

Chapter 15

Trauma-Informed and Inclusive Assessment of Productive Skills in Online Emergency ELT Classes: A Netnography Study of an English Language Training Center

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ABSTRACT

Using a netnography design, the current study attempts to discover in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, how teachers alter their assessment approach to account for students' vulnerability to traumas and how institutional regulations and administrative actions impact these assessment plans in online emergency ELT speaking and writing classes. Three teachers from beginner, intermediate, and advanced classes took part in the investigation throughout 12 asynchronous and synchronous sessions. The qualitative data were collected using observation notes and interviews with the three teachers. The findings reveal that although the teachers have been trained in trauma-informed assessment practices prior to their course, they could not always succeed in implementing these practices. However, it is worth noting that their classrooms often share the common characteristics of a trauma-informed approach, and institutional policies and administrative decisions could significantly affect the trauma-informed practices of the online emergency ELT classrooms.

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INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization's announcement of the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020) has significantly reshaped many aspects of education around the world, including assessment in language teaching and learning. This pandemic has forced people to follow strict social distancing policies, minimizing direct face-to-face interactions in public. As a result, it has globally compelled educational institutions to shift from traditional face-to-face classrooms to online classrooms. Although some developed nations have efficiently started their academic school year online even before the pandemic (Allen & Seaman, 2013), other developing nations can encounter several difficulties in implementing COVID-19-prompted online education due to time and resource constraints. In Vietnam, for example, when over 20 million students must resort to online learning (Ministry of Education and Training, 2020), there are unsorted burning issues, ranging from the shortage of accessible technological devices, unstable Internet connection, lack of educational resources, and heavy workload for instructors, to limited information and communication technology skills (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Can & Silman-Karanfil, 2021). COVID-19, indeed, has brought tremendous challenges to education in developing countries, especially those without a sophisticated ready-made system for online education. Notwithstanding that many articles have explored how teachers can adapt their teaching strategies to meet the new challenges of COVID-19, only a few would consider assessment in an online emergency remote teaching and learning environment. Research on assessment strategies in online emergency ELT classes is even scarcer in some developing nations, whose facilities for learning and teaching online may be insufficient, including countries like Vietnam. In a study by Dinh and Nguyen (2020), the researchers surveyed the level of immediate satisfaction with online learning of 186 undergraduate Vietnamese social work students during COVID-19. Although they discovered that in general, the participants were more satisfied with face-to-face assessment methods and other offline learning formats than with the online delivery mode, it remained unclear whether the distinctive features of crisis-prompted teaching and learning such as the learners' psychological states and health were rigorously considered during the process of online learning and assessment of the study (Dinh & Nguyen, 2020).

On the other hand, among a few studies into language assessment strategies prompted by COVID-19, a large proportion mainly focus on the teachers' and students' preference towards different types of online assessment or the difficulties that they might encounter. In Yulianto and Mujtahid (2021)'s case study with 12 teachers, the authors concluded that these participants had negative attitudes toward online assessment due to unstable internet connections, students' lack of enthusiasm, and the lack of test validity. Additionally, while some studies have reflected on how teachers who usually teach face-to-face ELT classes cope with the transition to the online context (Lemay et al., 2021), the contemporary research in the field has not provided us with enough detailed insights into the differences between testing practices in an emergency ELT class prompted by COVID-19 and an online ELT class in the usual context. Furthermore, a body of research has explored how teachers utilize online assessment during COVID-19 to sustain education, but there exists a significant gap in research into how teachers may conduct their trauma-informed and pandemic-based assessment that specifically includes the students who have suffered physical, emotional, mental, technological, and academic disadvantages from the Coronavirus outbreaks (Abduh, 2021; Chung & Choi, 2021). Many questions about assessment in times of pandemic are still open to answers. Research has not yet investigated how teachers assess and evaluate students who must be absent from the in-class tests because of infection or hospitalization. It is also questionable

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