Be S.M.A.R.T.:
Blending Formative and Summative Assessments in
Hybrid Course on ESP

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Abstract

The recent era in the field of education has been quite revolutionary in terms of the advent of new education paradigms that use Hybrid, Blended & Online learning (HBO) modalities. The base of this transformation in the pedagogical approach is to make the teaching-learning process more learner-centric. As English Language Learners as well as the teachers were familiarized with Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) way back in 60's, the arrival of non-conventional methods of delivery and assessment techniques is not a surprise to English for Specific Purpose (ESP) teachers. However, developing the understanding of assessment and assessment strategies is challenging for both the learner and the instructor. Along with the blend in the modes and methods of delivery, the blend of summative and formative assessment techniques definitely aims at a more conducive, goal/result oriented and self-regulatory impactful learning.

This paper aims to study the responses of students on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic & Time bound) assessment methods used which is blending Formative and Summative assessment techniques while starting the assessment process with a Diagnostic survey. This action-based research paper is supported by a self-designed and administered quantitative research conducted on 200 MBA Semester-I students to study the responses of the said group of students who are exposed to blended assessment (formative & Summative) in their first semester *Business Communication* course. It is analyzed through the data collected in a survey that this group of students appreciate blended assessment (both Formative & Summative) in comparison to

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only summative assessment that takes place in the middle and end of the semester in a conventional ESP classroom.

Keywords: English for Specific Purpose, Formative, Summative, Assessment, Hybrid, Blended & Online Learning

Introduction

In academics, assessment is the pivotal point around which the whole teaching process revolves. In addition to the correct pedagogical approach, unless the right assessment tools are used to achieve the learning outcomes, teaching-learning process is mere a myth. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Assessment as, "the action or an instance of making a judgment about something" to elaborate the word assessment can be defined as a systematic way, which is used to study someone or something on pre-defined parameters in order to achieve improvement in certain area. Hence, assessment is a methodical way of acquiring, reviewing and using information about someone or something, to make improvement where necessary. The term is interpreted in a variety of ways, i.e. educational, psychological, financial, taxation, human resource and so on. (S, 2017)

Let us first identify and understand the concepts of assessment & evaluation so that it becomes easier on our part to apply the correct and more relevant approaches to our pedagogy so that learning outcomes are achieved. According to Wiggins & McTighe:

> By *assessment* we mean the act of determining the extent to which the desired results are on the way to being achieved and to what extent they have been achieved. Assessment is the umbrella term for the deliberate use of many methods of gathering evidence of meeting desired results, whether those results are state content standards or local curricular objectives. The collected evidence we seek may well include observations and dialogues, traditional quizzes and tests, performance tasks and projects, as well as students' self-assessments gathered over time. Assessment is thus a more learning-focused term than evaluation, and the two should not be viewed as synonymous. Assessment is the giving and using of feedback against standards to enable improvement and the meeting of goals. Evaluation, by contrast, is more summative and credential-related. In other words, we need not give a grade— an evaluation—to everything we give feedback to. In fact, a central premise of our argument is that understanding can be developed and evoked only through multiple methods of ongoing assessment, with far greater attention paid to formative (and performance) assessment than is typical. (McTighe, 2005)

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The approach of a learner towards the teaching-learning process is most of the time directly proportional to the assessment tools used either throughout or in the end of the semester by the teacher. More than the method of assessment, the quality of the feedback shared and the 'learning achieved' in the process of learning affects the learners' attitude and approach towards the subject. It is generally acknowledged that 'a student's approach to learning and the quality of learning achieved will be influenced by the way in which this learning is to be assessed' (Gibbs, 2010) .

Nevertheless, other than the major three types of assessments, which are summative, formative and continuous assessment another form of assessments used in academics is diagnostic assessments. Diagnostic assessments are pre-assessments, which are used by the teacher to develop an understanding about the level of prior knowledge of a learner apropos a particular subject. Though, summative assessments are evaluative in nature, the blending of these assessment types immensely helps a teacher in designing the curricula and selecting the methodology to be used in the process of teaching and accordingly for catering to the need of the learner with a very learner-centric approach. The preferred type of assessments individually or blended with another form of assessment can further be aligned within the teaching process to bring into line and accomplish the learning objectives. In a traditional language classroom, formative or continuous assessments are most commonly used but with the intervention of technology, the teachers now can use blended modes of assessments in order to ascertain the accomplishment of learning outcomes and meeting course objective with exactitude.

Blended Learning

Before we discuss the difference between formative and summative assessment, it is very important to describe blended learning. In the past couple of decades, academics has shown tremendous revolutionary changes in teaching-learning methodologies, which enable the possibility of more learner-centric approach in teaching-learning process. The journey of the methods of teaching-learning, right from the traditional face-to-face method to web-based teaching and then *enroute* from synchronous learning to Learning Management Systems that offer both synchronous and asynchronous learning options, has shown quite a revolution in terms of growing with the fast changing world. Blended learning as the name suggests is an amalgamation of online learning with traditional face to face teaching and learning methods. As English Language Learners as well as the teachers were familiarized with Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) way back in 60's, the arrival of non-conventional methods of delivery and assessment techniques is not a surprise to ESP teachers. The combination of computer-based learning with the traditional classroom monitoring provides enough room to the learner as well the instructor to align the socio-cultural and linguistic needs.

Blended learning, in this process of growth, comes as a bridge that connects the teacher and the learner while not getting into either extreme. According to (Throne, 2003), blended

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learning has almost limitless potential because it "represents a naturally evolving process from traditional forms of teaching to a personalized and focused development path".

However, to develop an understanding of assessment and assessment strategies, which makes it simpler to meet the learning objectives fairly, is challenging both for the learner and the instructor. Along with the blend in the modes and methods of delivery, the blend of summative and formative assessment techniques definitely aims at a more conducive, goal/result oriented and self-regulatory impactful learning. The traditionally used techniques of assessment in English Language Teaching is Summative Assessment, which evaluates a learner's progression periodically up to a certain point of time. Mid/End-term examination and unit tests are some of the examples of such type of assessment (more likely to be called evaluation). On the contrary, feedback based assessment aligned with the learning outcomes that contributes to the improvement in the student's learning progression is Formative in nature. Brown and Knight explain:

> *Summative assessment* is assessment that is used to signify competence or that contributes to a student's grade in a course, module, level or degree. *Formative assessment*, on the other hand, is assessment strictly used to provide feedback to the student on their learning. It provides the student with advice on how to maintain and improve their progress, but generally, it does not form part of their summative grade or mark. Formative assessment is based on the assumption that 'growth is to be promoted, not left to the swirling patterns of 'natural' development by ex (Knight, 2004)posure to the subject matter of the degree'. (Knight, 2004)

Formative assessment also helps students develop self-directed learning. Using assessment and communicating the purpose of the assessments should be done meticulously so that the students are able to shift their focus from merely passing the subject to understanding the subject. At this point, it is important to reiterate the difference between assessment and evaluation. The difference of assessment and evaluation overlaps with that of between Formative and Summative. Assessments provide feedback on the areas that necessitate improvement whereas, evaluation defines the magnitude to which objectives are accomplished. In other words, we can say that assessment is process driven on the other hand evaluation is product driven. Learning objectives do not have a major role to play in the evaluation process while assessments are completely learner and objective centric.

> The assessment provides feedback on performance and ways to enhance performance in future. As against this, evaluation ascertains whether the standards are met or not. The purpose of assessment is formative, i.e. to increase quality whereas evaluation is all about judging quality, therefore the purpose is summative. (S, 2017)

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Method
Research Design (Descriptive-Survey)

Based on descriptive (Survey) research design, this paper aims to study the responses of students on assessment methods used (which is blending Formative and Summative assessment while starting the assessment process with diagnostic survey). It is studied through the diagnostic assessment that majority of the students have never been exposed to HBO until their graduation. They are found to be familiar with LMS as a mode of resource portal but not as a tool of assessment. The following results of the diagnostic test reflect a clear exposure and understanding of the students' familiarity on blended teaching learning tools. 190 responses were collected out of 200 students who took the diagnostic survey.
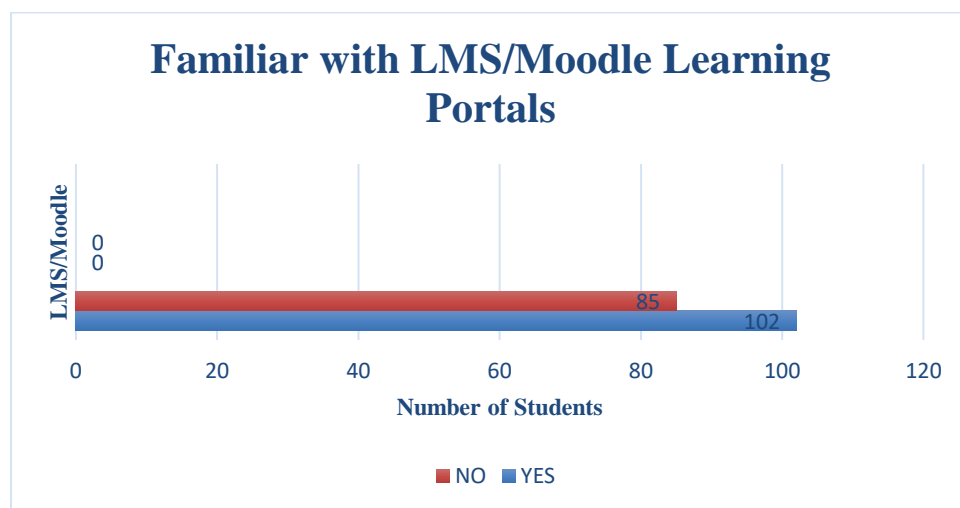

Figure. 01

More than 50% of the strength who took the diagnostic survey answered the question of being familiar with the LMS/ Moodle, but the percentage changed drastically when they are asked about their being familiar with HBO. Not only it is about their being exposed to the technology integrated teaching-learning methods but also the students who accepted their being familiar with Moodle or LMS in discussions expressed that usually Moodles/LMS were used to conduct MCQs based quizzes periodically which were usually non-graded. Further to the diagnostic test over 200 MBA- semester I students were given a self-designed and administered survey.to study the responses of the said group of students who are exposed to blended assessment (formative & Summative) in their first semester Business Communication course using blended (F2F & Online) mode of delivery.

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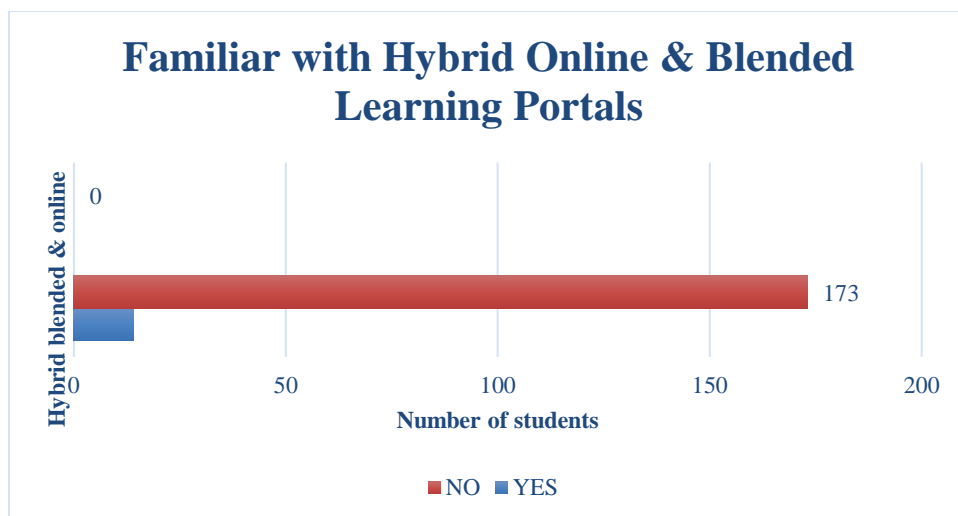Be S.M.A.R.T.: Blending Formative and Summative Assessments in Hybrid Course on ESP

Figure. 02

Data Collection Method(s) and Analysis

Keeping the concept of blended assessment techniques in mind, MBA first semester students are oriented about the unconventional teaching methodology along with the assessment pattern. Business Communication in the first semester is a subject that broadly deals with the basics of communication, components of effective business writing, effective presentation and negotiation skills. During the orientation sessions, the students are familiarized with the use of *Blackboard* (LMS) as a mode of teaching and assessment throughout the semester. Along with the course plan, a detailed plan with dates and deadlines for completing the online assessment is shared with the students. Internal Assessment is further divided into individual and group assessments and carry a weightage of 50% of the total marks. Rest 50% is End semester written exam in pen and paper mode like a conventional communication examination. The division of the marks under internal assessment is as given below:

Criteria	Marks
Internal Marks	50%
End Semester Marks	50%
Total	**100%**
Criteria	**Marks**
Group Assessment	
Case Studies (Classroom)	20 Marks
Class Presentations (Classroom)	20 Marks

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Total	**40 Marks**
Individual Assessment	
Quizzes (Online)	30 Marks
Assignment (Online)	10 Marks
Discussion (Online)	20 Marks
Total	**60 Marks**
End Semester Exam	**100 Marks**

Based on this, communication is shared with the students. With a proper timely intimation, the assessments were conducted. The timelines in the following format were shared with the students via *Blackboard* in the beginning of the semester:

Marks Distribution							
Module Description	Assessment Criteria		Details of activities	Marks Distribution	Total	Deadlines (Tentative)	Total No. of hours (Online)
Internal Assessment - 50%							
Individual Assessment	Quiz - I	Module- I	Communication - An overview, Goals of Communication, Directions of Communication, Barriers to Communication/ Grapevine/ Channels, pattern of Communication	10 Marks	**100 Marks**	6-Sep-17	15 Min.
	Discussion -I	Module- I	Cross-cultural/Intercultural Communication	10 Marks		04 - 11 Sept 2017	1 Hr.
	Assignment -I	Module- I	Business Correspondence, good news/bad news	05 Marks		13-17 Sept 2017	30 Min

	Quiz -II	Module-II	Verbal Communication-Assorted Quiz on Common Errors	10 Marks		15 - 20 Sept 2017	15 Min.
	Assignment -II	Module-V	Based on Critical thinking & writing skills	05 Marks		21 - 27 Sept 2017	2 Hr.
	Discussion -II	Module-V	Written Communication	10 Marks		28 Sept - 4 Oct 2017	1 Hr.
	Quiz-III	Module-IV	Negotiation Skills	10 Marks			
Group Assessment	Case Studies	Module- I	Case Studies	20 Marks		11-15 Sept 2017	1 Hr.
	Presentations	Module-III	Group Presentations	20 Marks		22 Oct - 3 Nov 2017	
End Semester-50%	Written Exam based on entire Syllabus			100 Marks	**100 Marks**		

It was made sure that the instructor did not compromise with the deadlines and at the same time kept on checking students' participation. The teacher took care of the fact that within a week's time the students are given the feedback, which is both written, and in person.

Findings and Discussion

Using a google form a 10 questions survey is conducted on the same set of students who underwent the above mentioned course. The students are briefed about the questions, but the purpose of the study was not disclosed so the responses are not affected.

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Table 1: Survey Questions:

Sr. No.	Questions
1.	*The online quizzes conducted every fortnight are helpful in making me understand my level of comprehension about the topic taught.*
2.	*The weekly assignments on Blackboard (LMS) helped me to check on my written expression.*
3.	*Formative assessments throughout the semester helped me to check on my progress in terms of achieving learning objectives.*
4.	*Instructor's feedback is detailed enough to make me understand my drawbacks and helped me work on my shortcomings with clarity*
5.	*Online discussions in continuous assessment helped me open up in expression and exposed to others' opinions according to my time pace.*
6.	*Blending of continuous assessment and end semester exam test my competence fairly*
7.	*Written exam pertaining to the complete syllabus in the end semester gives me a fair chance to prove my knowledge and competence in the subject.*
8.	*Integration of assessment methods (online and written exam) leave an extra room for my betterment.*
9.	*Final examination in pen and paper makes the whole assessment process more authentic and valid.*
10.	*Rate the assessment pattern of your course.*

Out of the given questions, some selected responses are as mentioned below:

1. The online quizzes conducted every fortnight are helpful in making me understand my level of comprehension about the topic taught.
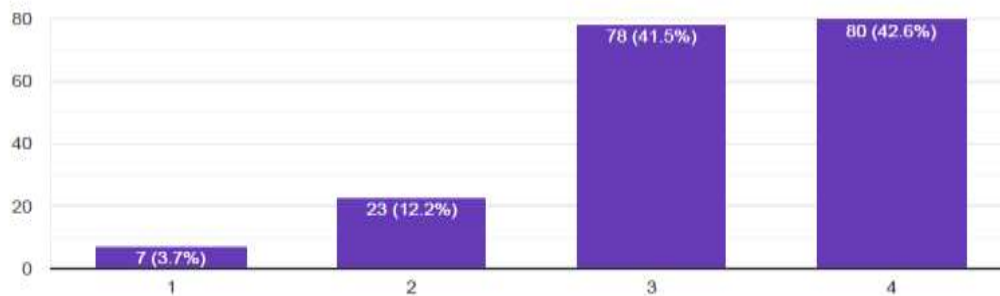
188 responses

Figure 1:

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2. The weekly assignments on Blackboard (LMS) helped me to check on my written expression.
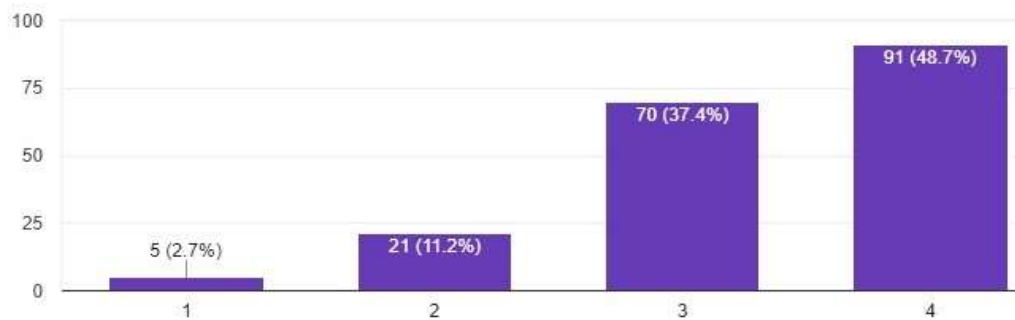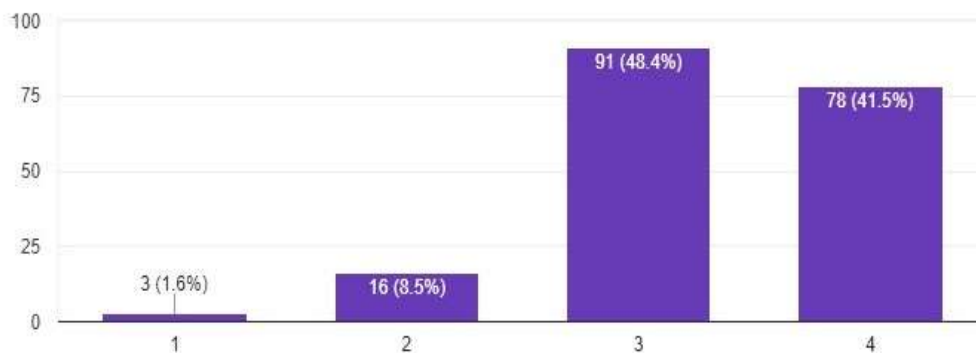
187 responses

Figure 2:

3. Formative assessments throughout the semester helped me to check on my progress in terms of achieving learning objectives.

188 responses

Discussion

The online quizzes conducted every fortnight not only helped the students in learning the topic but also identify the level of their comprehension with regard to the topic discussed. Though the online quizzes are evaluative in nature, they helped students see/identify the sections/parts wherein they need more practice.

The weekly online assignments complemented the fortnightly quizzes as they helped the students discuss and receive feedback on the topic. In addition, the online assignments (being subjective in nature) helped students to work and develop their writing skills. The blending of assessments had an overall impact on the learning of the students as they helped the students identify the areas of improvement and based on the detailed feedback, helped them learn the correct the mistakes and errors.

The formative assessments throughout the semester helped the students keep tab on their learnings well as the learning objectives. Students could easily identify (based on their scores & feedback) the learning outcomes where they required to work harder. Throughout the semester, the blend of assessments kept its focus on attainment of the learning outcomes, which can never be a summative process.

Conclusions

The blend of assessment types is the need of the hour as the summative assessments do not offer much room for self-correction and are evaluative in nature. Implementing formative assessment techniques provide this extra room for self-correction and correction by the teacher as well so that the process remains a well-knit complete process without any loopholes. The way to improvement is always progressive and continuous and that is why, the blend of assessment types is more outcome-based. The assessment techniques and tools are SMART as the blended assessments not only specific in nature and are measurable, but also are attainable, realistic and time-bound.

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