

# ONLINE SPEAKING ASSESSMENT DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC: IMPLEMENTATION, PROBLEMS, AND STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS

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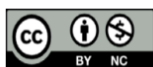
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## Abstract

*Assessment is one of the basic elements of the teaching and learning process. With assessment, teachers can measure students' abilities. Teachers can measure the competencies that students achieve during the teaching process. In the pandemic era, the activities of the teaching process are carried out online. The objectives of this study are to investigate the implementation of online assessment of speaking skills in vocational schools and to identify the problems and their solutions. This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate the case. The researcher collects data through interviews and observation. The interview was conducted with an English teacher. The results of this study showed that online speaking skills assessment is conducted through WhatsApp as a means of communication in the assessment process. The speaking tasks are guided by using video dialogues and video presentations. The problems experienced by teachers in carrying out online speaking assessment comprise of students' ability to think critically and their responsibility to perform and fulfill the tasks, the limited media used in the online speaking skills assessment which is just WhatsApp, the kind of speaking task that is not compatible with 21st century skills. Then the strategic solutions to counter those problems are by motivating students, guiding students in thinking critically and last but not least the role of government in developing and introducing how to use online platforms.*



**Keywords:** implementation, problems, solution, online speaking assessment

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## INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus infection first occurred in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, and has spread throughout China and beyond. Covid-19 was detected in Indonesia and announced by the President of the Republic of Indonesia on Monday, March 2, 2020 (Abdillah, as quoted in Giatman, Siswati & Basri, 2020, p. 169). The impact of the pandemic in the world of education has changed learning patterns in classrooms that are set up online. The Ministry of Education and Training has issued Circular No. 4 in 2020 on the implementation of regulations on education during the emergency period before the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic, based on the government's decision on March 24, 2020. Teaching and learning activities take place in the respective houses. Hendriyani and Novi (2020) find that the government letter outlines a learning process to be carried out online in their own homes to provide new and meaningful learning experiences for educators and students. and parents (page 239).

E-learning is a reality facing the development of science and technology/communication technology in the 21st century. It forces learners to keep up with the development of technology. 21st century learning must be technology-based to familiarize learners with 21st century life skills (Sugiyarti, et al, 2018, p. 1). Jennifer Nichol says there are four principles for student success in the 21st century; Instruction should be student-centred, education should be collaborative, learning should be contextual, and schools should be socially integrated (as cited in Rohim, Bima & Julian, 2016, p. 5-6). Moreover, not only about the teaching and learning process, this study will analyze the assessment process during the pandemic and in the development of 21st century technology. Online assessment process can be applied using IT. Online assessment has greater potential to measure complex learning skills, provide immediate feedback and grading, and reduce manual data entry time and costs (Kuo & Wu cited in Khairil) & Mokshein, 2018).

Understanding how online assessments are better for assessing students' speaking abilities and skills, this research involved several groups, for example: assessment and teaching in 21st century skills (Binkley et al., 2018; Meidasari, 2014), the importance of online assessment (Kuo & Wu cited in Khairil & Mokshein, 2018), the role of assessment (Tosuncuoglu, 2018; Brno, 2006), assessment technology (Ahmadi, 2018; Starkey, 2011) and strategies for effective online assessment (Winaryati, 2018).

Some previous researches show different conclusions. The researchers did not mention the steps teachers can take to assess students during the pandemic. The reality is that online assessment used in learning did not focus on speaking skills. First, the researchers did not mention the steps teachers can take to assess students during a pandemic. Second, the use of technology to assess learning in previous research (such as Ahmadi, 2018) does not refer to online assessment. Various media or technologies have been used to measure success in the learning process. However, there is an instrument that teachers and students use to get results or to realize what they have learned. Dixon and Worrell (2016) state that the assessment may be entirely online or only require online submission (as cited in Weleschuk, Dyjur and Kelly, 2019, p. However, language competence is not only writing, reading and listening but also speaking ability (Aydogan & Akbarov, 2014, p. 673). This study will focus on only one skill, which is speaking skill. Speaking is more important than other skills. With this skill, students can communicate with each other. Brown states that speaking is an interactive process for constructing meaning that involves generating and receiving information (as quoted in Musfirah, 2019, p. 72). Relevant aspects of a successful assessment in the pandemic era and the 21st century include: assessment, learning and assessment in the 21st century, pandemic era, e-learning, online assessment, teachers' challenges to e-learning and online speech assessment.

In addition, a successful evaluation is about making the assessment process easier and more efficient. A preliminary observation was conducted with an English teacher. According to the information given by teacher, in the era of the pandemic all learning processes and instruction must be adapted to either online or distance learning. All aspects of the learning and teaching process are transformed by an online system such as providing materials, testing and assessment. Many difficulties are encountered by teachers in the process of learning and teaching by online systems such as: students do not respond, students do not accept assignments, problems with internet connection, internet capacity and student utilities, because not all students have their own smartphones, they have to take turns using them. smartphone use with the family. Referring to the above preliminary observations, the most difficult part of online learning is the assessment, especially the assessment of students' speaking skills. Eventually, the study tries to investigate the process of online speaking assessment in one of vocational high school. Specifically, the study focuses on three aspects the implementation of online speaking assessment, its problem, and strategic solution to those problems.

## **METHOD**

This study utilized a qualitative research method which explored and identified the use of online assessment for students' speaking ability which were focused particularly on the implementation, problems, and solutions. In this study interview was used as the data collection technique. The participants of the study were two teachers who teach English in a vocational high school and were selected based on the criteria of having experience in

implementing online speaking assessment. Besides, this study used observation and document analysis as method of data collection. The data were then analyzed and reported qualitatively (Creswell, 2012, p. 218).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In this pandemic era, the whole learning process has been changed through e-learning, including assessment activities. All teachers and students participate in a distance learning program which the school operates from its own home. Because the school uses e-learning, the assessment process is also done online. After the meeting, an online assessment of SMKN 2 Kota Cirebon 12th grade English lessons was established. Because it is done throughout the learning process, it is a process assessment. According to the results of the interview, the types of speaking strategies used by teachers as part of the speaking assessment process are: responsive and interactive. However, the type of speaking exercise was dialogue, but the teacher applied all kinds of speaking assessment in class activity. In the online assessment of speaking skills, teachers have several steps: first, the teacher gives the students a video of the dialogue and the students should pay attention to the video, second After understanding the video, the teacher asked the children to state the expression in the video, third students have to mention expressions using voice notes, fourth the teacher tasked the students with performing the dialogue in the video on the invitation, fifth teachers ask them to receive assignments via WhatsApp or email.

The teacher said she used reactive strategies in learning to speak, such as: Ask and answer questions about video content. While teachers use interactive strategies to assess oral expression. It correlates with Brown's theory of speech strategies, but teachers use only two speech strategies. Regarding types of speaking strategies, there are several types of speaking strategies that teachers can use to assess students' speaking ability (Brown, 2004, pp. 141-142), such as: imitative, responsive, interactive, and extensive

E-learning was used for all activities. It turns out that all learning activities were done on the Internet. Assessment of the learning process is included. Teachers used WhatsApp as a means to test students' speaking ability through e-learning. Oral assessment was given by the teacher on WhatsApp. WhatsApp group was used to communicate all guidelines and guidelines.

Teachers have been using WhatsApp as a medium to carry out the learning process and especially to conduct the online assessment of speaking skills, as it is convenient and easy to use. It does not require much internet quota and is easy to access. Almost all students have good WhatsApp access as they also often use WhatsApp to communicate with others in their daily lives. Moreover, teachers choose WhatsApp because it has many features that facilitate the progress of the learning process, especially for oral assessments. WhatsApp features are: text messages, pictures, videos, audio and documents.

This is online with Evriana (2020, pp. 22-23) who stated that the types of social media that can be used in online speech theory are: Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApps. Then, when conducting the online speaking assessment, the teacher used the WhatsApp application as an online learning medium. All activities of the learning process were carried out in the entire WhatsApp group. WhatsApp is a popular means of communication used today. The teacher gave an oral assessment via WhatsApp. All instructions and rules were given through the WhatsApp group. Teachers have used WhatsApp as a medium to carry out the learning process and especially to conduct online speech assessment because it is convenient and easy to use, does not require a lot of internet space and is easily accessible. access. WhatsApp is an application used to conduct text, voice and video chats (Fahrudin, winarni & Winarno, 2021, page 2). Teachers claim that this application has many features such as chat, video, pictures, documents and voice notes. Teachers used video features to assess oral expression. Because, with video, teachers can evaluate students; speaking ability. She not only assessed the students' voices, but also saw the students' expressions in the performance of the task.

In relation to speaking tasks assessment, the teacher took the steps to take the online speaking assessment in the following steps. First, the teacher uses an investigative approach at the beginning of the learning activity by showing some examples of speaking, such as a dialogue or a video of procedural text examples. The teacher then explains the content of the video and the students pay attention to the video or audio provided. Second, the teacher then asked them to identify the expressions used in the video. To see if you understand, I will give you the task of creating your own dialogue after identifying expressions. The students are

tasked with creating a video and sending it to the teacher. However, before creating a video, students should check with their teacher about the content of the video. Students are asked to open the review that the teacher posted in the WhatsApp group on their mobile phone or laptop.

The types of online speaking practice used by teachers are video dialogues and video presentations. It correlates with the theory that there are several types of online conversation tasks, for example: role-playing, online debate, video presentation, dialogue, online group project (Evriana 2020). Based on the interview results, teachers only used two speaking tasks: dialogue and video presentation.

In terms of grading, teachers have two options for providing feedback to students: the first is to post scores on social media through a WhatsApp group and the second is to provide direct feedback, such as comments on responses or student responses. When noting students' speaking ability, English teachers focus on several aspects of student assessment during speaking lessons, which are: (1) develop ideas; (2) pronunciation, (3) vocabulary; (4) expression; and (5) Grammar.

In the aspects of assessing students' speaking ability, some aspects are correlated with Brown's theory that the correct criteria for assessing aspects of speaking ability are as follows: fluency, pronunciation, accuracy and vocabulary (Brown, 2001, p.168). Other aspects were not correlated with theory, because when assessing verbal expression, teachers did not assess aspects of fluency and accuracy. During the feedback process, teachers used the feedback step of the pandemic online speech assessment such as: Oral feedback through voice notes and scores. There are four types of teacher feedback in online speaking assessments (Idayani & Rugaiyah, 2017, p. 10):1) scoring, 2) description of the criteria plus scoring, 3) oral comment, 4) Written comments. In these types of comments, teachers only use oral and written comments.

The assessment tool that teachers use in online assessment is the rubric. Before giving students an assessment, the teacher builds an oral assessment assessment sheet so that the development of ideas, pronunciation, vocabulary, expression and grammar are the five criteria of the section.

Teachers use assessment rubrics to assess students' speaking skills. The rubric is a tool to help teachers evaluate student learning outcomes. it's consistent with the theory that the rubric is a student assessment tool commonly used in all assessments, including online assessments, and can help teachers grade students (Si'arifah, 2019, page 35). A rubric is a set of criteria, rules, or standards that can be used to evaluate a person's work or the completion of a task (Berger, cited in Ulker, 2017, p. 135).

The problems experienced by teachers in the implementation of online speaking assessment cover lack of students critical thinking ability, responsibility in performing the tasks, fewer media used. In the 21st century, learning, especially in online speaking assessment. Students must be able to think critically in relation to higher order thinking (HOTS). Evaluating higher order thinking almost always involves the addition of three principles: a) Present something that students think, usually given by the teacher in the form of text, pictures, scenarios, original documents or problems; b) using material that is new to the student, not yet discussed in class; c) distinguish between difficulty level (easy or difficult) and thinking level (low-level thinking or memory or high-level thinking) and control each problem separately (Winaryati, 2018, p. ten). Meanwhile, when performing online speech assessment, students are not capable of critical thinking. From the results of the interview, the teacher explained that the students were not capable of acquiring higher order thinking skills. Although the task the teacher gave the student was to create the dialogue, he was always helped by the teacher.

The next skill that students should have in 21st century skills demand is accountability. As stated in the National Research Council identifies one of the skills a student should have as responsibility (as cited in Winaryati, 2018, pp. 8-9). The 21st Century Assessment Accountability Competency is how students can take responsibility for themselves and others. During the assessment, some students responded less positively. The children were silent only when the teacher asked about their understanding. Students answer the teacher's question, only 4-6 students answer and answer the teacher's question. Other accountability issues related to student discipline. They don't do quests and they don't collect quests.

Furthermore, the teacher's problem is the student's response during the online oral expression assessment. In the process of teaching and learning, students are less active in responding.

The children were silent only when the teacher asked about their understanding. Students answer the teacher's question, only 4-6 students answer and answer the teacher's question. The second issue concerns student discipline. They didn't do the job. They just attended the class, but they didn't do the duty. The second problem, students do not collect lessons.

Information literacy (IL), information and communication technology (ICT) skills and media literacy are the three main components of digital literacy (ML) (Chu, et al., 2016 , p.5). Media is one of the components of digital knowledge. The ability to access, understand, evaluate, and disseminate messages in several formats is known as media literacy (Namle, cited in Chu, et al., 2016, p. 5). Media or platforms that teachers can use in online speaking assessment are: Zoom, Google Meet, YouTube, Google Class. Other researchers say that there is a There are many platforms that teachers can use in conducting online speaking assessments, divided into six categories (Anwas et al., 2020, 43). They are: Social for communication and interaction (Facebook, Myspace, linked in, etc.); To chat or chat on social networks (Skype, Google talk, phorum); Use social media to distribute materials, such as images and videos (YouTube, share slides, comments, WhatsApp. Instagram); Publication media (word press, blog, Wikipedia, dig, wikia); Microblogging, a social networking platform with some limitations (twitter, plazes, plurk); Social games (doof, pogo, kongregate) are games you can play with other people.

When conducting online assessment, teachers only use WhatsApp medium. Teachers affirm that WhatsApp is an accessible medium for many people. In addition, he also explained that many students do not have the necessary skills to access media education. The teacher explained that some students do not understand the use of other platforms such as:

zoom in, meet Google. Critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity must all be compatible with the types of speaking tasks required in the 21st century. Interviews, judgment tests, role plays, group exercises , work samples, and evaluation/performance standards are all examples of oral tasks that can be used in online assessment (Asri, 2019, p.335). In addition, there are several types of online voice assessments such as: Online Presentation, Online Group Project, Role Play, Online Debate (Evriana, 2020).

However, in the process of conducting online speech assessment, teachers only use video conversations. The type of speaking assignments teachers give students are not aligned with 21st century skills such as critical thinking and creativity.

In overcoming those problem, teachers carried out some strategies. Among students' shortcomings in responsibility, critical thinking and media literacy are less. Teachers also have solutions to fill in the gaps. To overcome these disadvantages, teachers suggest a strategy such as: motivate students. He affirmed that motivation is an essential factor to support students in the learning process, especially in task performance. The ways teachers motivate are: Ask students why, give them advice, and give them a chance to try. The purpose of the teacher is to motivate students to: guide them to be enthusiastic in learning and aware of their responsibilities as students.

The other strategy to overcome the problems in students' critical thinking skills is when the teacher gives them a text and asks the students to read and understand the content of the text. Then the teacher asks questions about the content of the text. Students are asked to answer the teacher's questions orally. This strategy can also be used to develop students' problem-solving abilities. If students can learn critical thinking skills, they can also learn problem-solving skills.

The urgent point of taking the online speaking assessment is lacking digital literacy skills among students. Based on the interview results, teachers confirmed that the role of the government in the development of education, especially the development of technology is very important. The teacher explained that the government should make it easier for students to access technology.

The last strategy is for less media-savvy students. Students cannot access facilities such as zoom and Google Meet. They also have access to technology such as computers. The teacher said that many students asked how to use the app or the platform. This is why teachers only use WhatsApp as a medium in the teaching, learning and assessment process. However, teachers have two strategies to fill these gaps, such as: teachers show them how to use the online platform, and sometimes teachers use a zoom meeting for several weeks. The reason the teacher only used the online app for a few weeks was because he saw the potential of his students.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on teaching mode the teacher used, especially during the transition from offline to online learning. The implementation of online speech assessment during the epidemic period in vocational schools is divided into six aspects: activities, media, assessment tasks, scoring and tools. The activities or steps conducted by teachers in the online assessment of speaking skills are providing a video as an example, identifying the expression and mentioning the expression using voice notes, assigning the students a task to make the dialogue video according to the Topics provided by the teacher. The teacher used all speaking strategies such as: imitating, interacting, reacting, interacting and extending. The media used to conduct the online speaking assessment is WhatsApp. The type of speaking assessment task is dialogue . the speaking aspects which are assessed by the teacher are: idea development, pronunciation, expression, grammar and vocabulary. The assessment tool used by the teacher is rubric.

The problem during online speaking assessment in the pandemic era at vocational high school with the 21st century assessment are: 1) the students not able to achieve higher order thinking skill such as: analyze, evaluate and create (students' skill in critical thinking; 2) in the learning process many students are not active and respond and did not not collect the task ; 3) the media or online platform that teacher used in the implementation of online speaking assessment is only WhatsApp, and 4) in online speaking assessment the teacher only use video dialogue as a type of speaking task (the types of online speaking assessment).

The teacher's strategies to overcome the less responsibility skill of students is by using student response system strategy and give the students motivation. While the strategy to overcome the problems in students' lack of critical thinking by giving them a stimulus to think critically such as giving them a text and asking them to read and comprehend the content of the text Furthermore, the strategy to overcome the problems of the students' deficiency in media literacy is to give them ways such as tutorials of how to access online platforms.

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