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**ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC: TEACHERS OF ENGLISH PERSPECTIVE****АЛЬТЕРНАТИВНЕ ОЦІНЮВАННЯ ПІД ЧАС ПАНДЕМІЇ: ТОЧКА ЗОРУ  
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**Abstract.** *Alternative assessment as a formative type of assessing students' progress and achievements is a tool to achieve the 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning goals. The authors' purpose is to provide the readers with the analysis of alternative assessment approaches and get feedback from the teachers as to their experience in using alternative assessment during the pandemic. Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained from the surveys completed by teachers of English in Ukraine (45) and from interviews in Zoom sessions. The respondents agreed with the necessity of professional training, the positive impact of portfolios on students' motivation, acknowledged the importance of alternative assessment and students' involvement in choosing corresponding tools. It was revealed that videos are used most often; curricula limitations prevented teachers from using alternative assessment in teaching English. The findings of the research showed the readiness of teachers to implement alternative assessments in their work. The authors proved the hypothesis that ESL teachers are aware of the benefits of alternative assessment and its positive effect, but do not use it in everyday practice. That is why there is a necessity to outline the positive sides of alternative assessment and give recommendations on how to apply it in practice.*

**Key words:** *Alternative assessment, the pandemic, teachers of English, rubrics.*

**Introduction.**

Assessment plays a vital role for students, their parents, teachers, school and university officials. Ratings based on students' performance demonstrate the results of best practices at different levels, ranging from schools and universities to countries and regions. Gordon Commission states that assessment can boost acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies if it guides the actions of teachers and enables students measure their progress [1]. Pellegrino pointed out that assessment will have a positive impact on achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning goals if it is properly conceived, designed, and implemented [2].

Unexpected transition to teaching English online during the pandemic revolutionized the approaches to forms and modes of communication between



teachers and students. As the context of teaching changed, innovative assessment methods came into play to meet students' needs, employ the upcoming novel technologies, and ensure the quality of the course [3].

The aim of assessment is to provide information about the effect of classroom activities on students' language proficiency. Such high stake assessment like final exams or external independent tests mainly measure how students memorize the factual information and fail to assess other levels of learning. According to Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, both the process of English language learning and its assessment are very complex, and in order to deal with such complexities, various types of assessment should be used [4]. In this regard, it is alternative assessment that researchers have revealed a great interest in. Alternative assessment provides evaluation of what students have learned by focusing not only on what they know but focusing on how they apply that knowledge [5]. In addition, alternative assessment is focused on teaching students to evaluate their learning results, which has a significant impact on their future professional development and self-development skills.

Alternative assessment has a number of characteristics, which differ from traditional assessment features. Thus, alternative assessment requires product, not the right answer; it relates to solving problems that students could encounter in real life; it involves a number of skills that are not isolated; it includes open questions which may have several possible ways to answer; it provides an opportunity for a student to get diagnostic feedback, not just a score [5]. Being in-process evaluation of students' understanding, needs and progress, alternative assessment is positioned as formative assessment. Numerous strategies to conduct alternative assessment include such assignments as presentations, memos, letters, poster presentations, reports, case studies, role-plays, portfolios, to name just a few [5]. These assignments, which are used during the whole course of study, may be time-consuming to implement, they may require some effort, materials, and evaluation may be more subjective. Nevertheless, they allow students to demonstrate understanding of the topic, identify gaps they have and use higher-order thinking skills. In addition, such assignments are more interesting for students and motivate them for future studies, provide opportunities for teachers to use individual approach, consider students' needs [5].

Best practices in using alternative assessment include electronic portfolios, using rubrics, involving students in the process of assessing their performance, measuring institutional effectiveness [6]. Students should know the basic principles of academic integrity being at any level, from primary to postgraduate. In addition, students should know the consequences of academic malpractice. In order to prevent such behavior, teachers should provide each assignment with an assessment tool like a rubric. According to Brookhart, a rubric consists of criteria for assessing students' performance according to level descriptions [7]. Using rubrics allows teachers and students to conduct fair objective assessment.

The actuality of the study is determined by the necessity to explore the views of teachers of English on alternative assessment and develop recommendations on exploiting its benefits considering the experiences of educators during the pandemic.

### **Aims.**

This paper aims to determine teachers of English experience on using alternative



assessment during the pandemic. To reach this aim, the following tasks are to be completed:

1. to establish teachers of English views on alternative assessment with the help of surveys and interviews;
2. to outline recommendations to teachers of English and university officials for making alternative assessment more effective.

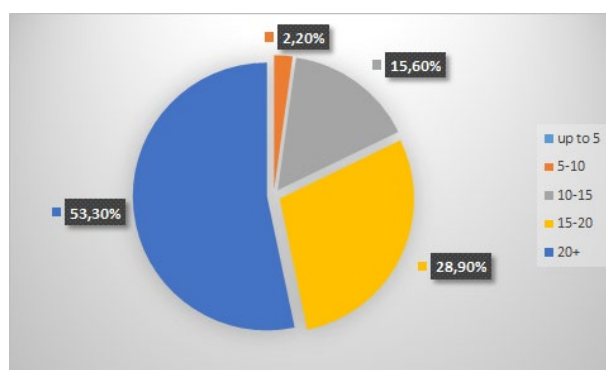
In the study, we hypothesize that teachers of English are aware of the benefits of alternative assessment and its positive effect, but do not use it in everyday practice.

### Materials and methods.

A mixed-method research design was used in the study: quantitative and qualitative data were obtained from the surveys completed by teachers of English in Ukraine (45) and from interviews in Zoom sessions. The survey consisted of four kinds of prompts: multiple choice (prompts 1, 2, 3, 4, 12), a Likert scale (prompts 5, 6, 7, 10: strongly agree / agree / neutral / disagree / strongly disagree); ranging (prompt 11) and open (short answer text). To measure central tendency, we calculated the median (Mdn) and to show the spread of the responses we calculated the Interquartile Range (IQR) for the prompts which used a Likert scale. The survey covered the issues related to teachers of English views on alternative assessment during the pandemic. This research complies with ethics, all respondents volunteered to participate in the survey and gave their consent.

### Results and Discussion.

According to the results of the survey, approximately half of the respondents had more than twenty years of experience teaching English, about a third of the respondents had been teaching English for 15-20 years (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Indicating teaching English experience of the respondents**

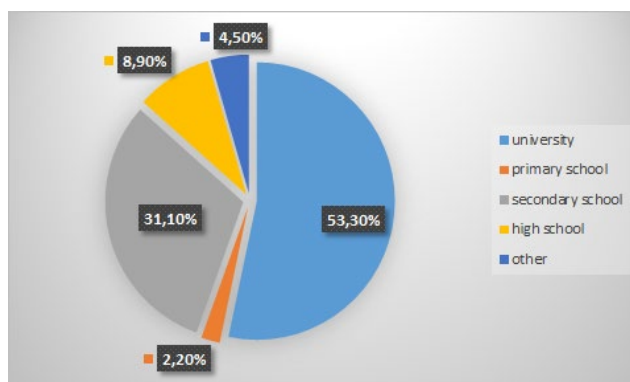
We may conclude that most of the respondents were experienced teachers of English who had their own opinions about the issues related to assessment.

Considering employment, more than half of the respondents indicated that they worked at university, a third taught English at secondary, and about nine percent at high school (Figure 2).

Assessment is important for students and teachers in all these types of educational establishments, but exam preparation is a burning issue for school leavers and bachelor students. To enter university in Ukraine, school leavers should take an external independent test called ZNO, while bachelors have to take an external independent test called EVI to obtain a master's degree. Both ZNO and EVI ensure

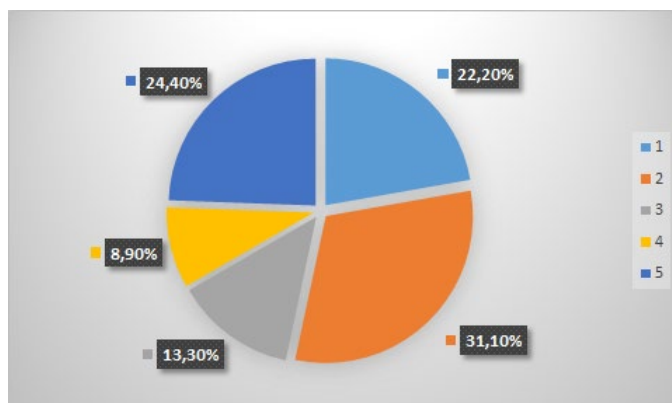


equal opportunities for students and educational quality but require thorough preparation.



**Figure 2. Indicating main place of work of the respondents**

The findings of the study showed that about a third of the respondents claimed to have two lessons of English per week, 24% of the respondents wrote about five lessons, and slightly less, 22,2%, indicated one lesson per week (Figure 3).

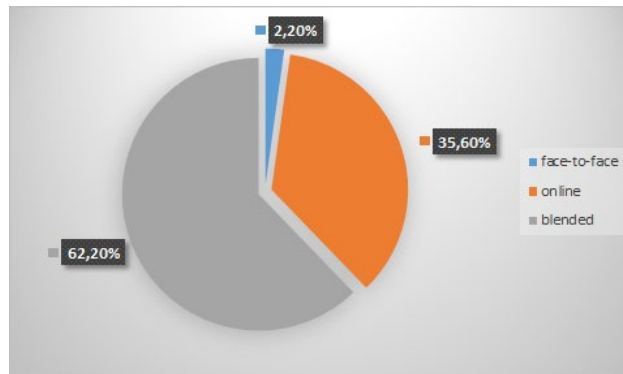


**Figure 3. Frequency of English lessons conducted by the respondents**

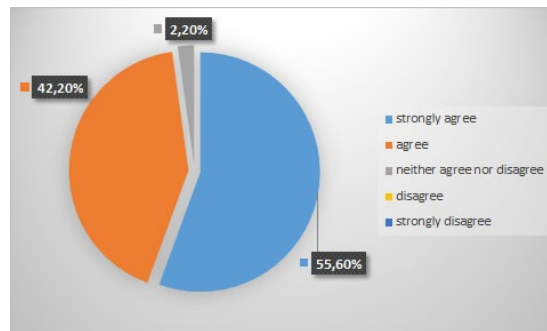
The number of lessons of English at educational establishments in Ukraine depends on state regulations, types of schools or universities and their policies. For example, there may be five lessons of English at a secondary school, which specializes in foreign languages, and two lessons in a conventional school. First and second-year students may have one English lesson per week at a technical university, but in some universities, English is taught to bachelor, master and PhD students.

The choice of types of English lessons (online, face-to-face, or blended) depended on the region and restrictions related to the pandemic situation in Ukraine. Some educational establishments managed to have face-to-face lessons from time to time, but some started and finished a new school year distantly. During the 2020-2021 academic year the respondents mostly had blended English classes (62%), 36% online classes, and just 2% face-to-face classes (Figure 4).

According to the results of the study, practically all respondents acknowledged the necessity of training in assessment and learning facilitation for teachers of English (56% strongly agreed, 42% agreed) (Figure 5).



**Figure 4. Types of English lessons conducted by the respondents during the pandemic**



**Figure 5. The necessity of training in assessment and learning facilitation**

The calculation of the median (Mdn) and the Interquartile Range (IQR) shows that most respondents strongly agreed with the necessity of training (Mdn=1, IQR=1) (See Table 1).

**Table 1**

**Teachers’ perspective on alternative assessment in Teaching English**

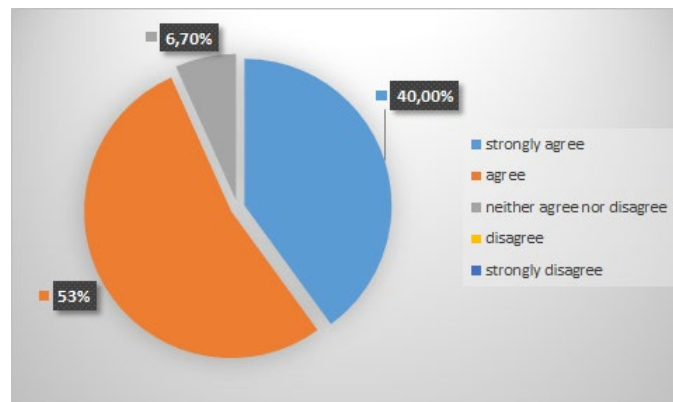
Survey prompts	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mdn	IQR
Prompt 5. Teachers of English have to be trained in assessment and learning facilitation	25	19	1	0	0	1	1
Prompt 6. Alternative assessment is an important part of the language teaching and learning	18	24	3	0	0	2	1
Prompt 7. Students should be involved in choosing alternative assessment tools	3	31	9	2	0	2	0
Prompt 10. Portfolios increase learners’ motivation over the course of English	4	23	17	1	0	2	1

The results of the study are in line with Etedali, who claims that teaching online during the pandemic turns teachers from technology users into designers of learning systems [3]. In order to design the content which could be used online, teachers have to develop their digital skills, as educational technology will remain an inseparable part of curricula even after the pandemic [3].

The results of the study showed that most teachers of English agreed with

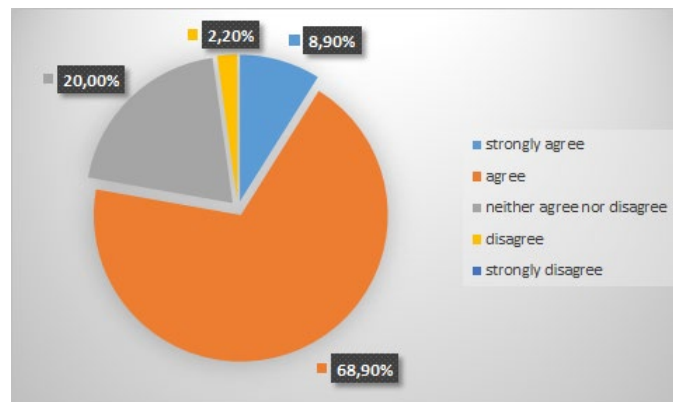


prompt six about the importance of alternative assessment (Mdn=2, IQR=1) (See Table 1). The respondents were positive about the importance of alternative assessment in language teaching and learning (40% strongly agree, 53% agree), but some could not decide (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. The respondents’ opinions about importance of alternative assessment in the language teaching and learning**

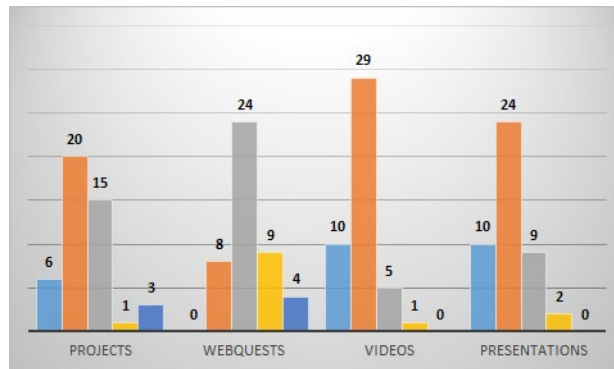
Prompt seven about the involvement of students in choosing alternative assessment tools is the only one with which the respondents mostly agreed; their opinions were not polarised (Mdn=2, IQR=0) (See Table 1). More than half of the respondents agreed that students should be involved in the process of assessment (Figure 7).



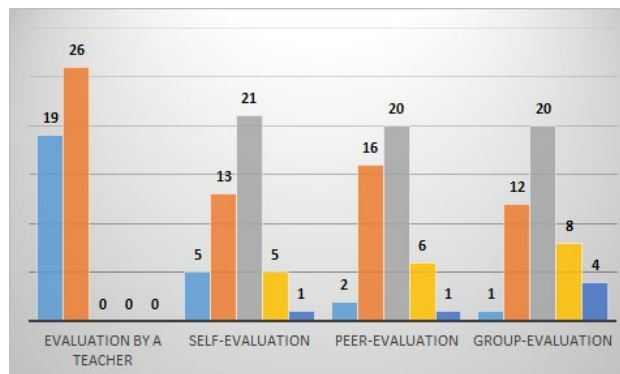
**Figure 7. The respondents’ opinions about involvement of students in choosing alternative assessment tools**

The results showed that teachers of English used videos the most often, then presentations and projects, while web quests were the least frequently used (Figure 8). This result may be explained by the fact that teaching online it is easier to watch videos in English class by sharing the screen or a link, providing time limit and checking comprehension afterward compared to special equipment for demonstrating a video for the whole class in case of face-to-face lessons.

Considering types of evaluation, the responders practiced evaluation by a teacher more often than others, while they sometimes used self, peer and group evaluation (Figure 9).



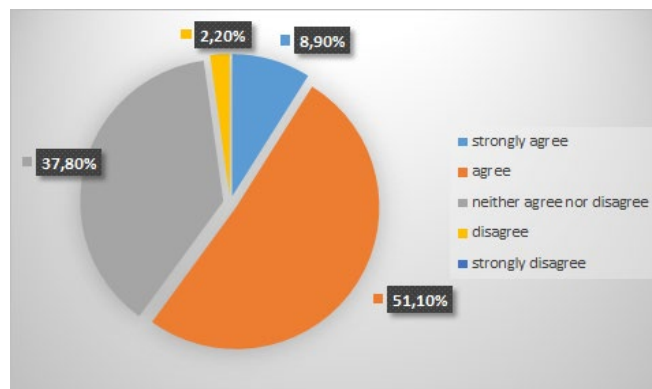
**Figure 8. Frequency of using projects, web quests, videos and presentations by the respondents**



**Figure 9. Frequency of using different kinds of evaluation by the respondents**

The results of the research by Ahlam Mohammed Al-Abdullatif devoted to the alternative confirmed the fact that the extent of student experience with the self-assessment affects their credibility and objectivity [8]. Formative assessment is based on critical feedback, which is needed by all the participants of the educational process. It was confirmed that teachers and students preferred indirect types of CF, when errors are indicated implicitly; the most effective types of CF for students were meta-linguistic clue, when they are reminded of the rules related to this particular error, and repetition, while for teachers it was elicitation by providing hints to make students correct their errors themselves [9].

The results showed that teachers of English mostly agreed with prompt ten about portfolios (Mdn=2, IQR=1) (See Table 1). Therefore, the respondents were positive about the impact of portfolios on learners’ motivation (Figure 10).



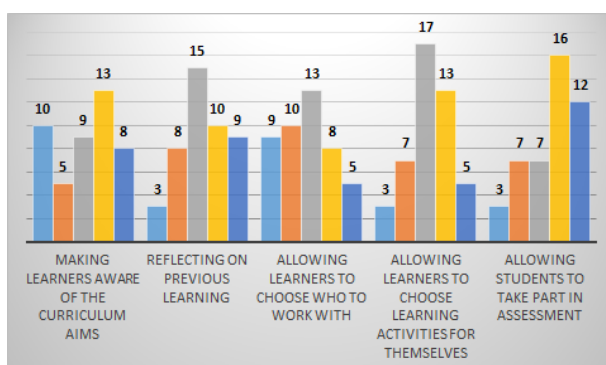
**Figure 10. The respondents’ opinions about positive impact of portfolios on learners’ motivation**



The results of this study are in accordance with those presented by Esma Bulus Kırıkkaya, who investigated the dependence of students’ attitudes on academic achievement levels in their research and used portfolio techniques for assessment [10]. The findings of this research indicated that “students responded positively to the portfolio technique and that it positively contributed to their achievements in their courses”.

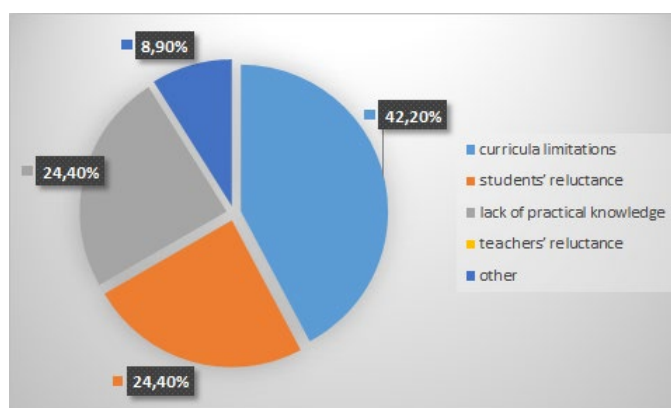
According to the results of the survey, teachers of English ranged the elements of alternative assessment from the most effective to the least in the following way:

- allowing students to take part in assessment;
- allowing learners to choose learning activities for themselves;
- reflecting on previous learning;
- allowing learners to choose who to work with;
- making learners aware of the curriculum aims (Figure 11).



**Figure 11. Ranging the elements of alternative assessment by the respondents**

According to the results of the survey, for 42.2% of the respondents, there were curricula limitations that prevented teachers from using alternative assessment in their English class, for 24.4% it was students’ reluctance, for the same percentage it was lack of practical knowledge (Figure 12).



**Figure 12. Reasons for reluctance of the respondents in using alternative assessment in their English class**

Difficulties in implementing alternative assessment were noticed in the study done by Aminatus Sa’diyah, who examined emerging strategies and problems of alternative assessment for the teacher while working on the development of speaking skills [11]. The results confirmed the necessity of finding the right combination of





assessment techniques to avoid the boredom of students during the lesson and prepare students for using English in real-life situations.

Providing additional comments on their experience in using alternative assessment in their English classes during the pandemic, the respondents mentioned that technical problems for students could be real ones or just excuses for not participating in class activities actively. Some respondents noted that a lot of educational institutions were not modernized and had no tools necessary for teaching and learning effectively, some teachers had difficulties with choosing appropriate kinds of alternative assessment and confessed that they needed more practice. However, others mentioned that they could use alternative assessment regularly during the pandemic, wrote about advantages like making students more cooperative working in groups, increasing their autonomy and engagement. Respondents mentioned using self-assessment in online classes, and the fact that using rubrics, or even developing them with students, makes alternative assessment more effective.

### **Conclusions.**

Alternative assessment as a formative type of assessing students' progress and achievements is a tool to achieve the 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning goals. The research aims to identify to what extent English teachers are aware of alternative assessment, how intensively exploit its advantages during the pandemic. For the survey, 45 experienced teachers of English from different educational establishments in Ukraine have been involved. The research has been conducted with the use of quantitative and qualitative methods with the voluntary consent of the participants, the data obtained is visually presented. It was established that most teachers conducted blended lessons of English. The respondents agreed with the necessity of professional training, the positive impact of portfolios on students' motivation, acknowledged the importance of alternative assessment and students' involvement in choosing corresponding tools. It was revealed that videos are used most often with presentations and projects falling behind; curricula limitations prevented teachers from using alternative assessment in teaching English. However, provided with a proper technical base and training, English teachers tend to apply alternative assessment tools in their practices.

The properly organized and adequate combination of traditional and alternative forms of assessment and the more effective ways of their incorporation in curricula are the issues for future research.

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**Анотація.** Альтернативне оцінювання як формуючий тип оцінювання успіхів та досягнень учнів є інструментом для досягнення цілей навчання 21 століття. Мета авторів - надати читачам аналіз альтернативних підходів до оцінювання та отримати відгуки від учителів щодо їх досвіду використання альтернативного оцінювання під час пандемії. Кількісні та якісні дані були отримані з опитувань, заповнених викладачами англійської мови в Україні (45) та інтерв'ю на сесіях Zoom. Респонденти погодилися з необхідністю професійної підготовки, позитивним впливом портфоліо на мотивацію студентів, визнали важливість альтернативного оцінювання та залучення студентів до вибору відповідних інструментів. Було виявлено, що відео використовується найчастіше; обмеження навчальних силабусів не дозволяло викладачам використовувати альтернативне оцінювання під час викладання англійської мови. Результати дослідження показали готовність викладачів впроваджувати альтернативне оцінювання. Авторів довело гіпотезу про те, що викладачі англійської мови усвідомлюють переваги альтернативного оцінювання та його позитивний ефект, але не використовують його у повсякденній практиці. Саме тому існує необхідність окреслити позитивні сторони альтернативного оцінювання та дати рекомендації щодо його застосування на практиці.

**Ключові слова:** Альтернативне оцінювання, пандемія, викладачі англійської мови, рубрики.