

Assessing Learner Attitudes towards English Language Examinations Conducted through Online Platforms

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The increasing reliance on online platforms for teaching and learning has prompted educators and learners to utilize Learning Management Systems (LMS) and video conferencing tools such as Zoom and MS Teams. However, the effectiveness of virtual classrooms compared to traditional physical classrooms remains a subject of debate. Despite the advantages of online platforms, English language learners encounter significant difficulties when facing language skill examinations. In light of this hypothesis, the present study employs a qualitative dominant research approach to investigate the challenges experienced by learners during online language skill tests. The study sample consisted of 135 undergraduate students randomly selected from both state and private universities in Sri Lanka, all of whom had undergone online examinations. Among them, 130 undergraduates participated in a Google survey, and 30 undergraduates were selected for semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling. Computer-aided software was employed to analyze the survey data, while thematic analysis was utilized to interpret both the survey and interview data. The findings indicate that online assessments primarily emphasized evaluating students' writing and reading abilities, with relatively less emphasis placed on their listening and speaking skills. Only a small number of participants were assessed in all language skills during online tests. The study also examined that the transition from paper-based assessments to online tests in Sri Lanka posed significant challenges for students, including technological difficulties, network glitches, a lack of technical experience, and heightened anxiety. In conclusion, this study illuminates English language learners' obstacles during online language skill assessments. It underscores the necessity of addressing technological challenges and anxiety concerns to improve the quality of online exams and enhance the overall examination process for students in the future.

Keywords: Challenges, Learner Attitudes, Online Examinations