Online Assessment and Feedback (Teacher Learner) Practices of ESL Teachers: A Case Study of Three Universities in Sikkim

By

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Abstract

There have been many empirical studies on the online teaching of English language, especially during this ongoing Covid-19 pandemic times. This is yet another paper on it focused on Sikkim context which remains still unexplored. Sikkim being a small North Eastern State of India has not been able to make a notch of its own in the academic ESL/ELT territory. Since the onset of the pandemic the teachers all over the world are required to teach online being forced to adapt to the changing times. This paper is inspired from a similar study conducted by Mahapatra (2021).This paper makes an attempt to explore online assessment (OA) and feedback (Teacher Learner) practices (FP) of three ESL/ELT teachers teaching at three universities in Sikkim. The data collected through three methods such as analysis of feedback practices, thematic analysis on the basis of research questions of both interviews and classroom observation were triangulated. Despite, not being able to use all the assessment tools available, still with room for improvement they were actively and dedicatedly involved in teaching and assessing using some of the tools. Thus, a study as this is first of its kind in Sikkim and it has a scope of being conducted on a larger scale allowing verification of findings among the language teachers in similar settings.

Keywords

ESL/ELT University Teachers, Online Assessment, Feedback Practices, Sikkim

Introduction

It is not unknown that language teachers have been working under great stress especially online during the ongoing pandemic which MacIntyre et al. (2020) have supported claiming excessive workload, varied teaching/learning responsibilities, and time management to be major factors adding to the language teachers' woes. This is true in every sense for language teachers working at higher educational organisations in Sikkim. A report by United Nations (2020) has reported that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected almost 99% of learners especially in countries like India. However, the same report points out that fact that it has forced innovation in fronts of language learning/teaching and assessment (p.2). Since the onset of the pandemic language teachers especially in India and with regard to state like Sikkim language teachers who have been adapted to online teaching platforms have turned to innovations in all fronts bringing somewhat normalcy to the threat and panic created

by the pandemic. However, the major hurdle to online teaching as Mohamadi (2018) and Garcia-Penalvo et.al. (2021) point out is that online assessment and providing appropriate feedback to the learners to make teaching/learning effective. To this, two major organisations such as Quality Matters (2020) and Online Learning Consortium (2020) working with online learning have stressed on providing timely and appropriate feedback to learners. Garcia-Penalvo et.al. (2021) likewise have emphasized the use of assessment especially formative assessment for online teaching. Various studies had been conducted on online teaching in India such as Giri & Dutta, 2020; Mishra, Gupta & Shree, 2020) but not a single one of it is considered the online language teaching scenario in Sikkim. Thus, this paper has tried to do the same exploring the online assessment and feedback practices of ESL teachers at university level in Sikkim.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed by this study have two sub-questions:

- How did the ESL teachers in Sikkim carry out online assessment in whatever form during the Covid-19 pandemic?
  - ➢ What kind of tools did ESL teachers use and the rationale behind the choice of tools?
  - ➢ How were the ESL teachers' online assessments similar or different in terms of frequency, method and quality?
- How did the ESL teachers provide feedback to the learners over online classes?
  - ➢ What kind of tools did ESL teachers use and the rationale behind the choice of tools?
  - • How were the ESL teachers' online feedback practices similar or different in terms of frequency, method and quality?
- Did the ESL teachers receive any training on online assessment and feedback processes?
- How did digital literacy affect online assessment and feedback practices efficacy?

Review of Literature

Assessment

Assessment broadly can of two types—Formative and Summative. However, for the study formative assessment (FA) is considered given to the fact that summative assessment is lengthy three hours written paper. According to Black and William (1998), assessment involves all those activities or tasks which are undertaken by teachers with their learners or among learners themselves which in turn helps in providing feedback for improving overall teaching and learning experiences (p.2). This implies that assessment is not one time activity but rather ongoing and continuous activity making is more formative and informal in nature. This informal nature allows the teacher to monitor, analyse and interpret learners' progress and provide them appropriate learning feedback aiding to improvement of teaching/learning experiences. FAs often highly localized to a context (Davidson & Leung, 2009) are micro level diagnostic analysis and interpretation aiding to boost teaching learning processes in ESL settings (Elder, 2017). This diagnostic analysis and interpretation may include activities such as interaction, observation and demonstration (Klenowski, 2009), and events, tools, processes and decisions with right frequency and suitable feedback (Taylor& Nolen, 2008). Effective FAs are any collaborative activity used by a teacher or learner for the purpose of analyzing and

interpreting learners' strengths and weakness so that the same may be used for planning future classroom instructions aimed at improving learners' learning achievement (Cizek, 2010, p.6).

Online Formative Assessment (OFA)

Not much information is available on online formative assessment compared to summative assessment especially in the case of higher education scenario (McLaughlin &Yan, 2017). This is because not much attention has been paid to assessments on formal online teaching and it has been totally neglected in the case of language teaching in Sikkim leading to not study on it so far. There are many useful and practical methods of alternative OFA such as e-portfolios, Web 2.0 tools, the one-minute paper with multiple choice tests (McLaughlin &Yan, 2017). Due to increase use of technology in language teaching e-portfolios have emerged as significant assessment method which can provide versatile and long-term record of learners' development or effectiveness of a programme (Fox. J, 2017, p. 135) and personalising the learners' experiences (Williams , 2014, p.5). Further technological advancement will continue to extend the scope of alternative assessment such as e-raters and 3D virtual assessment tasks (Fox. J, 2017, p. 144). FA is mainly concerned with monitoring learners' performances and then directing the learner to the desired performance (Chang & Peterson, 2006), and help them learn (McMillan, 2004, p. 106). This may involve multiple resources that may not be identified a priori (Matuga, 2006). OFA tools and methods largely depend on ease of digital literacy, course content usefulness and ease, social influence, behavioural and interest dimensions (Yilmaz et al., 2020, p. 32). There has been varied researches on tools of OFAs, among which some are Electronic Journal Entries, Online Discussions, Online Self-Testing (Mathur & Murray, 2006), learning management system (Bogdanovic´ et al., 2014), learner response system (Pe´rez-Segura et al., 2020), e-portfolio (Namaziandost et al., 2020), social media (Allagui, 2014), web 2.0 tools (Mohamed, 2016), wikis (Wang, 2014), Google Forms (Haddad & Youakim, 2014), self-assessment (Ishikawa et al., 2014), and peer-assessment (Chien et al., 2020). Yet, there is scarcity of research on OFA and related feedback strategies and this paper focuses to bridge the perceived gap in the research.

Online Feedback Practices

Feedback received from teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience, learners (Hattie & Timperly, 2007, p.81) provide useful information in shaping future learners' performances in varied and vital ways. Ferris (2003) suggests that are mainly two ways one can take feedback such as implicit and explicit feedback, and whatever format they may be such as positive or negative, limited or extended, direct or indirect, they accordingly provide information that will have impact on the learners' performances. Elbow (2003) argues that teachers' feedback can play role of a coach and as a judge simultaneously. Teachers' feedback as a coach is seen formative in nature that helps improve learners' future performance whereas feedback as a judge explains why they have such performances. The choice of OFA tools and feedback are directly related to learners' motivation. Dornyei (2001) suggests that role of assessment and feedback in boosting learners' potential can be connected to theories of motivation. MacAlpine (2002) suggested that any assessment may be directed at learners' feedback on their learning and for teachers same feedback can be directed to feedback on their course or teaching. When it comes to OFAs immediate feedback is essential and the use of digital tools has made this possible (Yilmaz, 2017) giving way to online feedback and at

some places possibility of automated feedback (Cheng, 2017). Apart from this feedback may take the shape of mobile-assisted feedback (Wu &Miller, 2020) such as WhatsApp (Soria et al., 2020) and computer-mediated feedback (Ginkel et al., 2020) such as Google Docs (Ebadi & Rahimi, 2019), which have found to be more versatile and potential tools of online formative feedback. Online peer-feedback (Chien et al., 2020) can improve learners' communication level along with a sense of self monitoring of their learning (Beebe et al., 2010).

Online Assessment Literacy (OAL), Feedback Literacy (FL) and Digital Literacy (DL)

Since teachers have taken to online teaching and assessment due to Covid-1 9 pandemic and pressure on language teachers and institutions has increased to provide data on learners' performance, it is absolutely essential for a teacher to know what, why, when and how of online assessments especially OFAs and its tools. There have been many studies on language assessment literacy (Taylor 2013; Malone 2013; Stiggins 1997; Boyles 2005), but not much data is found on online language assessment literacy. Above all, FL is regarded as absolutely indispensable part of AL which enables a teacher to use learners' feedback effectively to improve on learners' learning (Lee, 2017, p. 150). This study is going to establish a need for it so that teachers are trained on how to identify the best tool for OLA. To add to this, teachers are to be digitally literate as OFAs are computer integrated. Using computer integrated FA should be seen as a means to an end (Irons, 2008, p.87). When it comes to digital literacy even the learners are to be digitally literate as without which they may not be able to make utmost use of the OFAs and provide feedback to the teachers. The ways in which learners interact with OFA tools profoundly influence OFA and FP efficacy. Thus, OAL and DL go hand in hand to make OFAs and FP a success. This study will help to establish a need if teachers need training on OAL and DL, and if learners need training on DL. Digital literacy and know-how of making the utmost of OFA tools definitely affects OFA efficacy.

Methodology

A case study approach was adopted for this study which is recognised as a tool in many social sciences studies especially in case of education (Gulsecen & Kubat, 2006). Case study approach allows analysis of data in a specific real-life context taking limited number of persons in a small geographical area (Yin, 1984), which is what is applied in the present study. In the study, three ESL teachers from different universities within Sikkim form three separate cases for the purpose of triangulation. Owing the context of Sikkim and the researcher have chosen three universities, the researcher chose to use purposive-homogeneous sampling (Stake, 2013). Homogeneous being where all the sample members are similar and in particular occupation in the given geographical area. Data collected were analysed thematically (Gerring, 2007) to identify similar and dis-similar patterns.

Context

The three ESL teachers who were part of the sample along with their learners were working in three different universities in Sikkim and had taken to online platform of teaching with the onset of Covid-19 pandemic April 2020. Since then all the participating ESL teachers have been involved in online teaching. The participating teachers apart from being socially active, using other online platforms for communicating with their learners also had participated in several webinars. The data collection for the study was done in July 2021. *Table 1* below shows that the teachers participating in the study had

similar educational, socio-cultural, and teaching experience background. For the ease of the study the actual names of the teachers and learners are not used, but rather appropriate coding has been used.

Teacher	Average Years of Teaching Experience	Qualifications	Training in Assessment and Online Tools	Courses Handling	Average Hours of Teaching in a Week	Average Number of Learners
Teacher1 (T1)	04	PhD (English Language Education)	Yes (Formal Training in Language Assessment)	English Language Skills	16	40
Teacher2 (T2)	04	PhD (English Language Education)	No	English Language Skills	16	38
Teacher3 (T3)	03	PhD (English Literature)	No	English Language Skills	16	32

Table 1: *Participating Teachers' Profile*

The researcher stayed in touched with the participating teachers online and in person describing to them the objectives of the study and their roles. The researcher obtained consent from them for the study. The participating teachers mentioned that they and their learners do not have seamless access to the internet as they were working from home. However, the researcher has conducted the study with whatever data was available.

Data Collection and Analysis

For the purpose of the data collection, the entire field work was divided into three different stages such as classroom observation, interview and analysis of feedback practices materials. Three online classes of each teacher were observed and notes were prepared on teachers' OFA tools and feedback strategy using observation checklist. Each class was of 45 minutes each and the researcher participated as a learner in the class with the permission of the teachers. It took two weeks to record the observation. Second, Patton (1980) discusses three types of qualitative interview format such as the informal conversational interview, the interview guide, and standardized open-ended interview. Lynch (1996) supporting this suggests that after observation, interviews can be conducted using varied formats ranging from structured to unstructured continuum and along the continuum somewhere is the format of interview guide. Thus, interview guide was conducted on similar areas as classroom observation. Given below in *Table 2* is the list of questions that were basically asked during the interview. The interview questions have been picked and adapted from a study conducted by Mahapatra (2021) with some changes to suit the context in hand. Last, the teachers shared information on feedback which were given and taken during the classrooms through online platforms such as Whats App, Facebook, Mentimeter, Flipgrid, Zoom and Google Meet inbox messages. These feedbacks included learners' self-feedback, peer feedback and teacher feedback both in the form of

oral and written. The OFA and its tools were used for collecting feedback which was used again both for improving the teaching/learning process and internal grading purposes.

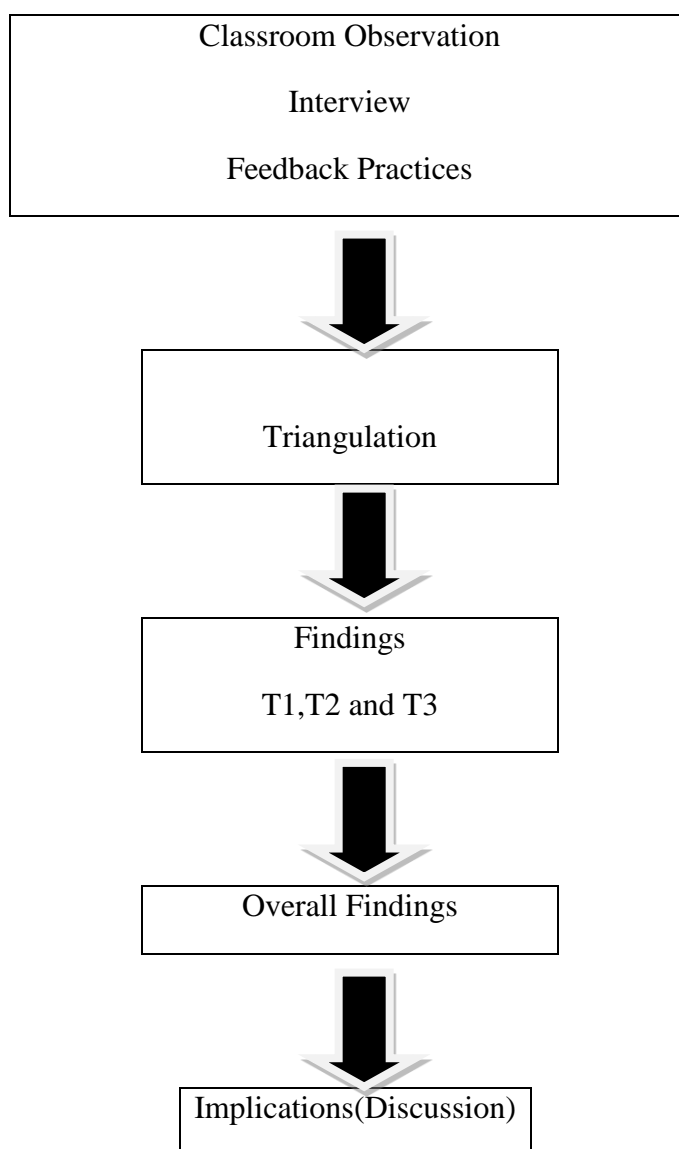| |
| --- |
| • **OFA**
 What role do you think FA plays in your online teaching?- What kind of methods do you use for OFA?- How do you select the method(s) of FA?- What do you do to ensure that your OFAs are valid?- What kind of information do you collect to evaluate and improve the quality of your OFAs?- How often do you use OFA in your classroom?- What are the digital tools that you use for carrying out OFAs?- What are the factors that drive your choice of digital tools? (adapted from Mahapatra, 2021)
 Did you receive any training on OFA and its tools? –How comfortable were you and your learners using the tools? - Did your knowledge of using various online platforms or know-how of computers affect online assessment in anyway? |
| • **Feedback**
 What role do you think feedback plays in your OFAs?- Which methods of feedback do you employ with your OFAs?- How do you choose the most suitable feedback strategy?- What do you do to ensure that the feedback your learners receive is useful and relevant?- How often do your learners receive feedback about their performance in OFAs?- What kind of digital tools do you employ for offering learners feedback?- What are the factors that shape your choice of digital tools? (adapted from Mahapatra, 2021)
 Did you receive any training on feedback strategy and its tools? –How comfortable were you and your learners using the tools? - Did your knowledge of using various online platforms or know-how of computers affect feedback practices in anyway? |

Table 2: *Interview Questions*

The study followed qualitative approach of research. In order to maintain the reliability and validity of data and its analysis –data collected from each teacher was triangulated to arrive at overall findings (Bazeley, 2013). The **figure 1 (given below)** shows the entire data research process followed for the study. The data collected were coded and anaylsed systematically as (Guest et al., 2011) suggests that data in a qualitative research ensuring validity automatically ensures reliability. However, the study was conducted by the researcher single handedly and there was no involvement of a second researcher with additional analysis which could have led to validity of the analysis (Morse, 1997).

Data collected from each teacher through classroom observation, interview and feedback materials were analysed and descriptive notes were made before any tentative thematic ideas were developed. Further the findings were grouped according to research questions and triangulated for findings. Last, a cross-case analysis method was adopted for overall findings.

Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│      Classroom Observation      │
│           Interview             │
│       Feedback Practices        │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│          Triangulation          │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│            Findings             │
│          T1,T2 and T3           │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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                ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│        Overall Findings         │
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│     Implications(Discussion)    │
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Figure 1: *Research Design*

Findings

The findings of the study are classified under the themes taken from the research questions, which are as follows:

Online Formative Assessment (OFA)

Despite any formal training on the OFA and its tools, all the teachers were diligently involved in their classes, and actively participated and carried out OFAs using various tools. However, it is observed that their methods and tools were different in terms of activities, frequency, and choice of tools. The reasons that influenced these were knowledge or awareness of know-how of the tools and their access.

- **OFA Digital Tools**

Free rather than paid digital platforms were used by the teachers for OFAs such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Google Forms, Google Docs, and Google Classrooms. The reason for which is based on internet speed and accessibility, know-how of the tools and affordability. It is commendable that teachers have taken to online teaching and they have been doing a great job but the universities themselves seem to be unaware of the online assessments and tools. The following table shows the details of each teacher along with their choice of tools, and their uses.

Teacher	Online Platform	Digital Tools, Frequency and Uses	Reasons for Choice of Tools
T1	Google Meet and Zoom	- Google Docs-sometimes-oral presentation - Google Forms-regularly-internal assessment and quizzes - Mentimeter-seldom- feedback from learners - WhatsApp- Always-communicating with learners on general queries, language related problems, and daily teaching/learning content and assessments - Facebook- seldom- sharing posts relevant to teaching and assigning Facebook based profile assignments	- Free and accessible - Free and accessible - Accessible and ease of use by the learners - Free, accessible, ease of use, absolute familiarity, and responsive - Free, accessible, ease of use, absolute familiarity, and responsive
T2	Google Meet and Zoom	- Google Docs- sometimes-providing rubrics to help learners with writing - Google Forms-regularly- internal assessment and quizzes - Mentimeter-seldom- feedback from learners - WhatsApp- Always-communicating with learners on general queries, language related problems,and daily teaching/learning content and assessments - Facebook- seldom- sharing posts relevant to teaching/learning	- Free and accessible - Free and accessible - Accessible and ease of use by the learners - Free, accessible, ease of use, absolute familiarity, and responsive - Free, accessible, ease of use, absolute familiarity, and responsive
T3	Google Meet and Zoom	- Google Forms-regularly- internal assessment and quizzes - WhatsApp- Always-communicating with learners on general queries,	- Accessible and Free - Easy, familiar and available with all the learners

		daily teaching/learning content , assessments and feedback	

Table 3: *Teachers' OFA Digital Tools*

- **Frequency, Method and Quality of OFAs**

The findings of the OFA tools were based on the some of the indicators from the review of literature and the data mainly collected through interview were analysed for findings here more than data collected through observation and analysis of materials. The findings are given below:

All the teachers always used Google Meet and Zoom platforms for teaching/learning processes, OFAs and feedback. The teachers have not used any other platforms. When asked of the reasons for this, they all do not know any other platforms for use of online teaching.

The methods used for OFAs by T1 and T2 are Google Docs, Google Forms, Mentimeter, WhatsApp, and Facebook for oral presentation. Internal assessment, quizzes, feedback, sharing posts, and handling queries related to daily teaching/learning content and assessments where as T3 used only Google Forms and WhatsApp. WhatsApp seems to be a common method used by all the teachers in the study. When asked on the reason for choice of the methods, The following were some of the responses:

> *I chose them as they are freely accessible and free. I am not aware of any other tools which are available for free and learners friendly. The learners are absolutely comfortable with the tools such WhatsApp and Facebook as they have been using them lifelong. Besides, we do not have any training on the use of other tools and network connectivity is a major issue even with the platforms being used.* (T1)

> *I have taken them as they are free and learners can very easily access them. The learners find Facebook and WhatsApp easy to use as they all have a ready app on their phones, and they find it interesting and responsive. The learners and I are very familiar with these apps. Above all we do not know of any other alternative tools but I am sure there are many available paid versions. (T2)*

> *I regularly use Google Forms and Whatsapp as they are quite convenient for use both by we teachers and of course learners as they have been using them for various purposes lifelong. I do not have much time to find and learn about other available tools. (T3)*

The frequency as to each method used by each teacher is given in *Table 3*.

The teachings of all the teachers were mostly relevant to the objectives set, involving most of the learners as long as they were asked to speak. The learners were found to be disengaged when it came to writing tasks. The learners looked quite unresponsive when it came to writing tasks. The T1 and T2 used rubrics for assessment and OFAs were clearly and successfully carried out in many instances. However, yet again, network connectivity disrupted the process sometimes and the OFA seems to have lost its validity then. T3 hardly used any rubrics fro assessment and OFAs were not clearly carried out. T1 and T2 used information from the process to improve on the performances of the learners whereas it was not observed in the case of T3.

Online Feedback Practices

As discussed in the literature review, feedback provides information that enables improving of learners' performances both in nature of a coach or a judge. It is also known that feedback literacy on the part of the teachers are essentially required to make good use of the feedback and make it purposeful for the learners' performances. This study shall also looks in if the teachers in study have any kind of feedback literacy, which in turn affects the efficacy of the OFAs, teaching/learning process. Feedback is also responsible for motivating the learners and it was observed that though the teachers had good intentions of improving the learners' performances, they lacked a sense of direction and planning. The teachers offered both written and oral feedback with the choice of tools used for providing feedback.

- **Digital Tools Used for Providing Feedback**

Google Forms and WhtasApp were found to be most commonly and regularly used feedback digital tools by the teachers (Mahapatra, 2021). Similarly, here too Google Forms and WhatsApp turned out to be popular among the teachers for providing feedback. The common reasons for the choice of the tools are found to be- free access and familiarity by the learners as well.

T1 when asked about the choice of feedback responded:

> *Google Classroom which also integrates Google Forms is mostly familiar and user friendly. They help me to prepare OFA and quizzes where I already provided my rubrics. When the learners take the tests or quiz hey immediately get the feedback. I use it regularly and now I am very well acquainted with the tool. WhatsApp is to provide instant feedback both through written text and voice messages when the feedback is lengthy to be typed.*

T2 had a similar response to T1, but added that:

> *Mentimeter is used seldom when I want collective opinions from the learners simultaneously so that I can form an idea as how-to go about certain lessons. I like the automated feedback system of Google Form.*

Apart from common response from T3, he added that:

> *Why use other digital tools when Google Meet and Zoom are sufficient enough to provide instant oral feedback to the learners. They seem to more attentive this way. I ask learners to make presentations and other viva OFAs online though these platforms and provide instant feedback. Otherwise, WhatsApp is enough for other kinds of feedback.*

- **Frequency, Method and Quality**

As already discussed teachers used Google Meet and Zoom platforms for overall teaching, assessment and feedback. However, they used other methods for feedback such as Google Forms and WhatsApp for feedback as well. All the three teachers used these tools regularly in fact these tools were only major tools used by them for providing feedback. They seldom used mentimeter.

It was observed that the teachers especially T2 and T3 opted for group feedback as they had a large class, but T1 preferred to provide individual feedback as the class had only 11 learners. Thus,

providing better feedback was possible for T1.However, all the teachers were able to provide instant feedback online to their learners but these feedbacks lacked planning and were random and corrective in nature. They had provided voice messages, video and audio recordings of their classroom processes. Refer *Table 3* for what tools were used, for what purposes and the reason for choice of methods. The teachers were observed to be involving learners in self-assessment especially writing. T1 made the learners self-assess their writings as the class progressed with techniques of writing to see if they can apply what they have learnt constantly. They we also involved in peer-assessment which was beneficial for the learners' performances.

T1 explained:

> *Since I have only 11 learners in my class, it is easier for me to provide individual feedback to each learner and I am also able to supervise and personalise the feedback. I find a small class to be advantageous for me. It is also possible for me provide feedback over a phone call. I try my best to improve their writing and speaking skills and sometimes provide speaking drill over WhatsApp voice messages. If they constantly participate in feedback processes and make use of it, they shall definitely make a difference in their learning.*

When asked about feedback practices, T2 explained:

> *I seldom use mentimeter for collecting feedback to form an idea or opinion of the classes so that feedback can be provided. Since I have a large class individual feedback is quite difficult but I have tried at times. Though mentimeter is useful I am not able to make a good use of it. I prefer Google Forms and WhatsApp for providing feedback. I always try to be as friendly as possible so that I can take learners into confidence and work better and provide encouragive feedback so that they improve their performances.*

T3 had his opinions on OFAs and Feedback:

> *I usually use WhatsApp to provide feedback to the learners. I usually provide feedback to the learners through Google Meet and Zoom in the form of oral feedback instantly and sometimes inbox messages. I also use Google Forms for conducting FAs and the automated feedback is something I like.*

Online Assessment Literacy (OAL), Feedback Literacy (FL), Digital Literacy (DL) and, Training

It has already been discussed that due to the pandemic teachers have adapted themselves and have not only taken to online teaching but also online assessment. When it comes to comes to online assessment, OFAs and feedback throughout the course work are the two factors which determine the overall performances of the learners. To be able to do justice with the teaching and learning process especially through online platforms OAL, FL, and DL come in and play a pivotal role in shaping the teaching learning process. Since no data has been found from the teachers on OAL, FL and DL, it can be established that there is a dire need of training of teachers on these aspects. However, it has been observed that teachers know how to use the digital platforms and somewhat comfortable with digital tools, they still need to be more trained further and develop an expertise in DL so that they can further improve in the areas of OAL and FL. We cannot deny the use of online teaching and it is

going to stay with us for some time now for the education purposes. This reflects the growing significance of DL and impact of internet to the workforce of the future (Hughes & Dummett, 2019) and above all English Language Education is no exception. This supports the statement, *Digital literacy and know-how of making the utmost of OFA tools definitely affects OFA efficacy*.

T1 accepts that DL does affect the efficacy of OFAs and feedback and responded:

> *I do know how to use computers and some of the apps and softwares but I really do not know anything on the complete use of digital tools. Whatever I have learnt is not enough for it. I must accept that some learners were not comfortable using Google Forms as they are not good with typing. I and my learners both need to take some training on it.*

T2 responded:

> *I am comfortable with the tools and made some effort to learn about them but the learners do have problem with the OFAs tools. They especially need training to make the most of it. I too need training on feedback strategies so that I can do justice to my online classes. Just the know-how of the tools is not enough but rather one needs to know what, how and when of classroom feedbacks.*

T3 accepting the impact of DL on assessment argued:

> *Why do we need training on OFAs tools and feedback strategies when we can manage with WhatsApp? I suppose Google Meet is perfect for everything and I do not have much time to go for trainings. Yes, I can train learners if you like.*

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study focused on the OFAs and its tools, and feedback processes of three ESL teachers from different universities. The study focused on the said area brought out many findings which were similar and different in many ways.

The main finding of the study is that the teachers did not have any kind of training on OAs, FP and did not have much of DL as well. This in turn definitely affected the online teaching learning processes and influenced the learners' performances in many ways. Drummond (2003) has found affirmative results and stressed that one cannot ignore the impact of computers and internet on online learning and there is a need of 'pedagogical revolution' and new paradigm (Mason, 1998; Palloff & Pratt, 2001). It was also observed that all the teachers were not well informed on OFA tools and Feedback processes though they did a commendable job. One can agree that teachers were not prepared well for shifting their offline assessments to online and that made their job quite difficult for them (King & Boyatt, 2014).Thus, teachers need to be trained on these fronts so that they can do better justice with learners' learning in the online education era where traditional assessment cannot be transferred directly from offline to online platform. Definitely the quality of assessment and feedback was compromised and the possible explanation could be due to contextual factors such as management awareness, readiness and support, expertise on the part of teachers and co-teachers, personal factors i.e. goals and objectives, motivation (Davidson & Leung, 2009) and of course DL of the learners and motivation. It was also observed that though teachers used some the basic and free tools such as Google Docs, Google Forms and WhatsApp for their assessments they lacked complete

AL and proper feedback channels. As observed by Guo and Xu (2020), the teachers were not seen taking intense interest on the learners' performances and they did not encourage learners to take self-assessment notes on their progress and push them in the right direction of performance improvement.

The institutions they worked for can be assumed not showing much interest in the teachers' choice of tools and feedback strategies. It may also be assumed that they were not aware of different factors working in the performance of teachers both offline and online. The teachers on the other hand seemed to be more satisfied with Goolge Classrooms (Docs and Forms) for their online teaching learning processes, academic activities and OFAs (Agustina & Purnawarman 2020).

The teachers in the name of providing feedback were mainly concerned with providing grading and marking feedback rather than providing feedback in a formative approach to improve the learners' learning (Hricko & Howell, 2006, p.15). As the classroom changes (we can assume from offline to online), teachers need to closely modify, adapt, and monitor the teaching learning of the learners (Angelo and Cross ,1993) so that appropriate and apt feedback can be provided to improve the learners learning. This was not observable among the three teachers in the study.

It is quite evident that the teachers did not receive any training on OFAs tools and feed strategies or methods and that among many other factors such as difficulty in providing online feedback (Daradourmis et al.2019), internet connectivity, motivation, DL and AL can be the reason why their feedback is unplanned and directionless. However, the teachers seem to be positive towards their feedback methods and it does have positive impact on the learners. They learners were given opportunity to be involved in self-assessment and peer-assessment sometimes. Above all we do not have empirical data to substantiate the assumption that the teachers' choice of tools and feedback plans followed were basically due to lack of training on OA. This study can be carried forward to establish such assumption.

This study has its own significance as Sikkim and its ESL practices in Higher education, is quite under represented and under researched. Thus, this is a one of a kind of study in the context. However, there are many such studies in the same areas but different contexts. This study gives an overview of OFA tools and feedback methods adopted by ESL teachers in Sikkim and will pave a way for future researches and training in AL and DL. No-matter-what one should pause here and applause the teachers who have taken up the online teaching which is totally unknown to them, facing the challenges and prospects of it together.

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