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The Deviated Role of the Online Home-Delivered Assessment during the has been Pandemic of Covid-19: A Case Study of the Experience of Palestine Technical University – Kadoorie (PTUK) in Assessing English Language Introductory Courses

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Abstract- *The aim of this study was to investigate the* deviated role of the online home-delivered assessment during the has been pandemic situation of the Covid-19, and also to investigate, from the researcher's point of view, and as a case study , the experience of Palestine Technical University – Kadoorie (PTUK) in assessing and evaluating English language introductory courses, namely, English (1) no. (15200106), English (2), no. (15200112), and Remedial English, no. (15200099). To achieve the purpose of this study, the researcher followed a qualitative analytical approach which was implemented for the available related research, which was casted in a relative chronological order, in a survey-like orientation. Findings of this study indicate that the role of the assessment process, through the online home-delivered mode, has been deviated and perverted because of the fact that a considerable number of students, learners, and exam-takers, all over the world, have been able to resort to various cheating practices and strategies that have negatively affected the maxims of reliability, validity, fairness, and equality; these maxims have long been supposed to be safeguarded by and through any assessment process, and for them to be profoundly violated by the cheating practices, in the online home-delivered assessment process, resulted in doubtful educational judgments, unreal grades, misleading feedback, and, in addition, an anticipated measurable learning outage and loss.

Keywords: *online home-delivered assessment, evaluation process, cheating, english language courses, exam-takers, moral outage, ethical loss, learning outage, covid-19.*

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The Deviated Role of the Online Home-Delivered Assessment during the has been Pandemic of Covid-19: A Case Study of the Experience of Palestine Technical University – Kadoorie (PTUK) in Assessing English Language Introductory Courses

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Keywords: online home-delivered assessment, evaluation process, cheating, english language courses, exam-takers, moral outage, ethical loss, learning outage, covid-19.

I. Introduction

Educational institutions all over the world were taken by surprise during the early wave of Covid-19, and, subsequently, as stated by Jiao & Lissitz (2020)" the pandemic leads to a lot of issues related to instruction, learning, and assessment." These institutions, especially universities and colleges, were steered towards an exclusive goal of insuring the continuity of the teaching-learning process through resorting instantly to an online home-delivered mode of education, which was completely enhanced, the researcher believes, while overpassing some vital related conditions and prerequisites such as educators' readiness and attitudes towards such a move, students' readiness, attitudes, and the amount of connectivity to the internet students can have at their disposal, and most importantly, as far as this study is concerned, the wide risk margins of the home-delivered forms of assessment and evaluation: the first margin is the strong possibility of not providing authentic assessment and evaluation processes that are as valid, reliable, and fair as they are supposed to be , and the second margin is the jeopardizing cheating practices that have been enhanced by a considerable number of students and exam-takers all over the world; maxims of validity, reliability, and fairness are critical, in this sense, because any assessment and evaluation processes have long been supposed to safeguarde them by enabling educators to grant whomever what she\he deserves in accordance with individual differences and the variable levels of distinguishability among students and exam –takers; in this sense, and also as far as this study is concerned, assessment and evaluation

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processes carry special concern because they are viewed as indispensable pillars upon which the whole educational process is built, and, in addition, as essential indicative calibers of how far learning has reached so far, enabling educators to spot weakness or else strength of the whole process in order to take related judgments; Sandars, Correia, Dankbaar, de Jong, Goh, Hege, & Pusic (2020, cited in Simamora, 2020) have stated that "Evaluation is essential for sustainability since it provides insights about the extent to which new approaches are achieving their intended and potential benefits, and also the variety of factors that enable and constrain effective online learning."

The educational process in Palestine Technical University –Kadoorie (PTUK), where the researcher has been teaching various English introductory courses since 2004, and as the case has been in most universities and colleges elsewhere, has also been affected by the sudden and disrupting impact of the Covid-19 situation and, as a result, its demanding effects; to ensure the continuity of education in (PTUK), a complete resort to an online home-delivered mode of learning and assessment, which has been orchestrated to include all courses , with no exceptions, including the English introductory courses, i.e. English (1) no. (15200106), English (2), no. (15200112), and Remedial English, no. (15200099). PTUK (LMS)- Moodle)and the (Zoom) application have been mainly used as a carrier to home-deliver such a mode of learning and assessment; English introductory courses have mainly been home-delivered and assessed using the (PTUK (LMS)-Moodle) in spite of the fact that - (LMS)-Moodle), as proposed by a bulk of the available related literature, constitutes a learning environment and does not much correspond with summative assessment (Jabsheh (2020); Jabsheh (2020) has added that" using (LMS)-Moodle) with an only multiple-choice matrix to measure students' achievement in English language courses may not be a dependable methodology because the (LMS)-Moodle) is a problem in itself and can have an impact on the reliability, validity, and the security of the exam." Moreover, it can be proposed that the home-delivered mode, which, expediently, has been facilitated by Palestine Technical University–Kadoorie (PTUK), has also been propelled by the priority of ensuring the continuity of the educational process rather than considering , as a priority, the risk margins of the online home–delivered assessment and evaluation processes endangered by the nearly sure potentiality of the cheating practices, which had been exploited by a considerable number of students of the (PTUK) as well as students of most universities and colleges all over the world. This odd reality, in regard to the home-delivered assessment and evaluation processes, has resulted in, depending on the researchers' mere experience, another odd reality in the form of unusual higher marks and averages in English language courses, though English is taught, in PTUK, as a foreign language; these unusual marks and averages, as far as the researcher has opined, are enough indicators that cheating practices cannot be denied, and that more investigation and review is highly needed in regard to the role(s) of the assessment and evaluation procedures during the has been pandemic situation of the Covid-19.

Cheating practices, which have been exploited by a considerable number of students and exam-takers in the online home-delivered assessment formats, in colleges and universities all over the world and not only in (PTUK), the researcher believes, are as risky and dangerous to the educational process and learning as Covid-19 virus to our health as they –cheating practices- have deviated and perverted the educational and moral roles of the assessment process, as instead of being a positive tool of developing the whole educational and learning processes through providing formidable judgments and real insights into students and learners' levels of achievement, they have facilitated, as proposed by previous research, an educational - learning outage as most of the educators' judgments have been mostly fake and do not reflect the reality of the teaching and learning processes; moreover, and alarmingly, cheating practices, which have been exploited by a considerable number of students and exam-takers, in the online home-delivered assessment formats, has perverted the role of the assessment and evaluation process as instead of being tools to promote and elevate human values such as fairness, justice, and equality, they have reinforced ethical loss and moral outage as cheating itself, the researcher believes, should be classified as a deviated and perverted form of a normal learning behavior, and that the tendency to cheat, from the part of students , learners, and exam-takers, especially in the absence of physical monitoring, amounts to a moral malefaction.

II. Statement of the Problem

During the has been Covid-19 pandemic situation, the bulk of the previous research acknowledged that the online home delivered mode of assessment and evaluation, especially in universities and colleges all over the world as well as in Palestine, has caused a heavy toll on the educational process: the validity, reliability, credibility and fairness of this mode of assessment and evaluation have been under deep questioning and doubt because of the cheating practices that have been exploited by a considerable number of students, learners and exam-takers all over the world; educators ,elsewhere as well as in (PTUK), have not been able to firmly confirm that cheating practices had not been adopted by a considerable number of students, learners and exam-takers, while in some occasions, alas, under the mere eyes of parents or family members. The undeniable and nearly

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certain occurrence of cheating practices, in this sense, has yielded a perverted and deviated context of the role of the assessment and evaluation processes as, during the pandemic situation of Covid-19, assessment and evaluation formats have provided fake judgments about how far learning has reached and how far goals have been achieved, and instead of safeguarding maxims such fairness, equal opportunities, just judgments, and real grading, they were repeatedly violated. Accordingly, this deviated perverted role of online home-delivered mode of assessment and evaluation processes is proposed to cause two facets of loss and outage: the first one is in the form of a relative measurable educational loss due the fact that the majority of the attained marks and averages have not reflected the real level of students' achievement and competency, and the second one, as proposed by this study, in the form of moral and ethical outage due to the fact that resorting to cheating practices, from the part of students, learners, and exam-takers, alarmingly signals a perverted learning behavior that should be viewed totally odd, especially in the absence of physical proctoring.

III. The Significance of the Study

One aspect of the significance of this study lies in the fact that its investigative scope, as far as the researcher knows, has never been surpassed by previous research as to approach the deviated role of the home-delivered mode of assessment and evaluation processes during the has been pandemic situation of the Covid-19; during the has been pandemic situation of Covid-19, the bulk of the available related research, generally, addressed cheating practices and their impact on the validity, reliability, credibility and fairness of the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation processes, and, as a result, proposed a nearly sure amount of loss in the form of learning outage, but although the fact that this kind of learning outage lies not within the investigative scope of this study, and although this study goes with the importance of more investigating that kind of learning outage, it considers the ethical and the moral outage as equally important, to be approached, as the learning outage, and additionally views both types of outages to be a kind of a collateral result of the cheating practices in the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation processes; moreover, some previous related literature such as Yamamoto & Ananou (2015, cited in Salhab, Hashaikeh, Najjar, Wahbeh & Affouneh, 2021) concludes that "There is a lack of existed research that is intended to stimulate ethical values beside cognitive abilities and creativity." Alshehri, Mordhah, Alsibiani, Alsobhi & Alnazzawi (2020, cited in Salhab , Hashaikeh, Najjar, Wahbeh & Affouneh, 2021) further explains that "Numerous problems in society in general surfaced while implementing online learning, issues around ethical assessment of student work and concerns about academic misconduct have been amplified." As also cited by Salhab, Hashaikeh, Najjar, Wahbeh & Affouneh (2021) it was concluded that "Palestinian code of ethics for teaching profession revealed a lack of online learning ethics, thus, the purpose of the current study was to introduce an online learning code of ethics in the crisis learning environment." As a result, again, this study can steer the attention of educators, English language teachers, curriculum planners, and educational psychologists towards this ethical and moral outage which was caused by the act of resorting to cheating practices from the part of the students and exam-takers, in nearly all higher education institutions, all over the world.

IV. Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to augment the main argument and proposal of this study; accordingly, this review is sub-divided into three sections, and casted in a relative chronological order; each section of this review is provided with a discretionary epitome distilling the main argument of each section: The first section reviews the status of English Foreign Language (EFL) online home-delivered evaluation and assessment processes during the Pandemic situation of the Covid-19, while the second section generally reviews the status of online home-delivered assessment and evaluation during the pandemic situation of the Covid-19, and the final section classifies some important counter cheating procedures an techniques in the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation during the pandemic situation of the Covid-19.

a) *The status of (EFL) Online home-delivered evaluation and assessment processes during the Pandemic situation of the Covid-19.*

Lin & Warschauer (2015, cited in Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020) indicate that "a research on online language learning carried out during a pandemic is very rarely found, especially in English as Foreign Language (EFL) context in secondary school settings as most online language learning researches have been done in tertiary education level." Atmojo & Nugroho (2020) conclude that "It enriches the knowledge of how EFL secondary school teachers in Indonesia carry out online EFL learning in a sudden and completely unprepared situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic." Destianingsih & Satria (2020) sum up that" There are several tools that have been used during English online learning such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Google Meet, E-mail, WhatsApp. However, to replace the physical meeting with the students, Zoom is one

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of the effective tools that can be used as virtual face to face meeting. The teachers provide all learning materials that can be accessed by the students in online English learning and create interactive and convenient atmosphere during online class. "Khatoony & Nezhadmehr (2020) conclude that" Online learning has some problems like lack of learners' awareness toward materials. I think EFL learners cannot concentrate on the materials that we send them. Additionally, although computer aided systems are very well-known for evaluation, reliability of learners' answers can be under question in some parts." Khatoony & Nezhadmehr (2020) also add that "Online learning has some problems like lack of learners' awareness toward materials. I think EFL learners cannot concentrate on the materials that we send them. Additionally, although computer aided systems are very well-known for evaluation, reliability of learners' answers can be under question in some parts." Astuti & Solikhah (2021) conclude that "teachers believe that teaching English though online system is hard to apply because the internet quota is limited and students do not have access for the online platforms such as internet, email, virtual. Students have the access only for the android service, that use only Google meet or google classroom that are free of charge." Astuti & Solikhah (2021) also add that "In general, teaching English online is perceived problematic. The availability of support system and internet quota is the main problem. The aims of teaching are wrongly perceived in that knowledge competence is to teach reading and listening. In addition, the skill competence is perceived to teach speaking and writing. Teaching methods applicable for online teaching are basically Google meet and Google classroom because students have only android to access the online teaching. The evaluation process is fully relied on Google."

To sum up, the previous review confirmed that studies investigating online language learning during the pandemic are rarely found, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting; teaching English online is perceived as to be problematic because of various reasons: *First,* in most cases, EFL learners could not be able to concentrate on the material that is sent to them, via online and in a home-delivered fashion, because of some disrupting elements and distractors: first, some number of students did have technical problems in accessing the internet or they, even, could not have cellphones or other devices to be online, and, as a result, they resorted to using parents' devices which may not be as effective and compatible to the requirements of online language learning and testing as they were presumed to be; *second,* online language teaching and learning was confined to few online applications such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Google Meet, E-mail, and WhatsApp, but, Zoom, exclusively was considered to be the most effective application that could be used as virtual face to face meeting; *third,* the previous review confirmed that the (ELT) assessment and evaluation processes, during the has been pandemic situation of Covid-19, has mostly relied on some compatible applications that are centrally connected with the search engine (Google), and this heavy dependence on such a mode places reliability of the students answers' under deep questioning and doubt, and, moreover, poses a real challenge of how to maintain the validity, fairness, and authenticity of the whole assessment process; fourth, by the same token, and most importantly, the previous review concluded that establishing a valid and reliable (ELT) formats of assessment during the pandemic outbreak, which are, to some extent, similar to those of pre-pandemic situation has been proved to be so hard and problematic; moreover, it should be added that it has been so difficult for (EL) educators to guarantee safe and efficient counter-cheating measures while using the online home-delivered mode. Although the previous review mostly considered many setbacks in (ELT), especially in a sudden and unprepared situation which has been encountered since the pandemic outbreak, some research indicated some proposed successful endeavors of online (EFL) teaching, learning, and testing.

b) *The status of online home-delivered assessment and evaluation during the pandemic situation of the Covid-19.*

Robles & Braathen (2002, cited in Tartavulea & Petre, 2020) indicate that "online assessment requires a more ongoing systematic approach than traditional ones." *Thiele (2003,* cited in Syahrin & Salih, 2020) states that "there is also an urgent need to accurately assess the quality of the online course delivery." *Downing & Haladyna (2004,* cited in Rahim, 2020) concludes that" Validity is equally important in online assessments. Threats to validity include context under-representation (CU), which relate to issues of sampling and blueprinting, and construct-irrelevant variance (CIV), which relate to item quality, passing score determination and integrity of assessments, including issues of cheating and examination security."

Pallof and Pratt in Gudea (2008, Cited in Destianingsih & Satria, 2020) state "that teaching online isn't always easy, as it calls for guidance and difficult work. It is concluded that instructors should assume to spend extra time in developing the materials and activities, pupil assessment, and other direction related to online teaching." *Baran (2011); Wang & Torrisi-Steele (2015,* as cited in Motala & Menon, 2020) indicate that "Online teaching requires planning, understanding of curriculum demands and assessing strategies for teaching and learning, assessing technologies to be deployed, determining the assessment regime taking into account the need for

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robustness, integrity and validity of assessments, and review and evaluation." *Gikandi, Morrow & Davis (2011,* cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021) concludes that "One of the critical issues is the validity and reliability of assessment using online platforms that met the intended purposes" Richardson (2015, Cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021) confirm that "Before educators decide to go for online examination, they may consider other alternative assessment options such as assignments, writing reports (that require students to choose different titles and different settings from classroom exercises), or open-book examination. Evidence shows that assessment by coursework alone or by blending coursework and examinations tends to produce higher marks than assessment by examinations alone." *Walsh (2015);* Sandars (2010, cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021) conclude that " the disadvantages of online assessment include software costs to develop educational content and supporting infrastructure, for example, internet servers, data storage, computer-aided learning rooms." Walsh (2015); Sandars (2010, cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021) also add that "Other problems of online assessment are unreliable systems (due to poor network connectivity, hardware, software, power supply), lack of online and physical security systems to safeguard assessments and cheating." vd Westhuizen (2016) and Types of online assessments [Internet] (2020, cited in Rahim, 2020) confirms that "Formats or types of online assessments can initially be bewildering but as discussed above they can be grouped according to Bloom's taxonomy levels, formative versus summative, or both." *Aliyyah, Rachmadtullah, Samsudin, Syaodih, Nurtanto & Tambunan (2020)* conclude that "A teacher cannot fairly conduct assessments, which include cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in an online environment. Indeed, teachers often felt that proper assessment of the cognitive aspect was challenging to do fairly because of the intervention of parents who helped provide answers to the assignments/tests given by a teacher. Assessment of psychomotor aspects is often better. Assignments such as singing or practicing specific movements can be assessed better by a teacher because these are based on student abilities without parental intervention when recording." Aliyyah, Rachmadtullah, Samsudin, Syaodih, Nurtanto & Tambunan (2020) *add that it is "difficult to assess cognitive aspects because of the intervention of parents to provide answers to their children, so the assessment is not fair enough to describe the understanding of students."* Destianingsih & Satria (2020) point out that "most of the students live in different districts in which the accesses of the internet are restricted. This situation makes the students to find the best spot to get better Internet signal." *Flaherty (2020, cited in Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020)* adds that "Kevin Gannon, the Director of Center for Excellence in Teaching, Grand View University in a contemporary publication, has opined that he's a strong advocate of considerable modification of grading systems during this pandemic because it is unimaginable to claim that learners are getting the same learning experiences and chances through online learning during this pandemic and this will make assessment more complicated." *Jiao & Lissitz (2020)* concludes that" Cheating on the tests and on the homework is also likely to be a problem and analytic and observational approaches based on modern online video devices will be offered in this area, as well." *Korkmaz & Toraman (2020)* sum up that "The problems the educators experienced during COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey are about students' internet connection problems, lack of educator-student interaction, not being able to make a reliable assessment of learning, lack of knowledge about how to evaluate the learners' knowledge and skills, not being able to provide skills teaching, not being able to reach all the learning outcomes determined for learning, difficulty in providing feedback to students, difficulty in teaching according to the individual interests and abilities of the students, lack of student motivation, school/university administrators' attitude and behaviors towards educators who teach online during the obligatory online education period." *Korkmaz & Toraman (2020)* adds that "both state/public and private school/university educators stated that reliable assessment could not be made in the online education environment." *Motala, & Menon (2020)* concludes that" Assessment became a major challenge, and academic regulations were changed to emphasize continuous formative assessment." *Purwanto, Asbari, Fahlevi, Mufid, Agistiawati, Cahyono & Suryani (2020, Cited in Supriyanto, Hartini, Irdasari, Miftahul, Oktapiana & Mumpuni, 2020)* state that "Teachers also have problems related to work motivation due to the emergence of the burden of paying for electricity, internet costs, and excessive data security problems due to WFH." *Putri, Purwanto, Pramono, Asbari, Wijayanti & Hyun (2020)* conclude that "the three aspects of assessment, namely assessing, recording, and reporting, may look different in term four of the academic year 2020. Teachers must find a way to give feedback and provide an authentic assessment under the current unique circumstance. Lastly, boredom and social life aspects of students and teachers are another concern as home learning gets longer than expected."

Rahim (2020) concludes that "Cheating is a concern especially in summative assessments in professional courses such as medicine. Research data on cheating in online assessments is inconclusive. On the one hand, cheating seems to be a real cause for concern." *Rahim (2020); Rowe (2004)* cite that "reports of approximately 70% of American high school seniors admitting to cheating. On the other hand, even if the prevalence is high, it had not been conclusively shown that cheating in online environments is significantly

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more prevalent than in conventional assessments ((Boitshwarelo, Reedy & Billany (2017) and The realities of cheating in online classes & exams [Internet] (2020)), and Cheating in online assessment is not easier than other assessment situations (The realities of cheating in online classes & exams [Internet]2020); in fact, proctoring online examinations via human and software means have become big business (Krueger K. How to catch students cheating on online tests [Internet].) and cheating have actually become more difficult (Ross (2020))." *Rahim (2020); Westhuizen (2016, cited In Tuah & Naing, 2021)* state "institutional and educator readiness are essential requirements of the online assessment. Institutional readiness refers to institutional policies, resources and practices, for instance, internet coverage and availability of the IT support team. Internet access is a critical infrastructure for online teaching. IT support team is an essential resource during the transition from traditional to online teaching in many HEIs. Educator readiness refers to educator's acceptance and 'buy-in' when changing to online teaching and learning that include taking up training for teaching methods, assessment and online applications." Vala, Vachhani & Sorani (2020) conclude that "medical students prefer traditional teaching for theory and practical classes." *Muhammad & Ockey (2021)* state that "some of the challenges that high-stakes standardized testing teams face in trying to maintain a high standard of test validity when moving an assessment to at-home delivery." Tuah & Naing (2021) conclude that "The online learning helps to minimize disruptions on teaching and compromising students' learning outcomes; however, there is limited evidence on effective online assessment methods used at Higher Education Institutions during pandemics." Tuah & Naing (2021) confirm that "The online and blended learning in higher education confronted educators with several critical issues related to teaching, learning and assessment in an unconventional environment." *Richardson (2015, Cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021)* concludes that "Potential problems with course work assessment include collusion, plagiarism and personation (in particular 'contract cheating' through the use of tailored essays). Gupta RP. "Educators may use online plagiarism checking platform", Harland T, Wald N. which are freely available at present, such as DupliChecker and Grammarly. Also, educators must recognise that there were differences between sciences and arts-type subjects which indicate distinctive assessment practices. Tuah & Naing (2021) Nonetheless, we recognize that there is no cheat-proof online and paper-based examinations. In the rapidly shifting situation of COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainties globally, educators in HEIs must explore the best approaches to curtail disruptions on students teaching and learning, and assessment. *Zhang, Wang, Yang & Wang (2020, Cited in Supriyanto, Hartini, Irdasari, Miftahul, Oktapiana & Mumpuni, 2020)* state that "In China, difficulties arise in the learning process due to weaknesses in online learning infrastructure, the inexperience of teachers, information gaps, complex environments at home, and unequal learning outcomes." Tuah & Naing (2021) conclude that "primary challenge for online examination is to prevent or control potential cheating among students." *Chirumamilla, Sindre & Nguyen-Duc (2020, cited In Tuah & Naing, 2021).* shows distinctive cheating practices during online examination such as impersonation, forbidden aids, peeking, peer collaboration, outside assistance and student–staff collusion. *Tuah & Naing (2021)* The common possible cheating practices during the mock online examination include screen sharing among candidates, using multiple monitors, using a mobile phone, using Bluetooth technology headset, impersonation, taking a screenshot and sending to friends, and traditional ways such as notes on their palms or attached notes to computer monitors. *Farrah & al-Bakry (2020) conclude that* 'Evaluation methods (e.g. exams) were not accurate due to easy means of cheating. This shows that cheating during e-learning exams is an easy mean, which refers to serious danger that students will not trust e-learning as an accurate system for their grades. In addition to that, a university degree is not also accurate enough to be adopted which leads to a useless university degree. Universities need to use a surveillance system for students' fairness." Lally, The 18 Best Free Survey Tools for Customer Feedback Drive (2020, Cited in Tuah & Naing (2021) mentions that "The advantages of online assessment include costs saving (such as for printing costs, examination spaces, travel) and use of freely available online tools, e.g. SurveyMonkey, Google Form, HubSpot Forms, CANVAS free for teachers." Walsh (2015, Cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021) concludes that "The online assessment allows the delivery of constant and real-time feedback that can be given at a time and place appropriate for both the student or the educator." Reed, Shell, Kassis, Tartaglia, Wallihan, Mahan (2014, cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021) Smith & propose that "The online quiz is a method to assess the knowledge that promotes self-directed learning and may improve the effectiveness of teaching." Walsh (2015, Cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021) claim that "For viva-voce or actual clinical examinations conducted over online (via skype or zoom) would enable the assessor to observe and interact from a distance location, thus reduce costs (such as accommodation, travel and subsistence for both examiner and student) and eliminate difficulties of traditional clinical assessments (e.g. examination halls and printed paper) in medical education." Betlej (2013); Spivey & McMillan (2014, cited in Tuah & Naing , 2021) conclude that "the benefits of using online assessments are reduction of paper usage, decreased concerns over the security of transporting test papers, flexible time and

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venue, continuous feedback and random selection and reproducibility of exam questions." Gikandi, Morrow & Davis (2011, Cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021) indicate that "The value of online formative assessment tools includes enhancement of learner engagement and the creation of a learning community."

To sum up, the previous review indicated that there is limited evidence that online assessment methods, at Higher Education Institutions during the pandemic situation of Covid-19, were as effective as they had been supposed to be; however, online assessment practices are not an easy task as they need more time than the traditional ones and require more systematic orientations, in the sense that they – practices of online assessment- should be carefully and previously decided and planned. Online assessment, especially the home-delivered format, may not support any kind of control over students or learners' potential cheating practices, which have significantly been more prevalent in online modes than in conventional ones, and which represent a real threat to the validity and reliability of the formative and summative forms of assessment; the previous review, mainly Tuah & Naing (2021) and Chirumamilla, Sindre & Nguyen-Duc (2020), summarizes some of the cheating practices that online - exam takers normally exploit during formative or summative assessment: impersonation, forbidden aids, peeking, peer collaboration, outside assistance and student–staff collusion, screen sharing among candidates, using multiple monitors, using mobile phones, using Bluetooth technology headset, taking a screenshot and sending to friends, traditional ways such as notes on palms or attached notes to computer monitors, and, in addition, the potential parental support in the form of providing ready-made answers to the exam questions.

Some of the previous review, it should be stated, proposes some gains of online assessment, but not specifically the home-delivered mode, such as the economic cost-saving dimension, the possibility of being delivered at a fitting time for both the teacher and the exam-taker, encourages autonomous learning, can improve the practice of teaching, promotes distance interaction between teachers and students through the process of exchanging distance feedback, especially formative assessment which can enhance students' level of engagement, and, as a result, creating a learning community; in addition, Betlej (2013), Spivey & McMillan (2014) classified some benefits of using online assessments such as: reduction of paper usage, decreased concerns over the security of transporting test papers, flexible time and venue, continuous feedback and random selection and reproducibility of exam questions. The bulk of the previous review also categorized *some disadvantages and technical problems that may negatively affect the reliability, validity, fairness and authenticity, of such an assessment and evaluation processes, like the lack of the supporting technical infrastructure represented by internet servers, data storage, computer-aided learning rooms, poor network connectivity, hardware, software, power supply , in addition to the prominent problem of the rarity of online and physical security systems to safeguard assessment modes from the potential cheating strategies and techniques that can be enhanced by students and exam-takers; by the same token, the fairness of the online assessment is under deep questioning due to the fact that, in most cases, it- the online assessment- is home delivered to students in different areas of various Wi-Fi connectivity strength, and most importantly, accordingly, the doubtful process of anchoring the formative and the summative assessment formats to various cognitive domains that include the affective domain, the psychomotor domain, and, of course, higher levels of the cognitive hierarchy. The previous review acknowledged that lack of knowledge and skills of how to switch into online assessment during the pandemic of Covid-19, the attitudes of both teachers and students, the social and psychological demands, especially from the part of the teachers, the cost and bills of Wi-Fi connection, and a fitting electricity supply during the assessment session, all, stand for real challenges towards carrying out online home-delivered assessment fairly and reliably.* The previous review, indicated that although a considerable number of university educators go with the belief that a reliable assessment could not be made in the online home-delivered education environment, they have to abide by changing academic regulations that were dictated by most universities in order to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning, especially during the early stage of the pandemic of Covid-19, and as a result, to consider other alternative assessment options such as assignments, writing reports, and open-book examination, and, then, to accept considerable modification of grading systems on the proposed assumption that learners may not be able to get the same learning experiences and chances through online learning during this pandemic. Acknowledging the differences between sciences and arts-type subjects which indicate distinctive assessment practices, the previous review highlighted the need for online proctoring software and online anti-cheating ware as well as plagiarism checking platforms. Although most educational institutions all over the world were taken by surprise during the early wave of Covid-19, the previous review confirmed that institutional readiness and the educators' level of readiness of the online assessment, the availability of IT cadre's support to carry out some kind of authentic assessment and to safeguard the transaction of feedback, and a plan (B) in the form of training for such an unconventional environment of teaching, learning, and assessing, should have been considered long before switching to the online means.

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c) *Counter Cheating procedures in the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation during the pandemic situation of the Covid-19.*

Valenti, Neri, & Cucchiarelli (2003, Cited in Tuah & Naing, 2021) conclude that "essays are the most effective tool to evaluate learning outcomes that indicate learner aptitude to recall, organize and integrate viewpoints in the form of written work. The essay questions can assess learning outcomes that relate to the evaluation and synthesis levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy. Therefore, automated assessment for essays arguably offers a reliable scoring method that can be costly and time savings. The methods of automated assessment of free-text answers include Project Essay Grade (PEG), Intelligent Essay Assessor (IEA), Educational Testing service I, Electronic Essay Rater (E-Rater), C-Rater, BETSY, Intelligent Essay Marking System, SEAR, Paperless School free text Marking Engine and Automark. The main problems encountered in automated essay grading are lacking standard to calibrate human marks and ambiguous set of rules for selecting master texts." *Walker (2007,* cited in Rahim, 2020) recommend that "Whenever relevant and feasible, using more than one format for a particular domain is recommended to measure widely and deeply." *Bruff, Fisher, McEwen & Smith (2013,* cited in Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020) have found that "The integration of both face-to-face interaction (offline) and online materials have shown great implications to learners as they found it to be useful." *Boitshwarelo B, Reedy AK, Billany (2017,* cited in Rahim, 2020) conclude that "strategies to overcome this threat [cheating practices] begin by encouraging honesty among students." *BOZKURT & Hasan (2018,* Cited in Doyumğaç, Tanhan & Kiymaz , 2020) conclude that "biometric and information-based identity verification methods would be more reliable in online assessment and evaluation exams." *Bozkurt, A., & Sharma, R. C. (2020,* cited in Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020) state that "There exist needs for researchers in educational technology to direct research advancement toward the development of alternative assessment approaches that will be devoid of cheating and plagiarism with adequate attention on the recommendations of Feldman (n.d.) for unbiased and equitable assessment systems for future reoccurrence of such pandemic, since education system is vulnerable to external problems of this kind." *Chirumamilla, Sindre & Nguyen-Duc (2020,* cited In Tuah & Naing, 2021) classify some "various countermeasures for those cheating practices were using biometry, mingling, shuffling, random drawing, sequencing, broadcasting methods." *Doyumğaç, Tanhan & Kiymaz (2020)* confirm that "various measures should be taken to improve the validity and reliability of measurement and evaluation in e-exams or distance/online exams based on the principle of equal opportunity. Further studies and applications could be developed to ensure objectivity and justice in online exams." *Farrah & al-Bakry (2020)* suggest "Using oral and analytical exams to make the assessment more reliable." *Kaup, Jain, Shivalli, Pandey & Kaup (2020) conclude that* "Conducting a secure and valid online assessment is difficult. This can be made possible without violating privacy by enabling software such as Proctorio, a Google Chrome extension that monitors students taking exams online. Regular formative assessment on smaller topics with reflections can help in this regard." *Putri, Purwanto, Pramono, Asbari, Wijayanti & Hyun (2020)* state that "Another aspect of assessment, the summative assessment, has also become a big concern for teachers. With the enforcement of Indonesian government policy on restriction of social gathering, gathering students for a summative assessment is not an option. Consequently, teachers have to rack their brains to come up with an alternative for authentic assessment." *Rahim (2020)* has concluded that "As with all assessments, quality-control procedures including blueprinting are required to ensure adequate coverage and sampling of all learning outcomes." *Muhammad & Ockey (2021)* conclude that "the complexity and unfamiliarity with the different technologies involved in online at-home testing can affect students' test taking experience, as such, sending how-to videos designed for test takers with limited language proficiency before taking the assessment can be valuable." *Tuah & Naing (2021) conclude that* "The two key strategies recommended to manage online examination are 1) set up online questions using free software, and 2) use a free video-conferencing tool as closed-circuit television (CCTV) through the candidates' mobile phones for invigilation purposes." Tuah & Naing (2021) recommend "affordable and straightforward ways to minimize possible cheating attempts among candidates in low resource settings. The strategies are to check the identity of the candidate, check examination room and setting, record both audio and video throughout the examination, and closely observe on candidate's computer screen or monitor." Tuah & Naing (2021) also add that "The critical strategies recommended managing online examination involve setting up online questions using freely available software and utilizing free video conferencing tool as CCTV on mobile phones for invigilation purposes. Educators must consider readiness among students and teachers, cheating practices and student diversity when employing online assessment at HEIs. They can benefit from training for online learning and the assessment methods to prepare them better when facing global uncertainties such as COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, educators must evaluate the methods and their impact on students' learning outcomes."

To sum up, the previous review stressed the fact that conducting a secure and valid online

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assessment, during the pandemic, has been difficult because of the cheating practices, which have been utilized by a considerable number of students, learners, and exam-takers, and which has represented a major challenge that can steeply damage the reliability, validity, and fairness of the online assessment and evaluation processes, especially the home-delivered ones ; accordingly, the previous review classified some online procedures and applications that can be proposed to minimize the exam takers' potential cheating procedures, and then boost the reliability, validity, and fairness of the assessment process:

- Checking the identity of the candidate using biometric and information-based identity verification methods.
- Mingling, shuffling, random drawing, sequencing, broadcasting methods.
- Using oral and analytical exams to make the assessment more reliable.
- Checking the examination room and setting, and closely observing the candidate's computer screen or monitor.
- Recording both audio and video throughout the examination.
- Setting up online questions using freely available software and utilizing free video conferencing tool as CCTV on mobile phones for invigilation purposes.
- Setting up online questions using free software, and using a free video-conferencing tool as closed-circuit television (CCTV) through the candidates' mobile phones for invigilation purposes.
- Integrating both face-to-face interaction (offline) and online materials.
- Enhancing alternative, but authentic assessment approaches and procedures that can devoid cheating and plagiarism.
- Using more than one format of assessment for a particular domain.
- Changing the exam format through enhancing a wide range of essay questions which can assess learning outcomes that relate to the evaluation and synthesis levels of Bloom's taxonomy, while keeping in mind that the main problem encountered in automated essay grading has been the absence of standards and maxims that can calibrate human marking.

The application of the abovementioned procedures and applications should consider the maxim of exam-takers' privacy through enhancing privacy-preserving software and apps, and, furthermore, educators must evaluate the impact of such procedures and applications on students' learning outcomes, and consider various measures that should be taken to improve the validity and reliability of measurement and evaluation, in e-exams or distance-online exams in a way that goes with the principle of equal opportunity; by the same token, the students' diversity and readiness, students-bound technical and material demands, and the teachers' attitudes and readiness towards online home–delivered assessment should be taken into consideration when employing online assessment, especially at HEIs. The previous review assured that the summative assessment should have received extra attention and consideration as it could have been orchestrated and oriented to be as valid and reliable as possible.

Although the previous review acknowledged the fact that ensuring the objectivity and justice in online exams is hard to be achieved, but, at the same time, this should not overlook the fact that a better outcome would have been if all, who were involved in the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation, had received a correlative mock training simulating that of the pandemic situation of Covid-19, As a result, the previous review deduced that as long as the education system may always be vulnerable to external problems like that of Coid-19 pandemic situation, it should be rehabilitated, adjusted, and evaluated to yield a valid, reliable, and authentic alternative assessment. The previous review also foregrounded the idea that encouraging honesty among students is the most effective strategy towards reducing, or, may be, eliminating, the threat of the prevailing cheating strategies which, as the case has been, stands for a negative collateral effect of the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation processes during the pandemic of Covid-19.

V. Discussion

Online assessment and evaluation processes, during the has been pandemic situation of the Covid-19, have echoed two antithetical voices: one, quite generally, tones some kind of advocacy towards online assessment and evaluation processes, and the other wafts a skeptical, conservative, and doubtful stand. The advocacy towards online assessment formats, should be stated, is anchored to some proposed set of procedural and materialistic gains such as: the easiness and flexibility of execution with the minimum need of human load, the nearly zero paper consumption, the notable speed of execution and collecting students' responses, the precious chance of reducing the cost, and the proposed objectivity and accuracy of the grading procedure; while the doubtful and pessimistic stand is anchored to a solid argument that the validity, reliability, and fairness, of the online home-delivered assessment forms, are all under deep questioning and doubt because of the cheating practices which have mostly been exploited by a considerable number of students, learners , and exam-takers all over the world; those who take such a negative stand, also propose

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that exam-takers or some teachers have not been able to get equal chances to online connectivity, may not have been able to cover the expenses related to internet connectivity, and may not have acquired the needed technical skills to switch into such a mode of online home-delivered education; those, who take such a doubtful stand towards the online home-delivered assessment, further argue that no one of whom involved, in the assessment processes during the has been Pandemic of Covid-19, has been able confirm that cheating practices have not widely been taking place, and in some cases, sorrowfully, under the watchful eyes of the parents or family members. As a result, it can be stated that online assessment, especially the home-delivered form, may not guarantee any kind of control over students or learners' high potential attempts to exploit cheating practices, which have been significantly, as confirmed by the available related literature, more prevalent in online home-delivered educational environments, and which stand for a real threat to the validity, reliability, and the fairness of both the formative and summative forms of assessment and evaluation. It can also be stated that although a number of university educators, as presumed by some of the available related literature, and as far as the researcher has opined, have been to a great extent aware of the fact that reliable forms of assessment and examination cannot be achieved in the online home-delivered educational environment, they have had no escape but to abide by a sudden modification of the related academic regulations, which have been brokered by most universities, in order to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning processes, especially during the early stage of the pandemic, and as a result, to consider other alternative assessment options such as assignments, writing reports, and open-book examination, and, then, to accept considerable modification of grading systems because of the assumption that learners may not have been able to get the same learning experiences and chances through online learning during this pandemic. During the pandemic situation, the cheating practices, which have been practiced by a considerable number of exam-takers all over the world, as acknowledged by the available related literature, and as far as the researcher has believed in, represent a core problem that may greatly destroy the validity, reliability, and above all, the fairness of the assessment and evaluation processes; accordingly, some research prescribed some therapeutic cheating –proof measures that should have been exploited to boost the validity, reliability, and fairness of the online home-delivered assessment processes, and proposed some counter-procedures that could have functioned as a corresponding alternative to physical proctoring during the has been pandemic situation of Covid-19; the application of these cheating-proof measures and those alternative proctoring- procedures, it should be added, as confirmed by the a bulk of the available related literature, must not violate the principle of preserving students and exam-takers' privacy, and that they must be applied in parallel with encouraging self- motivated honesty, among students and exam-takers, as it can be the most effective cheating -counter strategy. The status of the online English Language Teaching (ELT), in a foreign setting, has been proposed to be problematic due to various causes and considerations such as: the varying availability of the internet and the speed of connectivity with the internet that are open to both teachers and students at a given point of time, the varying availability and strength of a Wi-Fi signal, students' readiness and attitudes, teachers' readiness and attitudes, and the varying availability of effective and compatible applications that especially serve the (ELT); accordingly, the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation of the skills and sub-skills of English language in a foreign setting has been so worrying due to the fact that the reliability of learners' responses and answers have been under deep questioning, and that the establishment of valid and reliable formats of assessment in (ELT), similar to those of pre-pandemic situation, has been so hard to be guaranteed because of the has been prevailing cheating practices exploited by a considerable number, once again, of English language learners, students, and exam-takers all over the world. As far as this study is concerned, and depending on the researcher's experience in the field and his mere observation, the experience of Palestine Technical University –Kadoorie (PTUK) in the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation of English Language introductory Courses, i.e. English (1) no. (15200106), English (2), no. (15200112), and Remedial English, no. (15200099), has not been different from the experience of other universities and higher education institutions all over the world, in that, it can be stated, cheating practices, which have also been practiced by a considerable number of students, resulted in unusual higher percentages in marks and averages in English courses, though English is correspondingly taught as a foreign language in a Palestinian setting; moreover, during the has been Covid-19 situation, the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation processes, in PTUK, were mainly delivered and furnished via (PTUK LMS-Moodle) which was steered by the staff of the e-learning and computer centers, but, it should be stated that (LMS-Moodle), originally, and as proposed by previous literature, constitutes a learning environment and does not much correspond with some forms of assessment, especially the summative form, and that the overdependence of PTUK (LMS-Moodle) on multiple-choice questions, which measure lower cognitive domains, has additionally jeopardized the validity, reliability, and fairness of the assessment and evaluation

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processes. The researcher also believes that the great effort, which has been exerted by the e-learning center in such a demanding situation of Covid-19, was mainly propelled by two conditions: the first is the central demand of preserving the continuity of the educational process regardless any margins of educational loss or outage, and the second, the researcher also believes, is the may be digital and purely technical mentality with its binary and mathematic scope that has overlooked some essential qualitative educational maxims of the assessment process; in this regard, the researcher also believes that enough attention has not been paid to such educational specifications and to the safeguarding elements of the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation processes; in addition, and as far as the researcher has known, no online anti-cheating procedures were taken or enhanced. It should be added that the assessment and evaluation processes, which are integral parts of the whole educational process, should also be oriented towards elevating a set of human values and morals such as fairness, justice, equal opportunities, and, then, as a result sprouting the seeds of honesty and integrity through granting whomever eligible whatever she\he deserves in an educational equilibrium, and, in addition, should be enhanced to what Rahim (2020) has stated "online assessments must be designed to stimulate positive learning behaviors in students." This supreme educational and moral goal of the assessment and evaluation processes has been perverted and deviated by a virus, which is as dangerous to human values as Covid-19 to human health, in the form of cheating practices, from the part of a considerable number of students, learners, and exam- takers all over the world during the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation processes; moreover, and as a result of this deviant learning behavior, represented by the cheating practices, a steep doubtful consideration of the educational and learning outcomes has come into existence as, in one sense, the grades, levels, and judgments have not been trusted to mirror the real status of students' learning and their educational continuum, and in another sense a relatively measurable learning outage and educational loss has strongly been anticipated; as far as the objective of this study is concerned, another moral outage has been collaterally emerged as a result of the cheating practices and the deviant role that assessment has been oriented to play during the has been Covid-19 circumstances: this moral outrage and loss have, as far as the researcher knows, received very little attention from educationalists, education-planers, and educational psychologists. This reality has propelled and directed the objectives and the investigative scope of this study.

VI. Findings and Conclusions

In line with its objectives, findings of this study confirm that during the has been situation of Covid-19 cheating practices, which have been employed by a considerable number of students all over the world, in the online home –delivered assessment modes, stand for a devastating element to the learning process because they -cheating practices - violate various educational maxims to which the assessment and evaluation processes were anchored such as validity, reliability, fairness, and equal opportunity; findings of this study confirm that resorting to cheating practices, form the part of students, learners, and exam-takers, violates and disrupts the educational principle of calibrating the amount of learning a learner has reached over a period of time within the educational continuum; findings of this study indicate that educators, and as a result of the cheating practices, in the online home-delivered assessment, were led to measure and assess nearly fake responses, and, then, grant unreliable grades, unreal measurement, and a misleading evaluation process. Accordingly, this study concludes that the existent potentiality of cheating practices during the has been pandemic situation of Covid-19, entails four presuppositions: the *first* one is that the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation processes have failed, to a great extent, to safeguard what they are both supposed to guard: maxims of reliability, validity, and fairness; the *second* is that the online assessment and evaluation processes, especially the home-delivered ones, also have failed to justly achieve the maxim of equal opportunity, and, then, to precisely calibrate the varying and demanding levels of excellence among students and exam-takers; the *third,* it should be added, that cheating practices, which have been exploited by a considerable number of students during the pandemic situation of the Covid-19, also have violated the barometric dimension of the assessment and evaluation processes as the educational judgment was not as real as it should have been; as a result, this study concludes that the role of assessment process has been perverted and deviated as instead of being a tool for building, developing, and elevating the educational and moral aspects of the teaching and learning processes, it has facilitated the proliferation of the culture of cheating as the darkest side -effect of the online home-delivered assessment and evaluation processes, during the has been pandemic situation of Covid-19; the *fourth* is that online assessment and evaluation processes, especially the home-delivered ones, have resulted in some kind of both learning and moral outages, but as far as the proposal of this study is concerned, the moral outage can be more critical and devastating than the learning outage due to the fact that repairing learning outages is easier than fixing the ethical and moral outages that are caused by a deviant

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immoral learning behavior exhibited by cheating practices; moreover, learning as a human attribute, the researcher believes, is worthless if not been oriented towards elevating human and educational values, ethics, morals such as honesty, righteousness, and truthfulness. This study, in accordance with its objective, concludes that the tendency to resort to cheating practices, especially in the absence of physical proctoring, amounts to an immoral deviated learning behavior because it, simply, facilitates getting something, while at the expense of others, the cheater never has; this study also concludes that the online home-delivered assessment of some of the English introductory courses in (PTUK), during the has been pandemic situation of Covid-19, has relatively been worrying and doubtful because of the unusual high marks and averages in English courses though, in a Palestinian setting, English language is taught and learnt as a foreign language which has long been supposed to be demanding and not an easy task. This study, in addition, concludes that various cheating-proof techniques should have been used and facilitated to boost the reliability, validity, and the confidence in the assessment process.

VII. Recommendations

In reference to its findings and conclusions, and as far as the Covid-19 situation is concerned, this study recommends further referential diagnostic studies to cast more understanding in regard to the magnitude of that moral outage caused by the cheating practices which were enhanced by a considerable numbers of students, learners, and exam- takers, in the online home-delivered mode of assessment; this study recommends more research to identify the psychological basis of the students and exam-takers' deviant learning behavior represented by cheating practices, especially in the absence of any kind of physical proctoring; this study recommends empirical studies investigating the role of parents and family members during the pandemic situation of Covid-19 as, in some sizable cases, cheating practices, in the online home- delivered testing, during the pandemic situation of Covid-19, took place under the auspices of either parents or other family members. This study recommends that Palestine Technical University-Kadoorie (PTUK) should review all procedures, regulations, and the outcomes of the home-delivered assessment and evaluation procedures during the pandemic circumstances of the Covid-19, to find a proximal ground of development in-between the strong and weak points of the experience of (PTUK) in assessing English Language introductory courses; this study recommends empirical studies to investigate the factors orienting students' academic honesty and ethics; this study recommends deeper research investigating how far the online home-delivered modes of assessment and evaluation have affected the English language teaching and learning, especially in a foreign setting; this study also recommends further correlative studies to investigate the importance of academic honesty to the learning and teaching of the English language; this study recommends more research investigating the different learning behaviors adopted by English Language learners in Palestine and in other places all over the world during the Pandemic situation of the Covid-19; this study also recommends further studies to investigate cheating- proof technologies, software, and the related state-of-the-art web applications, especially those that are very appropriate for English language teaching, learning, and assessing.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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