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Integrating the Formative and Summative Post Covid-19 in a Blended Learning Approach to Higher Educational Assessment

Challenges and Opportunities

Abstract

The response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Europe, reflecting a general move towards remote working, has been overwhelmingly one of turning to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) described as a "temporary solution to an immediate problem" (Bozkurt and Sharma 2020, ii). ERT is often seen from a negative viewpoint, linked to a reactive approach to teaching (Golden 2020; Murphy 2020) with a lack of planning or expertise. This means of delivery, however, has also taught us many lessons, some of which may provide us with new opportunities and ways of working in the future (Hodges et al. 2020; Hartle 2020; Thomas et al. 2021). When considering the assessment of language competence one of these lessons is that formative assessment is more appropriate to asynchronous, online contexts and summative assessment is suited rather to the synchronous, face to face spaces. In Higher Education (HE) contexts in the past summative assessment has generally been conducted in person, in a physical context because of concerns related to exam security (Nusche 2008; Pachler et al. 2010). The challenge now, where online teaching is increasingly becoming part and parcel of the educational repertoire, however, is to integrate both the formative and the summative in a new form of blended learning (BL) for the future. This is a future where the approach to teaching in online digital contexts both synchronously and asynchronously will no longer be ERT but a principled, planned approach to combining the digital with the traditional.

Keywords: *summative assessment, formative assessment, Blended Learning, Covid-19, principled learning and assessment design*

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*
(T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding")

1. Introduction

As a result of the outbreak of the Covid-19 emergency, teaching in the majority of Higher Education (HE) institutions moved online during the pandemic, adopting the largely reactive approach known as Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) (Bozkurt and Sharma 2020; Crawford et al. 2020; Golden 2020; Murphy 2020). This, of necessity, as educators struggled to deal with online teaching as the 'new normal,' was concerned with addressing the technocentric question of how to use digital platforms and tools effectively, rather than focusing on the pedagogy and designing for learning and assessment (Xiao 2021; Lambert 2018;). T. S. Eliot's lines from the poem *Little Gidding*, cited above, encapsulate the circularity of travelling to new places, in this case to online, digital, teaching contexts, exploring them and then returning to the traditional classrooms. Such a path may enable us to see those traditional classrooms with fresh eyes, much as any journey would, and ultimately recognize the strengths in traditional teaching, which may then be enriched with the new affordances that have been discovered during the pandemic period. Many argue, indeed, that online learning will continue to be the norm in the post-pandemic world (Xiao 2021; Hanson 2020; Sintema 2020). This raises the issue, however, of how both effective learning and assessment can be planned for.

1.1 Digital teaching in Higher Education

The preoccupation with implementing digital resources and tools is not only the consequence of the pandemic but is rather related to the epistemology of technological approaches to teaching. Over the past twenty years technology has increasingly been seen as a solution to declining standards in education with its promise of better presentations of content or the enabling of increased interactivity in HE classrooms (Fitch 2004; Angeli and Valanides 2009). The focus has commonly been on how new technology can be implemented in classrooms, along with the training or lack of training of teachers in its use (Angeli and Valanides 2009). Bax (2003) discussed the need for technology to become 'normalised' before it could be integrated into a meaningful pedagogical approach and this is echoed by many of the advocates for the use of educational technology and digital tools. The dangers of the novelty attraction of tools are underlined, where the innovative nature of the tool itself may become central rather than the learning process (Hartle 2022; Mishan 2016; Day and Sharma 2014; Motteram 2011). Novelty, in fact, should be related to clear, learning-centred affordances rather than simply the 'novelty' or the 'wow' factor, which is one trap that many early adopters may fall into. To return to the effects of ERT, it is worth, in fact, mentioning the key figures published in the OECD (2020) report to provide an overview of the extent to which HE institutions resorted to ERT, increasing

precisely this focus on technology and tools. The initial reaction to the emergency was closure or partial suspension of classes, which affected 99% of the global HE student population (OECD 2020, 1). Onsite teaching was then replaced by remote delivery in 109 countries by 424 HE institutions as reported in the International Survey of Universities report (Marinoni et al. 2020). ERT, however, has been described as a "temporary solution to an immediate problem" (Bozkurt and Sharma 2020, ii) and is often seen from a negative viewpoint, linked to a reactive approach to teaching (Golden 2020; Murphy 2020) with a lack of planning or expertise (Crawford et al. 2020).

1.2 New principled teaching and assessment frameworks for the future

The question of practical implementation, and how to use tools, however, should not be the sole concern of professional development or planning, since both learning and assessment design must be conducted in a principled way with clear frameworks informing the approaches adopted (White 2014). A return to a more learning or learner-centred pedagogy, indeed, that still retains the advantages provided by digital tools and spaces both for learning and assessment is perhaps the best way forward. ERT has, in fact, taught us many lessons, some of which may provide us with new opportunities and ways of working in the future (Thomas and McCulloch 2021; Hodges et al. 2020; Hartle 2020). An assessment framework which adapts well to the BL context and includes both learning and assessment is Learning Oriented Assessment (LOA) (Jones and Saville 2016; Carless 2007; Purpura 2004). LOA provides a framework which caters for the co-existence of both summative and formative assessment types despite their separate goals. In this approach teaching and learning are informed by a range of activities that foster reflection and planning in such a way as to identify weaknesses and build on strengths. This ultimately may lead to more effective performance on summative assessment as well (Jones and Saville 2016).

1.3 Assessment in future HE blended learning contexts

Although there are many different types of assessment,[1] the summative/formative divide is a useful heuristic to use as a starting point when considering the topic. Traditionally the summative measures achievement, related to certification, measures achievement and progress. Formative assessment, on the other hand, focuses on identifying needs, strengths, weaknesses which then enables students and teachers to establish learning paths. These two approaches

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[1] The Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR) provides a useful overview of a range of assessment types (Council of Europe 2001, 183).

have commonly been considered to be separate from each other. Hamp-Lyons, in fact, speaks of two "assessment cultures" (2007, 487), which are often seen to be in conflict: the summative one as an "exam culture" whereas the formative focuses on learning. In fact, they can be thought of as two components of the assessment process that do not necessarily conflict with but may actually complement each other. This is precisely what LOA does and, furthermore, it is particularly appropriate for blended learning (BL) for assessment purposes (Keppell et al. 2006). Formative assessment tends to be appropriate in a range of contexts both asynchronous and synchronous, online and onsite, whereas summative assessment is suited rather to the synchronous, onsite spaces, for many reasons. In HE contexts in the past summative assessment has generally been conducted in person, in a physical context because of examination security concerns (Nusche 2008; Pachler et al. 2010). This is also true of foreign language teaching, where, in Italian university language centres, for instance, summative assessments may be blended with online and face to face (f2f) components. The online components, however, in such cases, are generally proctored onsite. Formative assessment, on the other hand, has often been neglected in HE contexts (Dunn and Mulvenon 2009; Pachler et al. 2010; Wang et al. 2008), where the emphasis is rather on certification or measuring achievement. The challenge now, where online teaching is increasingly becoming part and parcel of the educational repertoire, is to integrate both the formative and the summative in a new form of BL for the future where onsite and online contexts may draw on the affordances of both these spaces, combining interactions and resources applied in the physical context with those that are available online. This is a future where the approach to teaching in online digital contexts both synchronously and asynchronously will no longer be ERT but a principled, planned approach to combining the digital with the traditional.

This article provides a reflection on the challenges of online assessment that have been encountered during the pandemic period, and also seeks to answer the question of how to integrate the opportunities afforded by technological advances, with reference to online assessment, into a principled design for the future. As Chappelle and Sauro have already underlined, the addition of online resources to existing onsite pedagogy "has become integral to the ways that most language learners in the world today access materials" (2017, 1). This suggests that BL contexts may become increasingly adopted and developed in the future, both for learning and for assessment purposes. Returning to traditional onsite tests whether they are conducted online or face to face, furthermore, will almost certainly mean reevaluating them and regenerating them into new kinds of assessment constructs and delivery systems such as LOA. In this article we consider summative and formative assessment particularly in BL

approaches where the affordances of technology can be integrated with more traditional tools. We explore the necessity for a clear assessment construct and present the version of LOA that has been adopted at the University of Verona Language Centre as one possible model for future assessment in foreign language, blended learning.

2. The choice of blended learning

BL was already widely adopted for University Language Centre (ULC) teaching even before the pandemic. Driscoll rightly states, however, that BL "means different things to different people" (Driscoll 2000, 1) and cites four different blends including "the combination of any form of technology […] with face-to-face instructor-led training" (Driscoll 2002, 1). This is how BL is generally interpreted in Italian foreign language teaching contexts. The 'blend' usually consists of a systematic use of digital technology combined with onsite f2f contexts (Hartle 2018; Bates 2016; Laughlin et al. 2006; Sharma and Barrett 2007). Graham also highlights this definition of BL as being an accurate reflection of "the historical emergence of blended learning systems" (Graham 2006, 4). Friesen goes further including not only the combination of technological with f2f aspects, but adding that BL opens the door to a range of possibilities (Friesen 2012, 1) which are afforded by the combination of the differing online and f2f contexts. As a result of the Covid-19 emergency, where the onsite context was not used, BL is evolving yet again often to refer to the combination of the synchronous with the asynchronous, rather than distinguishing between the online and onsite aspects. As a result of the imposition of ERT, there has been a tremendous backlash against online teaching, which whilst understandable risks being counterproductive as the considerable affordances provided by this context, as already mentioned earlier, should neither be neglected when it comes to learning nor when considering assessment. Logistical advantages of online testing include factors such as time saving as a result of randomized item display in electronic test databases, automated marking systems and generation of reports. Such digital resources can aid both learners and teaching in identifying key action areas as well as providing accountability as both written and oral work can be stored online and accessed at a later date. The aspects of security related to summative testing and social interaction, which is helpful in the learning process, are features of the onsite f2f context, on the other hand, where human invigilators and interlocutors can shape the assessment experience and interaction helps extend knowledge and scaffold learning. The affordances of the synchronous are not the same as those of the asynchronous: technology can help us in one way and human interaction in another. If planned for in a principled way, all these may, ultimately, come together as different pieces of the principled assessment puzzle, where assessment is both summative 'of'

learning and formative 'for' learning.

3. Summative and formative assessment in Higher Education both prior to and as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic

3.1 Summative assessment

Traditionally, in HE contexts the assessment focus has tended to be on the summative, delivered both to establish student certification and to provide institutional accountability (Pachler et al. 2010; Nusche 2008). When summative tests were transferred online in the past, however, it was often a matter of transferring existing traditional tests to online or distance learning contexts (Xiong and Suen 2018). This simple transfer of traditional procedures online is not enough, however. Best summative practices in online environments must be identified and meaningly implemented (Williamson 2018; Bakerson et al. 2015; Ladyshewsky 2015). Matters of security and cheating, furthermore, have always been seen as problematic online test settings (Gikandi et al. 2011), together with instances of candidate identity fraud (Xiong and Suen 2018; Newton 2015; Hench 2010). For this reason, historically, even when teaching may be delivered online, to a greater or lesser degree, summative assessment is generally conducted onsite where tests can be delivered synchronously and proctored physically. As Ardid et al. (2015), demonstrate, in fact, proctored online tests may be an effective form of evaluation whereas unproctored ones present a bias towards higher ratings. These concerns were reflected in the findings of the OECD (2020, 2-4) report, which outlined the main challenges to summative online testing as being threefold: firstly, the most widespread concern, reported worldwide, was with student academic dishonesty, such as cheating or plagiarism. Secondly, questions of fairness were also questioned concerning access to reliable bandwidth, equipment, and suitable test conditions. The third greatest concern reported by the OECD was the risk of technical failure (even when good equipment and resources were available). The solutions put forward to these problem areas include firstly, that institutions might carry out spot checks during examinations to reduce cheating, secondly, that oral tests could be provided, rather than written ones where candidates can be monitored more closely. The report also suggests focusing on testing critical thinking where candidates are not simply searching for one correct answer, as is the case in multiple choice tests, for instance. In order to ensure fairness, more planning for easier access was advised: this would help candidates access onsite platforms in ways that would afford equal opportunities. More communication with students as to their needs was also recommended. To deal with the problems of technical failure the suggestions were to dedicate more time to the development of reliable technical support systems and to provide advanced simulations with

students, and to keep reliance on technology to a minimum. The problems identified above, however, together with the solutions proposed, arose as a direct consequence of the emergency. These recommendations seem to suggest that assessment will continue to be organized in a similar way in the future. Whilst it is possible that online testing, integrated into a BL approach to language learning may be one of the options chosen in the future, it is also important to underline, once again, the fact that these new types of tests must be planned and implemented as a principled element of the entire learning design, not a hasty solution to an emergency.

Two main points, in fact, are important to bear in mind for the future. Firstly, the online context has very different affordances from the onsite one and tests can be developed with these advantages in mind, which will be discussed in greater detail below. Secondly, the majority of the problems identified in the OECD report, were matters of test security related to proctoring and for this reason a future use of online summative assessment could imply retaining the online testing context where it is useful but conducting such assessment onsite where physical invigilation can be assured.

3.2 Formative assessment

As mentioned above, most HE institutions tend to opt for onsite proctoring of summative tests but when it comes to formative assessment, security is not usually a key factor. Formative assessment, in fact, which supports learning by means of tools such as feedback, reflection goal setting and learning scaffolding, is designed to foster and monitor the learning process, rather than to measure results (Xiong and Suen 2018; OECD 2013; Gikandi et al. 2011; Black and Wiliam 1998). It has been defined by the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) like this:

> Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and the teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get them there. (Broadfoot et al. 2002, 2)

The process involves teachers and learners, therefore, collecting data about individual and class learning experiences both together and individually by means of observation, feedback and reflection. Feedback and discussion are used to modify both teaching and learning enabling both teachers and students to set new goals in line with their needs. The aim of this is to "close the gap" (Black and Wiliam 1998, 6) between what a learner knows and can do at a specific point in time and the aims the learner may set themselves for the near future. If assessment is likened to a coin, the formative might be one side, sometimes known as assessment 'for' learning and the summative the other, assessment 'of' learning. They are both part of the same process,

however, which involves firstly reflecting on achievement and then developing learning strategies that aim to foster further progress. There has been an increasing interest over recent years in formative assessment as a move to see assessment as being part of the teaching/learning process rather than being separate. A great deal of work has been done on this topic, in fact, following the seminal paper by Black and Wiliam (1998) which reviewed the evidence for success in learning in general, in 250 articles which showed that quantitative evidence of learning gain had been obtained, following the introduction of formative assessment procedures (1989, 3). This work was followed by research by the ARG (Broadfoot et al. 2002), which Black and Wiliam were involved in, and which was based in mainstream UK education. The ARG work, however, which extended Black and Wiliam's, has had a far-reaching influence on other more specific fields such as Foreign Language Teaching (ELT) as well. Despite this, formative practices, as mentioned in the Introduction, have been neglected in HE (Gikandi et al. 2011) and there has been some misunderstanding of the concept in practice. The OECD (2013) report on student assessment found, in fact, that in many settings formative assessment was seen as "summative assessment done more often" (151) or as practice for final exams. A later report carried out by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (2016, 7) discovered that many elements of formative assessment had already been integrated into classroom practice. Formative practices such as reflection and goal setting as well as self-assessment lend themselves very well to online contexts, furthermore where quizzes or portfolios can be developed both synchronously and asynchronously, as will be described below. Introducing such elements is not, in fact, a luxury but may provide considerable support to learners who do not understand why they are not successful on summative tests or who struggle to understand the aims of their study programmes. Introducing formative elements into the learning design may, in fact, also be related to successful performance in summative assessments if managed effectively. Exploring summative assessment criteria with learners, to name just one such practice, is a formative practice that practitioners report as having considerable success (Salamoura and Morgan 2021).

The OECD (2020) report discusses mainly summative assessment, but it does mention the formative aspect briefly (OECD 2020, 9), stating that regular assessments with feedback are conducive to enabling learners to adapt their learning process itself. The report, in particular, cites Vincent-Lancrin (2020), who considers online and computer-based technologies to be useful for the formulation of AI driven feedback systems. Such systems could aid learning in a range of ways such as helping stakeholders navigate freely available Internet resources, helping teachers provide learners with tailor-made learning paths depending on their specific

knowledge or difficulties, as well as helping learners with their independent study in various ways. ERT has brought with it a series of problems, as discussed earlier, but neither does it seem feasible or even desirable to return to the traditional technology-poor classrooms of the past.

4. Reconsidering the examination construct for language assessment in Italian HE

In HE contexts the summative assessment of language learning still tends to focus on a largely structuralist approach to language as an object or series of structures, which need to be learned and used, something that a learner can acquire and that can be measured quantitatively (Kramsch 2017). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001; Council of Europe 2018), however, presents a rather different framework. It is a socio-cognitive model that puts the learner at the centre of the process, a construct that has its roots in Canale and Swain's (1980) notion of communicative competence. This approach focuses on what language users 'can do' in real life contexts. The latest CEFR 2018 volume, in fact, highlights such aspects as mediation and multilingualism, and is a framework which is already widely used in European university language centres. Despite this, however, the very fact of dividing "language competence" into discrete factors that can be measured or focusing on verbs such as "can use" or "can exploit" (Council of Europe 2018, 60), reveals a possibly covert attitude towards language as still being seen as an object, something to be studied and mastered, which is perhaps only part of the story. Assessment is often a key driver of learning, with a strong washback effect (Taylor 2005; Hughes 2002), moreover, on what is taught in class. If the main focus is summative then little space will be devoted to formative questions such as 'how to learn.' Learners may be encouraged to focus too much on the content of the tests and not enough on the study strategies they need to develop their own competence. They may even misunderstand the underlying construct of the exam itself, and this, in turn, may lead to repeated failure in many cases. The OECD report referred to above (2020), calls for examination constructs to be reconsidered, so that the constructs of the assessment framework adopted is aligned with its "intended learning outcomes" (Biggs 2003 cited in OECD 2020, 10). In other words, this means ensuring test construct validity, but at the same time asking 'what' actually needs to be tested and 'how' the process to reach this can be road-mapped in class. Together with this comes the matter of the synchronous versus the asynchronous and which elements should be provided onsite and which ones online.

4.1 Summative Assessment and technology: concerns

As has already been underlined, the transfer of summative assessment online is not simply a matter of providing traditional tests in electronic formats and best practices must be developed. This does not, however, mean merely adapting the task types to fit in with what the machine can do. To provide a clearer idea of what some of the problems that are arising may be, it is useful to consider two task types currently in use to test oral competence in English language tests. The first one is conducted face to face by human raters and the second one is conducted online and rated automatically.

1. Onsite interviews: these generally consist of a short interview between the candidate and the examiner or between more than one candidate with examiners present in the roles of interlocutors or assessors. The language produced and the interaction between the candidates and the examiners may be criterion referenced and assessed by human raters according to core scales and descriptors.

2. Reading aloud: candidates interact with a computer screen. They are given a short preparation period to read a short text silently and are then given a short period to record their answers reading the text aloud. This format enables computer rating according to aspects such as voice recognition, content and fluency.

The first task is more traditional and clearly reflects the socio-cognitive aims of the CEFR as there is a communication of ideas between participants even though the context of the examination room may be seen as artificial. The second option, on the other hand, seems to have been developed to fit in with the capabilities of the software. Pearson Test of English (Pearson PTE), a major developer of English language tests, has long subscribed to the notion of automated scoring, promising stakeholders on its website[2] that scoring is based on complex algorithms that have been widely tested on a data sample of over 10,000 students with over 120 native languages (Pearson Education Ltd. 2019, 2).

The algorithms are claimed to be more objective precisely because their evaluations are not clouded by human bias, and, therefore, more reliable than human ratings. The machines learn from the scores provided by a high number of human raters and are trained in over 126 different pronunciation patterns. The message is that the candidate is effectively being rated by 'dozens' of experts instead of just one human being. Pearson play down the importance of sociolinguistic

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[2] Pearson PTE website: https://www.pearsonpte.com. Last visited 10/04/2022.

or pragmatic elements in spoken exchanges (2021, 5) and claim that their scores, which are largely quantitative in nature, are just as valid. In the speaking "read aloud" task outlined above, the scoring is applied to three components:

1. Content: this is scored by counting the number of correct words in the response. Replacement, insertions and omissions adversely affect the score;
2. Oral fluency: this is scored by analyzing the rhythm, phrasing and stress to see whether they are regular. Hesitations, repetitions and false starts are penalized.
3. Pronunciation: this is scored by calculating the instances of vowels and consonants that are pronounced in an expert-speaker like way. Word and sentence stress is also analyzed.

This is only one task in the test but it is indicative of a tendency that might well seem to be a step backwards towards a deficit, exonormative approach (Kirkpatrick 2007) to assessment, based on aiming to achieve near native speaker competence, and penalizing failure, rather than focusing on the development of communicative competence. It does not allow for variation and the task itself of reading aloud when under pressure, because of a time limit, is a far cry from natural communication.

The question that needs to be asked, indeed, is whether such assessment as the second task really respects the socio-cognitive assessment construct of developing communicative competence. Such tasks are becoming adopted increasingly and there seems to be a risk of adapting to the limitations of the algorithms, rather than exploiting the affordances of the online context.

Ultimately, however, technology is neither positive nor negative and what makes it such is the way that it is used. Automated scoring on review tests when accompanied by constructive feedback, for instance, can be both time-saving and useful, and the advantages of feedback have been well documented (Carless 2015; Hattie and Timperley 2007). Technology may also be used to implement a system of continuous assessment by means of a series of assessments, both written and recorded, and uploaded onto a virtual learning environment (VLE) or by means of tools such as e-portfolios, which can be used both for formative and summative purposes.

5. Summative and Formative Assessment and technology: affordances

In a BL approach continuous assessment is a common way of approaching summative and formative assessment together (Ardid et al. 2015), although is often with regard to reflection

and feedback, which are part of the formative aspect of assessment (Cleveland 2018). Holmes (2018, 23) describes low-stakes, formative assessment such as weekly e-assessments as being instrumental in the increase of "student engagement," a key factor in the perceived success of learning. Whilst the online context may not always be suited for the summative, it is particularly suitable for an approach that includes continuous assessment, where both spoken and written assignments can be uploaded and assessed directly on a VLE and reports of learner achievement in the form of grades can often be generated automatically as part of the learner reports. Apart from record-keeping, teachers and learners can observe online discussions and provide feedback. Constructive feedback can be provided online that enables both teachers and learners to evaluate learning independently, and online quizzes can be used to review learning and identify weak areas that need further development. Reflection spaces can be provided, and goals set. If this online work is combined with synchronous scaffolding both online and onsite, the asynchronous activities may be even more effective, as learners can be guided in onsite discussions to discover the value of such activities and how to use them.

Assessment tasks, however, as discussed earlier in connection to assessment cultures (Hamp-Lyons 2007), are often seen as being an aut-aut choice, each task being used for only one type of assessment. A multiple-choice test, for instance, is considered to be merely a summative, measuring progress. Constructive feedback (Hattie and Timperley 2007) on such tests, however, sensitizes learners to their problem areas. If it is well structured rather than simply ego-focused (Clark and Mayer 2016), such as "Congratulations! You've earned a point in this quiz,"[3] it will provide clear explanations and ask thought-provoking questions. An online quiz, however, that does not do this, that provides no or limited feedback, misses a learning opportunity. When constructive feedback is provided with online quizzes, they can be used both summatively and formatively, depending on how they are managed in and outside class. If the instructions are clear on such quizzes, learners can also be encouraged to use them to reflect and to set learning goals. There is no reason, in fact, why both the formative and the summative should not be combined in the same task. The distinction, as underlined by Hamilton and Jones (2013), lies in the purpose of the task, not in the tool that is being used.

5.1 An online quiz for both summative and formative purposes

To illustrate the affordances of online quizzes, it is worth providing a brief illustration of ways in which they have been implemented for an advanced BL English language course, designed

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[3] Taken from JetPunk accessible at https://www.jetpunk.com/quizzes/multiple-choice-general-knowledge-1. Last visited 15/04/2022.

for both undergraduate and post-graduate students at Verona University: *English for the World of Work (EWW)*.[4] On this course, review quizzes are provided in each module for learners to work independently on key learning content. The VLE which is used is Canvas Instructure[5] a system which enables a range of settings for quizzes. Grades can be collected if a quiz is intended to contribute to the overall summative grade or the quizzes can be used purely formatively, as is the case here, where learners are encouraged to use them asynchronously for the self-assessment of their own learning and to set goals for the next stage on the learning path. Before beginning this process, furthermore, time is dedicated synchronously, either onsite or online, for learners to explore different ways of reflecting on their process and setting goals. This is often done cooperatively in groups in order for learners to understand that there are different ways of reflecting and setting goals. Fig. 1 shows the instructions that appear at the beginning of one of these review quizzes, which aims to foster reflection and smart goal setting. This particular quiz comes from a module on public speaking and giving oral presentations in meetings.

> Answer the questions in this quiz to review some of the important points from the module.
>
> Read the feedback carefully and then take the time to set three specific 'small' study goals on the basis of this:
>
> eg. '*I will choose one slide for my next presentation and work on the fonts and colours I use when I finish reading my email tomorrow morning.*'
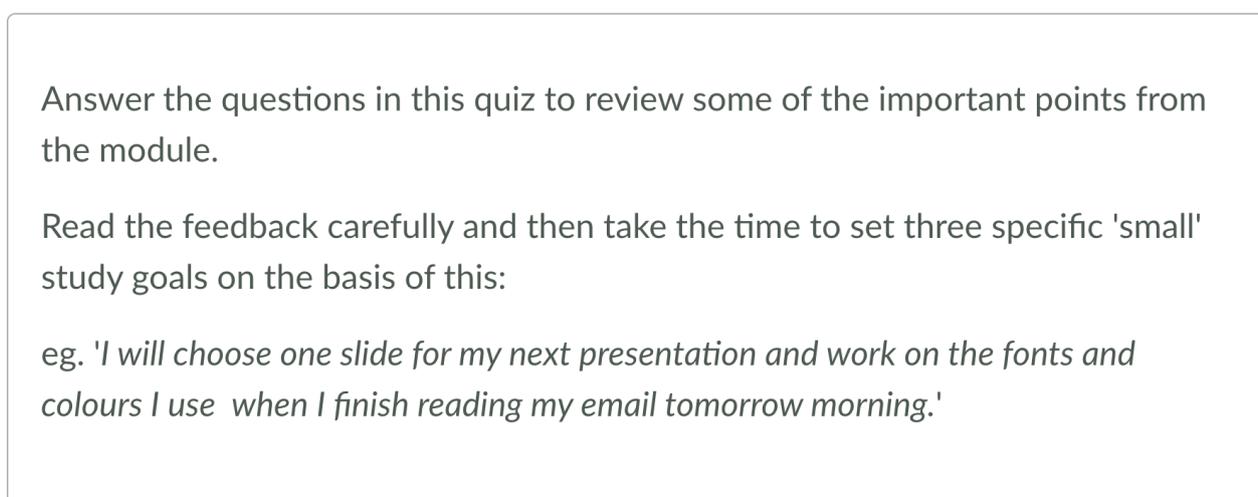
Fig. 1: Instructions at the start of the quiz

The group discussion of these instructions may consist of learners comparing their goals and deciding whether they are too general or are specific enough to achieve. Oral feedback can be

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[4] English for the World of Work is an English for Professional Purposes (EPP) course, which comes under ESP but works on developing English productive skills for a range of contexts. It has traditionally been a BL course, which proved to be one of its particular strengths during the Covid-19 emergency. Its aim is to provide a bridge from general, theoretical language studies to the practical language skills required for the world of work. For further information see (Hartle 2018).

[5] Canvas Instructure: https://canvas.instructure.com/. Last visited 15/04/2022.

provided at this stage both by peers and by teachers. There are a range of possible question types available and on this course the three main ones selected were multiple choice to test specific, discrete items, true or false to focus on debatable issues or concepts, open-ended questions where learners completed an idea with one or two words, which were also used to target specific language areas such as collocation. Fig. 2 shows the body of one of the questions, which often proves controversial. This is the question as to whether or not a presentation should be written out before it is given.

Fig. 2: Body of the question

As can be seen in Fig. 3, 38% of the respondents answered this question incorrectly. Canvas enables the teacher to access an immediate overview of the quiz statistics which can then be reintegrated for feedback and discussion into the synchronous stage of the following lesson.

Fig. 3: Quiz statistics provided by Canvas on a specific question

In this way the teacher gathers information but the learner does too. The feedback that is provided immediately for learners already provides an explanation, which is intended to be thought-provoking as can be seen in Fig. 4.

Fig. 4: Constructive feedback

This feedback reflects a discussion that was held in class earlier and aims to stimulate critical thinking. If the question is then discussed further in a plenary feedback format the main advantages and disadvantages of writing a presentation completely, in advance, can be considered.[6]

Setting up online materials like this can prove time-consuming initially if they are to be designed in a principled way. In the long run, however, the investment is well worth the effort as large numbers of learners can then work independently on the resources at their own pace, which allows them a greater degree of autonomy and ultimately may foster increased learner engagement.

This is simply one example of how an online quiz can be built to reflect key notions from a course and can be used in various ways to support both summative measurement of progress and formative gathering data, reflecting on progress, self-assessment and goal setting. One possible framework for BL assessment in the future is LOA and we will now consider this framework as it was implemented on the advanced English course, *EWW*, already introduced above.

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[6] This controversial topic goes beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice it to say the question aims to foster discussion rather than to provide a black and white answer.

6. LOA: a framework implemented on the BL course English for the World of Work

LOA is widely considered to have been coined by Carless (2007, 58) in 2003, when he was working in HE in Hong Kong. He envisaged formative as being more than the simple repetition of summative progress tests. As mentioned above, in Section 3.2, this is a common misunderstanding of formative assessment when implemented in practice. His intention was to focus more on the 'learning' aspect and to combine the two into a single assessment system. Since 2003 the term has spread and is adopted in various assessment contexts (Purpura 2004, Jones and Saville 2016). The idea of both summative and formative as being systemic has been strongly encouraged and developed by Cambridge English Language Assessment and Jones and Saville refer to this as "a vision of radical change" (2016, 1) both for assessment and for education. Developing the framework in a range of classroom environments, they also underline the particular affordances of technology. They refer to a "transformative shift of emphasis" on what learning is and how it may be implemented and claim that it "offers an opportunity to 'break out of the box' (the traditional classroom) and create a wider ecological environment to support effective language learning" (2016, 110). LOA may be applied as a systemic framework where the formative shapes more effective learning, which, in turn, leads to better performance on summative tests. In 2017, therefore, it was decided on the Verona University EWW course to implement this framework on our BL course. In practice this involved combining assessment for learning with measurement of achievement and proficiency in a systemic LOA approach where the formative assessment is applied both synchronously onsite and online as well as asynchronously and the summative assessment is conducted synchronously exploiting, however, language that has been produced in the asynchronous environment. To appreciate the nature of the framework, as applied on the EWW course, it is useful to consider its key components, which have already been outlined above: record-keeping, feedback, reflection and goal setting. Each module of the course contains online content, which can be seen in the Module One contents in Fig. 5. The three highlighted sections contain the assessment components where the formative and summative are interwoven into one system:

- One revision quiz, which is similar to the one considered above, which can be used summatively to measure progress but also formatively to inform reflection, discussion, both at a group and at a one-to-one level, and goal setting;

- One online discussion which is shaped as an online discussion or conversation on a key aspect of the module. The reflection may be written or oral[7] and is developed in an online discussion and then submitted individually to be assessed. Reflections are monitored formatively by the teachers as well and feedback both on features of language use and writing/speaking skills is provided on an individual as well as on a group basis.

- One formal assignment (written or oral), which may be both peer- and teacher assessed.
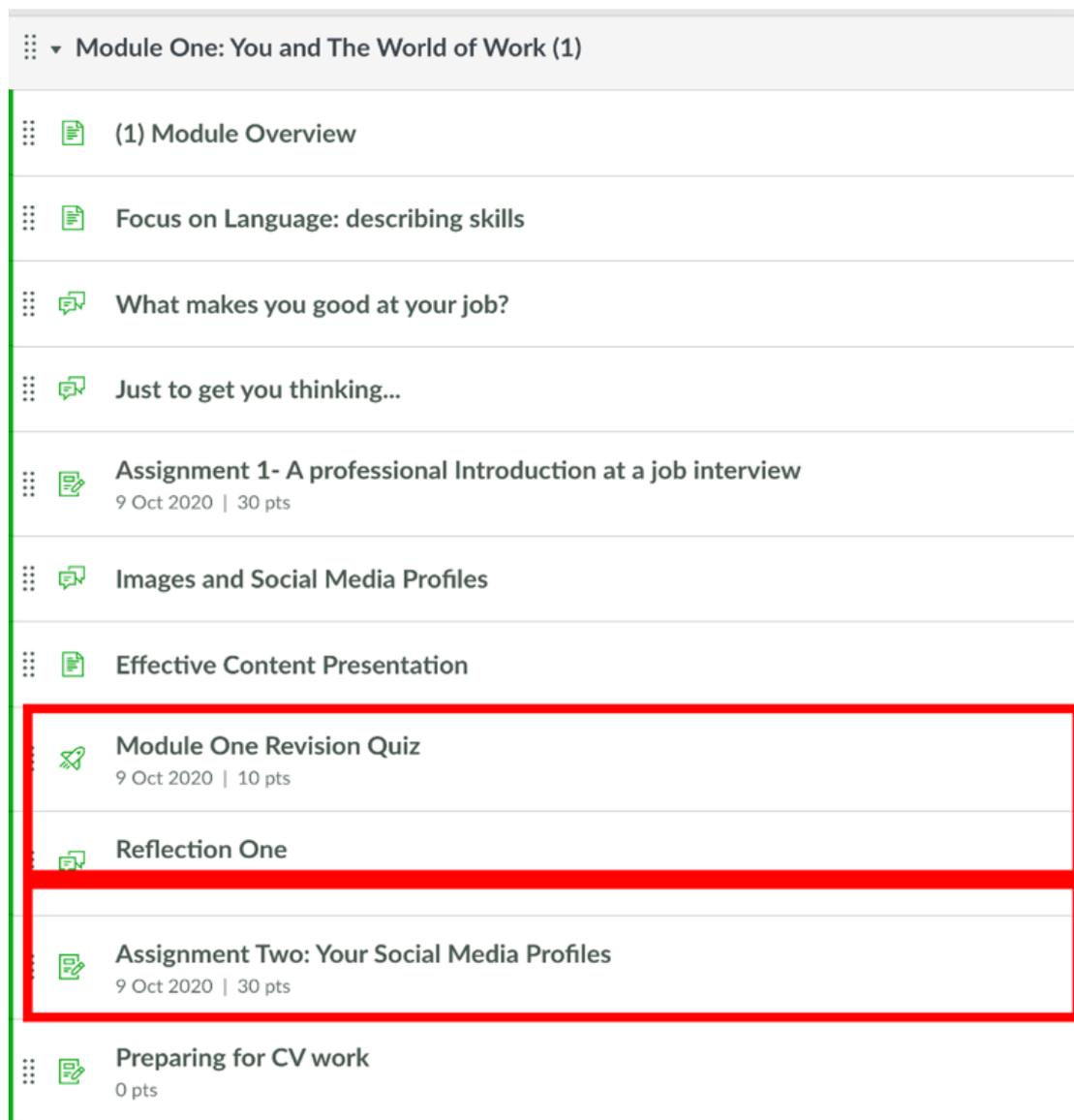
Fig. 5: Constructive feedback

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[7] Canvas enables learners to upload a range of formats including video and audio files. These can then be assessed by teachers and by peers, which is a popular option among learners.

The grades from this assignment are then recorded automatically and the average counts towards the final summative mark on the course. This consists of an overall average of the continuous assessment average from the records, a mark provided for a final oral presentation and a mark for the written production which is based on an e-portfolio that learners develop during the course. The e-portfolio is the final piece of the assessment puzzle that will be considered here and is another example of a tool that can be used for both formative and summative purposes. It is used formatively throughout the course, as participants write, receive peer/instructor feedback and then revise their work. Two sections, the reflections and the dossier, are then used for summative assessment by means of performance criteria-driven assessment at the end of the course. Specially designed rubrics have been developed for this purpose, based on the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001) and Cambridge Language Assessment criteria for written production.[8] These criteria were adapted to fit our local needs and included lexical/grammatical resources, text organization, creativity and originality, together with an overall holistic impression mark related to areas such as register, coherence, relevance and appropriacy. To reflect the widespread practice in Italian HE institutions of providing summative scores with a maximum of 30 points and a pass mark of 18 out categories were configured to adhere to this scale. The assessment criteria rubrics developed both for writing and speaking together with the score ranges can be seen in Appendix A.

6.1 The e-portfolio

Fig. 6 shows the cover of the e-portfolio model used on EWW. This is an online tool, which is developed asynchronously, then shared and monitored by peers, and where learners can provide a range of products:

- About you: a short introductory section where learners can discuss their English language learning experience from an academic or professional viewpoint;
- a language biography: where learners assess their own levels at various points during the course and are encouraged to set learning goals;
- a reflection page: where they can choose to share some of the reflections they have developed during the course (a minimum of two formal reflections and two on their

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[8] Cambridge Assessment has worked closely with the Council of Europe to develop their assessment criteria, which cover the macro-categories of content, communicative achievement, organization and language. A description of the assessment of written language can be found in this document: https://assets.cambridgeenglish.org/schools/CER_6647_V1d_JUL20_Teacher-Guide-for-Writing-C1_Advanced.pdf. Last visited 24/09/2022.

learning process), after feedback has been provided and they have edited the original versions further;

- a dossier section where they can upload at least four examples of work done during the course that learners feel have been particularly interesting or effective. This may include emails, oral presentations, social media presentations or CVs.[9]
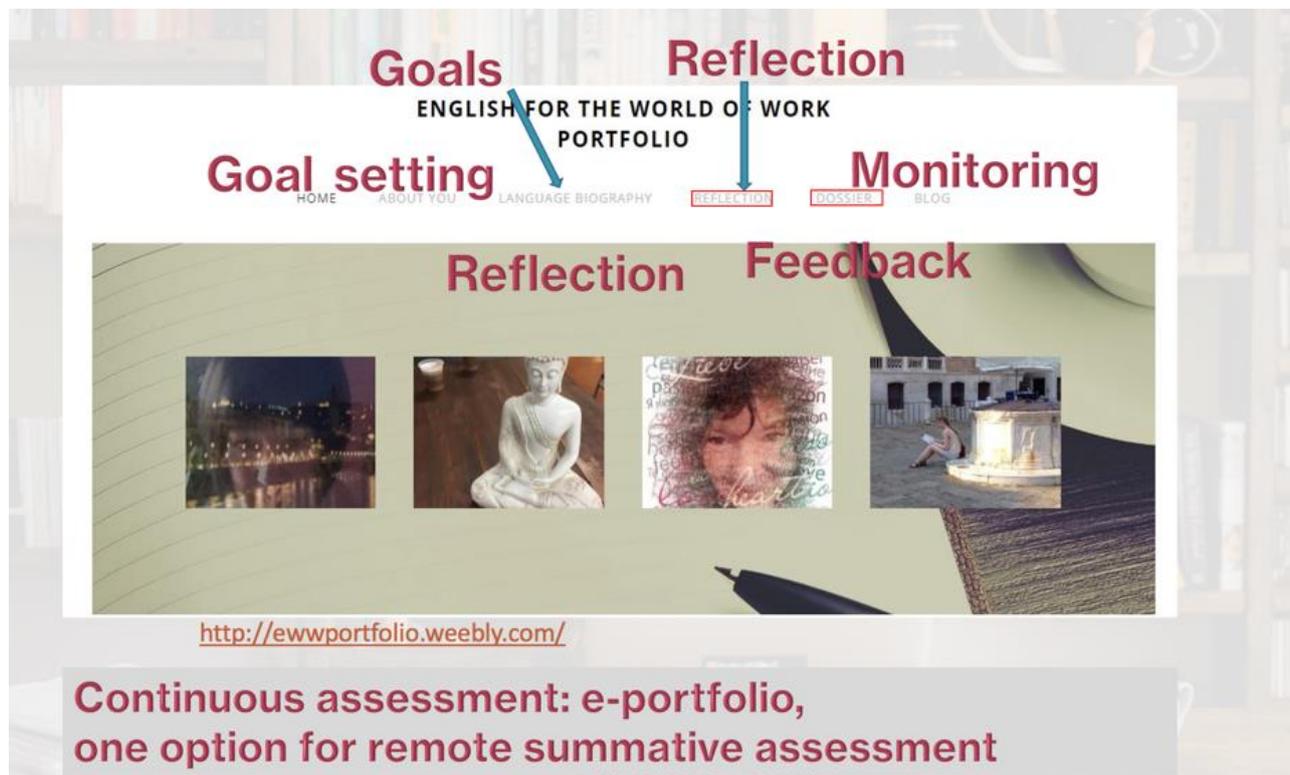
Fig. 6: The cover of the EWW e-portfolio model

Some of these elements are used formatively, such as the language biography and the peer monitoring but the reflection and dossier sections are used for criterion-based assessment. The formative feedback and reflection done during the course, if applied diligently, feeds into more effective performance when work is edited and presented in the final stage: the portfolio. The oral presentation is held synchronously with an exam commission of all the teachers and all the members of the class present as well. A class discussion is then conducted, which is assessed according to contributions made and questions asked by learners both when presenting and when they are in the audience. Similarly to the summative assessment of written language, this

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[9] This model was created on Weebly, which is free and easily accessible at the moment of writing. The model can be accessed at: http://ewwportfolio.weebly.com/. Last visited 15/04/2022.

is a criteria-referenced assessment with a specially designed rubric. The areas focus in particular on pronunciation, in this case, as well as discourse organization, lexical/grammatical resources and a holistic impression mark.

7. Conclusions

To return to the lines from *Little Gidding* cited at the beginning of this discussion, we are now, perhaps, returning to our traditional classrooms after the pandemic period, and this may give us the opportunity to see our practices both of teaching and assessment from a fresh viewpoint. As a result of the experiences of ERT we can now look to the future and appreciate the effective practices of the past. These may be combined with the new affordances that technology may afford us for the future. T.S Eliot's lines also point towards an idea of growth and development, learning from the past and integrating those lessons into future planning. LOA is one framework which draws on both traditional and more recent tools and practices. Moreover, combined with the BL approach adopted on the EWW course referred to in this discussion, such a framework has proved to be very promising. The opportunities lie in planning for BL as a principled process rather than the reactive ERT, which was an ad hoc solution to an urgent problem. Formative and summative assessment do not have to be considered as separate entities but can be combined in a single system where they are two sides of one assessment coin: the formative feeding into the summative. This, however, implies an implementation of tools and resources which reflect a clear construct which is being assessed. Summative tests that require security measures, may well be better conducted synchronously onsite where proctoring is facilitated. Reflection, goal setting, monitoring and feedback, on the other hand, may all be provided both onsite and online. Whilst LOA is by no means a silver bullet that will solve all assessment problems, it provides a system which can be flexible enough to adapt to different learning and teaching needs. It promotes both learning and measurable outcomes and hopefully provides a roadmap towards more effective learning strategies and ultimately better performance on summative assessments as well.

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Appendix A

Rubrics with assessment criteria for written and spoken production on English for the World of Work

EWW Written work rubric			
Criteria	**Ratings**		**Pts**
Holistic overall Impression This covers content choice, relevance, appropriacy and language register and coherence, (A good mark will be given to a candidate who expresses him/herself thoughtfully, without digressing too much from the main subject and communicates with the reader in mind.)	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
Logical Text Organisation This involves clear, coherent organisation and development of relevant content in paragraphs that help the reader. Ideas are extended and each one leads on to the next, rather than just being presented as one after another.	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
Lexical Resources A good candidate will use a range of appropriate lexis to express him or herself clearly. Any errors should not be impeding and should be the result of experimentation with the expression of complicated ideas.	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
Grammatical Resources A good candidate will use a range of appropriate grammatical structures to express him or herself clearly. Any errors should not be impeding and should be the result of experimentation with the expression of complicated ideas.	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
Creativity and Originality A good candidate will add something of his/her own to this writing so that his/her voice can be clearly recognized.	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
		Total points: 30	

EWW Oral Presentation rubric (5)

EWW Oral Presentation rubric (5)			
Criteria	**Ratings**		**Pts**
Holistic overall Impression This covers content choice, relevance, appropriacy and appropriacy and language register, and appropriacy (A good mark will be given to a candidate who expresses him/herself thoughtfully and meaningfully and presents his/ her content in a clear accessible way for the audience to follow.)	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
Logical Discourse Organisation This involves clear, coherent development of content, both when presenting and when discussing, which are relevant to the topic being discussed. Hesitation is natural as is the use of spoken discourse markers, and interjections such as Mmmm, etc. but these pauses should not be too long and a good candidate will organise his/her ideas in such a way as to make it easy for interlocutors to follow their discourse.	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
Lexical Resources A good candidate will use a range of appropriate lexis to express him or herself clearly. Any errors should not be impeding and should be the result of experimentation with the expression of complicated ideas.	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
Grammatical Resources A good candidate will use a range of appropriate grammatical structures to express him or herself clearly. Any errors should not be impeding and should be the result of experimentation with the expression of complicated ideas.	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
Pronunciation A good candidate will use sentence and word stress naturally and will be aware of the pronunciation of single sounds. Intonation should also be appropriate. The presence of a candidate's own accent is natural but the overall pronunciation should be clear enough for the interlocutor to understand without difficulty.	6 Pts Full marks	0 Pts No marks	6 pts
			Total points: 30