

Original research paper

**USING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT
DURING THE PANDEMIC BY INDIAN AND UKRAINIAN
TEACHERS OF ENGLISH**

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Abstract. *The article aimed to analyze the usage of alternative assessment by teachers of English in India and Ukraine during the pandemic. The actuality of the study is related to making teaching English during the pandemic more effective through alternative assessment. Comparing and contrasting the practices of Indian and Ukrainian teachers of English in terms of using alternative assessment provides the data necessary for planning English courses more effectively. Pedagogical observation, surveys, interviews, and mathematical statistics were used to collect the data. It was established that Indian respondents had a wider range of experience in teaching English. More than half of Indian teachers conducted their lessons online, while Ukrainian teachers mostly had blended lessons. The necessity of training in assessment and learning facilitation was obvious for both Indian and Ukrainian respondents. All the respondents appreciated the students' involvement in choosing alternative assessment tools. Both Indian and Ukrainian teachers acknowledged the usefulness of a variety of alternative assessment tools. The methods of evaluation preferred by Ukrainian respondents were similar to those preferred by Indian respondents, with peer-evaluation used more often by Indian teachers. The results of the study showed that the respondents from both countries were positive about the impact of portfolios on learners' motivation. Curricula limitations hindered the application of alternative assessment for both Indian and Ukrainian teachers of English. However, in contrast to Indian teachers' responses, for Ukrainian teachers, there was one more reason: students' reluctance. The recommendation is to provide more opportunities for professional development in terms of using alternative assessment.*

Key words: *alternative assessment, teachers of English, online, blended, pandemic*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the lives of people all over the world, but quarantine and other preventive measures, which disrupted the conventional educational process, were especially painful for teachers and students. The pressure of the necessity to continue working and studying online brought fear and anxiety, on the one hand, and an understanding of the need to reconsider existing practices, on the other (Luiz, 2021; Bragg, et al., 2021). Teaching and studying online, as an alternative to the physical classroom in crisis, required effective strategies that could compensate for the lack of face-to-face communication (Paudyal & Rana, 2021; Perifanou, et al., 2021). Looking at avatars instead of human faces caused stress and impeded understanding, experiencing technical problems during video conferences deprived students of active participation in class activities, which made fair and transparent assessment of students' performance problematic. Using alternative assessment as a precondition for the quality of the English course as properly planned and conducted, proposed strategies to deal with the negative effects of uncertainty and lack of control (Etedali, 2021; Pellegrino, 2014; Pilotti, 2022; Karaman, 2021). Enhancing students' learning process awareness, which is one of the aims of alternative assessment, is crucial for empowering their autonomy (Banat, 2022). Alternative assessment evaluates the outcome of learning and learners' ability to apply their knowledge, providing diagnostic feedback to help learners identify gaps and reconsider their strategies (Rousseau, 2018, pp. 2-3). However, little attention is paid to the issue of using alternative assessment in teaching English during the pandemic.

The actuality of the study is related to the necessity of making teaching English during the pandemic more effective through alternative assessment. The unprecedented experience of teachers practitioners under the quarantine restrictions must be documented and analyzed. Comparing and contrasting the practices of Indian and Ukrainian teachers of English in terms of using alternative assessment during the pandemic provides the data necessary for planning English courses more effectively.

2. METHOD

The article aimed to analyze the usage of alternative assessment by teachers of English in India and Ukraine during the pandemic. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to collect teachers' responses, conduct a comparative analysis, and develop strategies for using alternative assessment in teaching English more effectively. In this research, it was hypothesized that:

Hypothesis A: Indian and Ukrainian teachers of English used alternative assessment during the pandemic, there were more similarities than differences;

Hypothesis B: Indian and Ukrainian teachers of English used alternative assessment during the pandemic, there were more differences than similarities;

Hypothesis C: Indian and Ukrainian teachers of English did not use alternative assessment during the pandemic.

The study was conducted at the end of the 2020-2021 academic year, during which online, blended or face-to-face modes of instruction were used because of the quarantine restrictions. The research involved teachers of English who worked in Ukraine (N = 45) and India (N = 17). The survey was conducted by Ukrainian teachers of English first, and then by Indian teachers of English. The study's participants were fully informed about the

anonymity and confidentiality of their responses, as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

The data collection methods (pedagogical observation, surveys, interviews, and mathematical statistics) were used to collect the data. The survey was introduced via Google Forms, and interviews were conducted in Zoom sessions. The survey consisted of multiple-choice prompts No1, No2, No3, No4, and No12; Likert scale prompts No5, No6, No7, and No10; one range prompt No11 and a short response (see Appendix). Providing additional written responses was not obligatory. However, it was an opportunity for participants to add explanations to their responses for multi-choice prompts. For the Likert scale prompts, the median (Mdn) and the interquartile range (IQR) were calculated.

3. RESULTS

Concerning experience, about half of Ukrainian respondents had taught English for more than twenty years (Chugai et. al., 2021). However, Indian respondents had a wider range of experience: about 40% had taught English for 15-20 years, 30% for 5-10 years, and 18% for more than 20 years, while the rest of the respondents had taught English for 10-15 years. Nobody indicated experience of fewer than 5 years. To conclude, all the respondents had experience in teaching English, ranging from five to more than twenty years (see Figure 1).

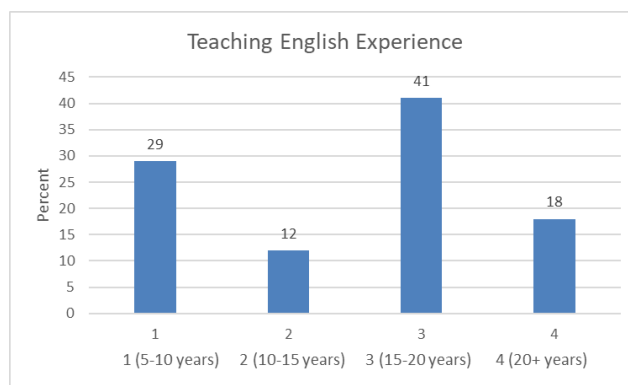


Fig. 1 Teaching English experience of the respondents (India)

According to the responses considering the main place of work, more than half of Ukrainian teachers indicated that they worked at universities, a third were secondary school teachers, and about nine percent were high school teachers (Chugai et. al., 2021). It is important to know that formal assessment in Ukraine is obligatory for school leavers (an external independent test, or ZNO), and bachelors (an external independent test, or EVI). Aimed at providing equal opportunities for students, ZNO and EVI are held each year on fixed dates. More than half of the respondents from India (53%) indicated high school as the main place of work; 47% taught English at secondary school. However, considering the fact that high school is part of the higher education system in India, we concluded that about half of all the respondents were university teachers.

To achieve the aims of the study, it was important to know the frequency of English lessons for one group of students per week in India and Ukraine. The findings of the study showed that about a third of Ukrainian respondents claimed to have two lessons of English for one group per week, 24% of the respondents had about five lessons, and slightly fewer conducted one lesson per week (Chugai et.al., 2021). The number of English lessons in Ukraine varied according to state regulations, the types of schools or universities, and their policies. As a rule, there were more English lessons in private educational institutions than in the public ones. Teachers of English in India conducted one class or two classes per week for one group of students (about 60%), three or five classes were less common (about 36%), and four lessons a week were the least frequent. To conclude, there are a number of differences between the frequency of English lessons conducted by the respondents from India and Ukraine (see Figure 2).

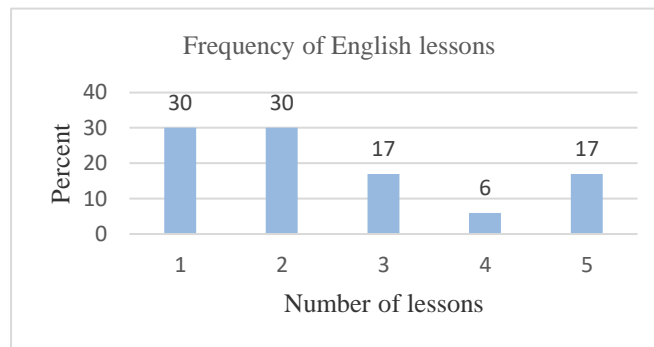


Fig. 2 Frequency of English lessons conducted by the respondents (India)

During the 2020-2021 academic year, Ukrainian teachers of English used three modes of instruction: they mostly had blended English classes (62%), 36% online classes, and just 2% face-to-face classes (Chugai et. al., 2021). The responses of teachers from India were quite different, with 65% teaching online and 35% face-to-face or blended, which could be explained by the government policy concerning pandemic restrictions in each country (see Figure 3).

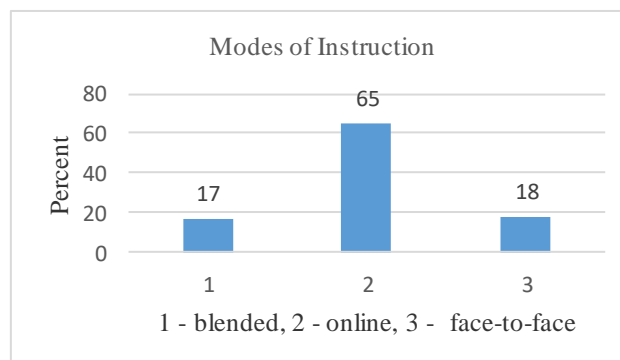


Fig. 3 Modes of instruction used by the respondents during the pandemic (India)

The necessity of training in assessment and learning facilitation was obvious for both Indian (100%) and Ukrainian (98%) respondents (Chugai et al., 2021). In particular, most Ukrainian respondents strongly agreed with the necessity of training (Mdn = 1, IQR = 1), while Indian respondents more tended to agree (Mdn = 2, IQR = 1) (See Table 1).

Table 1 Teachers' perspective on alternative assessment (India / Ukraine)

Prompts	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mdn	IQR
Prompt 5 Ukraine	25	19	1	0	0	1	1
Prompt 5 India	6	11	0	0	0	2	1
Prompt 6 Ukraine	18	24	3	0	0	2	1
Prompt 6 India	3	14	0	0	0	2	0
Prompt 7 Ukraine	3	31	9	2	0	2	0
Prompt 7 India	4	13	0	0	0	2	0
Prompt 10 Ukraine	4	23	17	1	0	2	1
Prompt 10 India	24	13	1	0	0	2	0

The research showed that most Ukrainian teachers agreed with prompt six about the importance of alternative assessment (Mdn = 2, IQR = 1) (See Table 1). The respondents were positive about the importance of alternative assessment in language teaching and learning (93%), with some having doubts (Chugai et. al., 2021). These results differ from the responses of Indian teachers who mostly agreed (82%) and strongly agreed (18%) with that statement.

Prompt seven, about the involvement of students in choosing alternative assessment tools, was the only one with which Ukrainian respondents mostly agreed; their opinions were not polarised (Mdn = 2, IQR = 0) (See Table 1). More than half of the respondents indicated that students had to be involved in the process of assessment (Chugai et. al., 2021). Indian teachers were more decisive in their responses: the majority agreed (77%), and the rest strongly agreed with that statement.

According to the results of the research, Ukrainian teachers used videos the most often, presentations and projects less frequently, while WebQuests were the least frequently used (Chugai et. al., 2021). Indian respondents sometimes used WebQuests, less frequently videos, presentations, and projects. Therefore, both Indian and Ukrainian teachers acknowledged the usefulness of a variety of alternative assessment tools, at the same time expressing preferences for using videos (Ukrainian teachers) and WebQuests (Indian teachers).

Ukrainian responders practiced a traditional way of evaluating, namely evaluation by a teacher, more often than other ways, but sometimes they used self, peer, and group evaluation (Chugai et al., 2021). Indian teachers indicated peer evaluation (as used sometimes), assessment by a teacher (as always used), self-evaluation (as often used), and group evaluation (as always or sometimes). Therefore, we may conclude that the ways in which Ukrainian respondents evaluate are similar to those preferred by Indian respondents, with peer-evaluation being used more often by Indian teachers. The results of the study showed that Ukrainian teachers of English were positive about the impact of portfolios on learners' motivation (Chugai et. al., 2021). Three-quarters of Indian teachers agreed with that statement as well, and one-quarter strongly agreed.

For Ukrainian teachers of English, the most effective strategies were "allowing students to take part in assessment", "choosing learning activities for themselves" and "reflecting on previous learning" (Chugai et.al., 2021). Indian teachers also considered "allowing students to

take part in assessment” first of all, with “making learners aware of curriculum aims” coming next, followed by “allowing learners to choose who to work with” and “reflecting on previous learning”. To conclude, all the respondents rated “allowing students to take part in assessment” as the most important, whereas “making learners aware of curriculum aims” was important for Indian teachers, and “choosing learning activities for themselves” for Ukrainian teachers.

For 42.2% of Ukrainian respondents, curricula limitations were detrimental to using alternative assessment; 24.4% were blamed on students’ reluctance; for the same percentage, it was a lack of practical knowledge (Chugai et al., 2021). Indian teachers also indicated curricula limitations (47%), and a lack of practical knowledge (41%). Other reasons were not significant. Therefore, curricula limitations hindered the application of alternative assessment for both Indian and Ukrainian teachers of English. However, in contrast to Indian teachers’ responses, for Ukrainian teachers, there was one more reason: students’ reluctance.

Providing additional comments on their experience of using alternative assessment in their English classes during the pandemic, the Ukrainian respondents were skeptical about the technical problems their students experienced. At the same time, they confessed that some educational institutions had no online tools and that sometimes teachers could not choose appropriate ways of alternative assessment. Nevertheless, a few Ukrainian teachers of English noted that they used alternative assessment, group work, and rubrics regularly (Chugai et al., 2021). Teachers also wrote about the necessity of creating a friendly atmosphere when conducting an online class. It is true that some students were dissatisfied with online learning for many reasons, like a lack of face-to-face communication or an inability to organize their daily routine. However, they blamed teachers for their failures, claiming that assessment online was not fair. Using alternative assessment methods provided more ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge and develop their skills by encouraging them instead of punishing them.

Some Indian teachers also added their comments and stated that alternative assessment was “the best option in the pandemic period”. The respondents confirmed that they had successfully conducted practical classes, taken exams, taught grammar and writing online. One respondent expressed their concern about students’ “participation in the learning process”. While students’ input could be better, teachers did everything possible in this complicated situation: “do your best and very best, do it every day”. The respondent added that the combined efforts of teachers, students, and parents were prerequisites for success. Another comment by an Indian teacher indicated the fact that for some students, English could be a third language, and that is why alternative assessment is especially useful, in particular, to discover the hidden potential of students. The respondent also wrote about the role of a teacher in choosing particular elements of alternative assessment and added that alternative assessment was used in teaching English before and during the pandemic, which resulted in better outcomes.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the research concerning the necessity of training for teachers of English in both countries are in line with Etedali (2021), who wrote about the necessity for teachers of English to master online collaboration tools and applications. Besides the

generation gap, the digital gap may seriously hinder the ability of teachers to demonstrate the visuals, combine different kinds of audio and video materials, provide opportunities for students to communicate online, to use effective tools for evaluation. In addition, lack of knowledge and practical skills of teachers may prevent creating friendly atmosphere at the lessons and result in disruptions. Considering the fact, that assessment is the most demanding and yet vital task, teachers should be trained in such areas as designing assignments and tests that promote student learning, conducting effective grading, as well as minimizing students' dissatisfaction (Mintz, 2009, pp. 49-51).

It is important to remember that the list of tools for alternative assessment includes some others like conferencing, diaries, learning logs, checklists, observations, and rubrics, which recreate real-world environments (Norris, 2000, p. 41). Using rubrics, for example, is necessary for various ways to be assessed, e.g. by a teacher, your peer, or yourself. Besides providing clear guidance for assessing effectively, rubrics minimize stress and dissatisfaction among students (Mintz, 2009, p. 52). The results of this research are in keeping with the conclusion that research also indicated that students positively assessed portfolios as evidence of their achievements (Kırıkkaya et al., 2011).

Difficulties in implementing alternative assessment were noticed in the study done by Aminatus Sa'diyah (2020), who examined emerging strategies and problems in alternative assessment for the teacher while working on the development of speaking skills. The results confirmed the necessity of finding the right combination of assessment techniques to avoid the boredom of students during the lesson and prepare them to use English in real-life situations.

5. CONCLUSION

It was established that Indian respondents had a wide range of experience in teaching English, ranging from five to more than twenty years, while half of the Ukrainian teachers had more than 20 years of experience. More than half of the respondents from both countries were university teachers of English. Ukrainian teachers conducted mostly two lessons of English per week for one group, while for Indian teachers it was one or two lessons. More than half of Indian teachers conducted their lessons online, while Ukrainian teachers mostly had blended lessons.

To conclude, the results of the research proved the hypothesis, which stated that Indian and Ukrainian teachers of English used alternative assessment during the pandemic, and there were more similarities than differences. The necessity of training in assessment and learning facilitation was obvious for both Indian and Ukrainian respondents. The respondents were mostly positive about the importance of alternative assessment in language teaching and learning, but some Ukrainian teachers had doubts about that. All the respondents appreciated the students' involvement in choosing alternative assessment tools. In addition, they ranked "allowing students to take part in assessment" as the most important. Both Indian and Ukrainian teachers acknowledged the usefulness of a variety of alternative assessment tools, while at the same time expressing preferences for using videos (Ukrainian teachers) and WebQuests (Indian teachers). The methods of evaluation preferred by Ukrainian respondents were similar to those chosen by Indian respondents, with peer-evaluation used more often by Indian teachers.

The results of the study showed that the respondents from both countries were positive about the impact of portfolios on learners' motivation. Curricula limitations hindered the application of alternative assessment for both Indian and Ukrainian teachers of English. However, in contrast to Indian teachers' responses, for Ukrainian teachers, there was one more reason: students' reluctance.

According to the results of this research, teachers of English in both countries are aware of the necessity of training in assessment and learning facilitation, the recommendation is to provide more opportunities for the professional development of teachers of English. As far as curricula limitations hindered the application of alternative assessment, it is recommended for teachers and university officials to initiate the revision of curricula for English courses at their educational establishments.

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KORIŠĆENJE ALTERNATIVNOG OCENJIVANJA TOKOM PANDEMIJE OD STRANE INDIJSKIH I UKRAJINSKIH NASTAVNIKA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA

Rad je imao za cilj da analizira mogućnosti primene alternativnog ocenjivanja od strane nastavnika engleskog jezika u Indiji i Ukrajini tokom pandemije. Aktualnost studije zasniva se na pronalaženju načina za efektivnije učenje engleskog jezika tokom pandemije kroz alternativno ocenjivanje. Upoređivanjem i suprotstavljanjem praksi indijskih i ukrajinskih nastavnika engleskog jezika u smislu korišćenja alternativnog ocenjivanja dobijeni su podaci neophodni za efektivnije planiranje kurseva engleskog jezika. Za prikupljanje podataka korišćena su pedagoška opservacija, ankete, intervjui i odgovarajući statistički postupci. Ustanovljeno je da su indijski ispitanici imali širi spektar iskustava u nastavi engleskog jezika. Više od polovine indijskih nastavnika je svoje časove izvodilo onlajn, dok su ukrajinski nastavnici uglavnom imali kombinovane časove. Neophodnost obuke za ocenjivanje i olakšavanje učenja bila je očigledna i za indijske i za ukrajinske ispitanike. Svi ispitanici su ocenjivali uključenost učenika u izbor alternativnih alata za ocenjivanje. I indijski i ukrajinski nastavnici su ukazali na korisnost korišćenja raznih alternativnih alata za ocenjivanje. Metode evaluacije koje su preferirali ukrajinski ispitanici su slične onima koje preferiraju indijski ispitanici, pri čemu su vršnjačku evaluaciju češće koristili indijski nastavnici. Rezultati studije su pokazali da su ispitanici iz obe zemlje pozitivno ocenili uticaj portfolija na motivaciju učenika. Ograničenja definisana nastavnim planom i programom ometala su primenu alternativnog ocenjivanja i za indijske i za ukrajinske nastavnike engleskog jezika. Međutim, za razliku od odgovora indijskih nastavnika, za ukrajinske nastavnike postojao je još jedan razlog: nevoljnost učenika. Na osnovu dobijenih rezultata preporuka je da se obezbedi više mogućnosti za profesionalni razvoj nastavnika u smislu korišćenja alternativnog ocenjivanja.

Ključne reči: *alternativno ocenjivanje, nastavnici engleskog, onlajn učenje, pandemija*