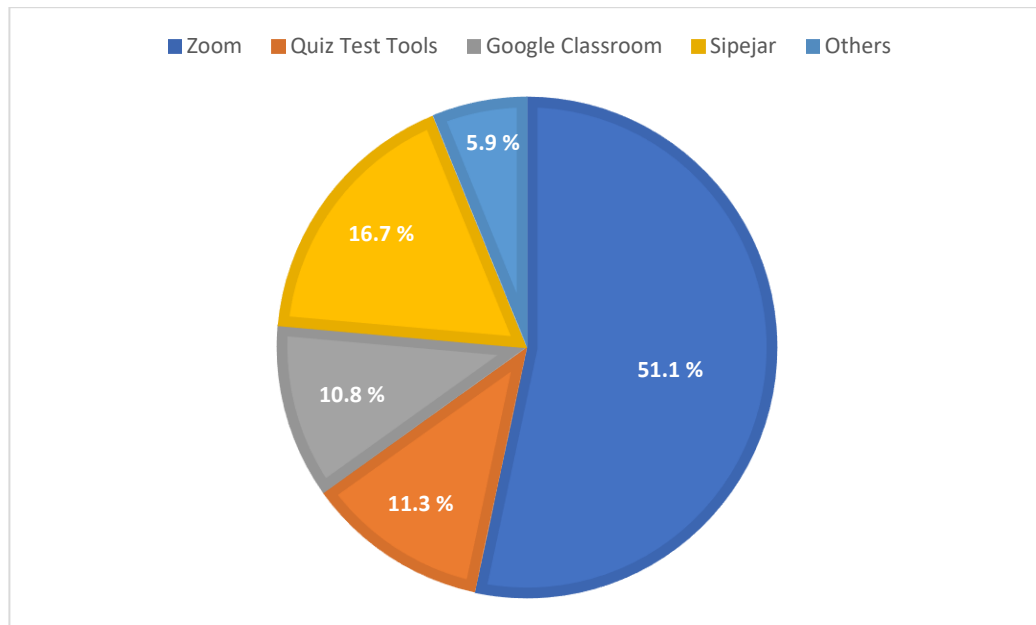
Based on the diagram above, the platforms preferred by students for task or test completion were Google Form, Quiz Test Tools, Zoom, Google Meet, Mentimeter, Survey Monkey, Google Classroom, and Sipejar-LMS. Most students chose Zoom as the suitable platform for task or test completion (51.1%), while some others did other platforms like Quiz Test Tools (11.3%), Google Classroom (10.8%), and Sipejar-LMS (16.7%). Some other platforms chosen by students for task and test completion were Edmodo, Word, and WhatsApp. The collection of tasks and tests completed by students can be archived as a digital portfolio that demonstrates their abilities to understand the materials taught. As stated by (Zulfikar, 2016), online or digital portfolios support assessment in life-long learning following technological advancements, improve computer skills mastery in learning, and ease data access anywhere.

Preferred Task Forms

The results obtained from the questionnaire survey disseminated to 186 students were related to the platforms used to archive tasks digitally. 46 students preferred Edmodo for that purpose, while 128 did Sipejar-LMS. 103 students chose Google Classroom, and nine others wrote Google Drive, Google Form, and WhatsApp Group as their preferred platforms. The platforms aforesaid were the platforms that could be used to support assessment activities according to the preferences of German Department students for online assessment. Such platforms were made use of as media for transforming the previously traditional means of tasks or tests completion.

A task or test transformation process must take into consideration what is to be assessed. Such assessment should be based upon administrative, instructional, or research purposes (Jacobs et al., 1981). Tests administration or tasks assignment as a way to figure out students' understanding is linked to the materials taught by lecturers in online classes. Below is a diagram that shows students' preferred task forms in online learning.

FIGURE 3
TASK FORMS
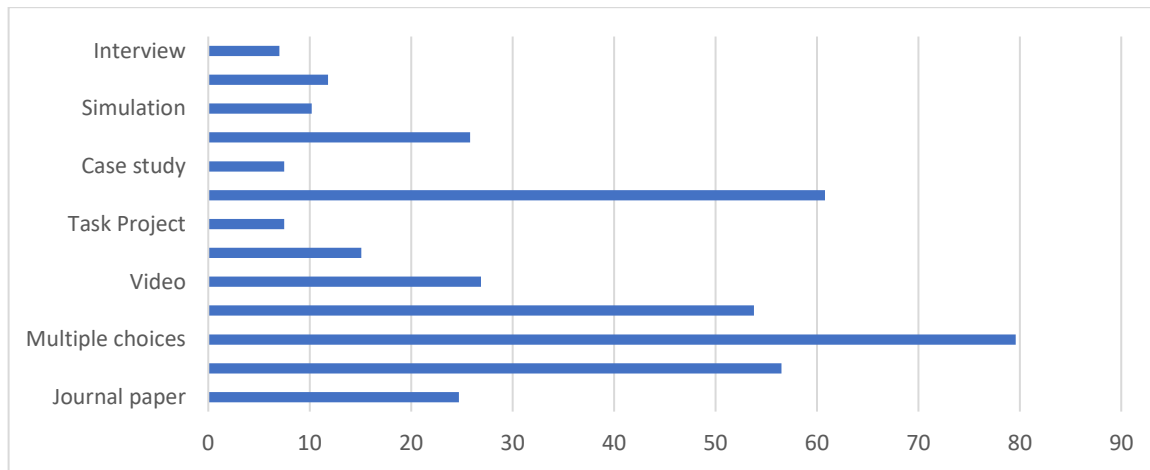
Based on the diagram above, the task forms preferred by students consisted of papers/articles, PowerPoint slides, multiple-choice/true-false questions, essays or short answers, instructional video making, portfolios, projects, discussions, case studies, self-assessment, simulations or practicums, observations, and interviews. Some lecturers expressed their preference for formative tests and oral and written assignments. One hundred forty-eight students had a preference for objective test questions, and 13 favored interviews. Other forms were chosen by an average of 14–113 students. Two students who chose another option wrote down game as a form that could be applied in online learning. Ninety-three percent students preferred multiple-choice, true/false, and matching questions, and 50.5% did essays or short answers. Multiple-choice questions were favored as they were easy to prepare and provided lecturers with a convenience to score students' answers (Traub & MacRury, 1990). According to (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2021), objective test forms have several advantages, namely (1) question marking is easy to standardize under a variety of situations, (2) assessment platforms are available not only for numerical questions, but also symbolic and graphical ones, (3) they reduce workloads in assessment, and (4) they allow lecturers and students to assess rapidly in a variety of topics and to give feedback directly. Tasks assignment in German Language learning is related to four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—proportionately following lecturers' mapping. Students' responses to the questionnaire showed that 120 students preferred that learning be predominantly focused on the speaking skill, 104 did the writing skill, 99 did the listening skill, and 97 did the reading skill. According to (Nan, 2018), the four language skills are inseparable from one another; only when they are integrated one to the other is it possible to promote such language skills. Transformation of question forms for language skills assignments covered speaking out loud, dialog, monolog, recording one's own voice, dialog writing, video making, role playing, presentation, presentation commentary, Q&A, paper writing, online discussion, PowerPoint slides making, and novel review. Below is a diagram that shows students' preferred language skills assignments.

FIGURE 4
LANGUAGE SKILLS ASSIGNMENTS
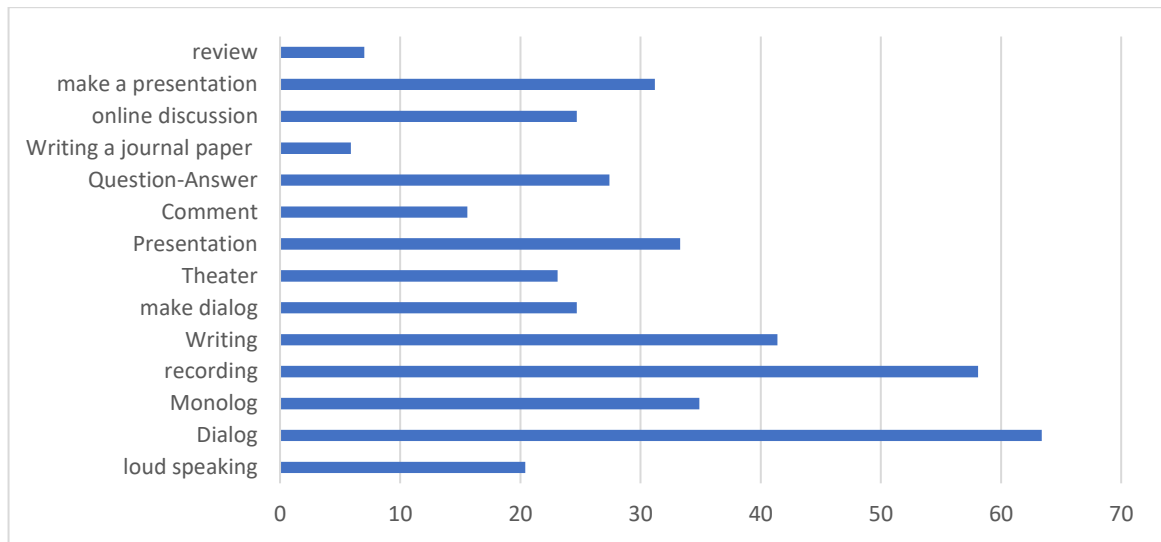
Based on the diagram above, the four language skills can be formulated in several forms of assignments. One hundred eighteen students wanted the assignments to be formulated in a monolog form, while 11 did the assignments to be formulated as article writing assignments. Other assignment form preferences were evenly distributed among students in the range of 13–108 for each of the task forms. In the course of online assessment, lecturers and students stumbled upon several challenges. The results of the interviews with lecturers showed that the primary difficulty encountered by students was the connection problem. Besides, students' understanding of the materials and assignments given by lecturers also became a hindrance in online assessment. Another difficulty came in lecturers' effort to control their students in their assignment completion. Lecturers could not supervise students in their assignment completion intensively, giving rise to the possibility of cheating through consulting the dictionary, copying the answers of other students, and seeking help via the Internet during tests. Lecturers might help students with their difficulties by giving them feedback both orally and in writing. Three of the 11 lecturers interviewed gave preference to written feedback, while 5 lecturers preferred commenting on students' work via oral feedback. Written feedback was chosen because it gave students an opportunity to review the lecturer-made corrections at any time, while oral feedback was preferred in case students did not read the corrections that lecturers had made.

CONCLUSION

Online assessment platforms are effective media for lecturers' use to figure out students' abilities. In online assessment practice, cooperation between lecturers and students is needed to achieve the learning goals that have been set to support and deliver of certain announcements, the sharing of various ideas and learning sources, and online discussions. Lecturers performed online assessment synchronously and asynchronously according to the conditions and needs of the students. Zoom was a learning platform favored by lecturers and students in online learning and assessment. For the purpose of sending works, the platforms and social media were used by lecturers in order to figure out students' abilities. The forms of assignments and tests developed by lecturers were taken form a way to find out students' achievements in alignment with the learning goals. The forms of tasks and tests developed by lecturers and at the same time desired by students were papers/articles, PowerPoint slides, multiple-choice/true-false questions, essays and short answers, instructional video making, portfolios, projects, discussions, case studies, self-assessment, simulations or practicums, observations, and interviews. The forms in which assignments and tests were to be given were based on four language skills that are integral to one another.

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