

ASSESSMENT IN ONLINE AND BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

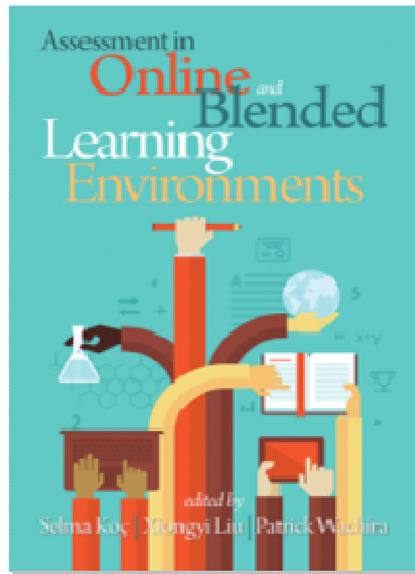
(Book Review)

by **Ferit Kılıçkaya**

Mehmet Akif Ersoy University

Department of Foreign Language Education, Burdur, Turkey

ferit.kilickaya @ gmail.com



Book etails:

Assessment in Online and Blended Learning Environments

Selma Koç, Xiongyi Liu, and Patrick Wachira (Eds.)

Information Age Publishing, Inc, Charlotte, NC, 2015, x + 308 pages

978-1-68123-044-3 (Paperback)

978-1-68123-045-0 (Hardcover)

978-1-68123-046-7 (ebook)

\$45 (Paperback)

1. Introduction

The expansion of online and blended learning environments allows students to enjoy a potentially better teaching and learning experience. As teaching and learning today are not limited to the walls of the classroom and most universities and schools provide learning

opportunities for their students through online and blended learning environments, assessment practices also gain much more importance (Stein & Graham, 2014). Thanks to the growing number of digital tools available on the Internet (Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007), we are no longer confined to traditional assessment practices, and it is possible to keep a balance between process and product-oriented assessment forms. However, what requires due attention is that the assessment practices to be conducted either online or in blended learning environments is that the selected digital tools for assessment should be geared towards the needs of the learners (Marsh, 2012). The great benefit of digital tools lies in the “provision of effective and efficient feedback that can be individualized” and “student interaction” (Irons, 2008, p. 92). It is, therefore, vital that researchers as well as teachers that have online and blended learning classes adopt appropriate assessment.

The book *Assessment in Online and Blended Learning Environments* edited by Selma Koç, Xiongyi Liu, and Patrick Wachira, with 2 sections and 15 chapters, aims to present both theoretical and practical information on how assessment in online and blended learning environments can be conducted.

2. Sections and chapters

Section I, “Online Learning and Assessment” includes 8 chapters. In Chapter 1, ‘The value of embedded formative assessment: An integral process in online learning environments implemented through advances in technology’, Michelle Bakerson, Tracey Trotter, and Malinda Mansfield provide a rich overview of technologies for online embedded formative assessment, informing readers of several tools and as well as their uses such as Learning Management Systems, online authoring tools, and student feedback tools.

Chapter 2, ‘Empowering learners to engage in authentic online assessment’, deals with how authentic assessment can be achieved through a discussion of a 6-week online collaborative activity conducted with pre-service teachers, teachers, and academics. The authors, Jennifer V. Lock and Petrea Redmond, specifically focus on the role that authentic assessment practices play in online learning environments.

In Chapter 3, entitled ‘Assessing technology-enhanced learning: A process-oriented approach’, Philip Bonanno proposes a process-oriented model for assessing technology-enhanced learning, focusing on learning process and dimensions of interactions (domain, technology, and community).

In Chapter 4, ‘Students as “assessors” and “assesseees” in an era of social media’, Grail Casey discusses the findings of a large study benefitting from action research. The findings

indicate that social media can be used to provide an interactive and positive learning and teaching experience for students and teachers alike.

Chapter 5, 'Assessment methods in online graduate courses', presents the findings of a study based on an exploratory, qualitative approach. The author, Shijuan Liu, examines the assessment methods used in 22 online courses, leading to 21 large categories, some of which include projects, field reports, and peer editing.

Chapter 6, 'Online course dynamic design informed by student response and formative assessment', investigates a variety of techniques based on formative assessment. Thus, Marius Boboca focuses on how these techniques affect student interactivity in a dynamic course design that allows students to interact with their classmates as well as their teachers.

In Chapter 7, 'Using embedded audio feedback for formative assessment purposes in teaching about English language learners', Larisa A. Olesova and Luciana C. de Oliveira discuss the role of audio feedback in providing formative assessment in asynchronous online courses in a case study. The authors provide examples of audio feedback recorded using the software, Audacity and students' reports.

Chapter 8, 'Assessment strategy for self-paced online learning', aims to introduce an assessment strategy (Propero™) developed for self-paced online courses, including various formative and summative assessment content. Barbara E. Rowan and Walter D. Way also discuss how standards for educational and psychological testing contribute to the development of this assessment strategy.

Section II, "Blended learning and assessment" includes 8 chapters and begins with chapter 9. In Chapter 9, 'Student assessment in a blended learning environment: A triad approach', Norman Vaughan introduces a triad approach to investigate how blended learning and digital technologies can be used in assessment. In this approach, various assessment practices (self-reflection, peer feedback and teacher assessment) are integrated through a variety of tools such as online quizzes, portfolios, and wikis.

Chapter 10, 'Continuous formative assessment during blended and online instruction using cloud-based collaborative documents', employs synchronous collaborative cloud-based documents to investigate the effects of real-time formative assessments. The authors, Norman Herr, Mike Rivas, Tae Chang, John M. Reveles, Marty Tippens, Virginia Vandergon, Matthew A. d'Alessio, and Dorothy Nguyen-Graff, benefit from free web-based documents such as spreadsheets, presentations, and drawings and use several techniques such as online quiz-write and collaborative presentation.

In Chapter 11, ‘Blended learning and assessment through dynamic digital portfolios: The e-scape approach’, Kay Stables, Osnat Dagan, and Dan Davies introduce web-based performance portfolios developed through an e-scape project (e-solutions for creative assessment in portfolio environments) in several case studies. The use of portfolios is shown in different contexts such as classroom assessment and summative assessment for national assessments.

Chapter 12, ‘Strategies for success: Using formative assessment to build skills and community in the blended classroom’, written by Anupama Arora, Shari Evans, Catherine Gardner, Karen Gulbrandsen, and Jeannette E. Riley, reports findings from a longitudinal project on the integration of online tools into the classroom to investigate how digital tools can help formative assessment in blended learning environments.

In Chapter 13, ‘Discussions in online and blended learning: A tool for peer assessment’, David S. Stein and Constance E. Wanstreet discuss the peer assessment rubric developed to assess higher-order thinking in synchronous discussions.

Chapter 14, ‘Criterion-referenced language assessment in blended environments’, focuses on criterion-referenced testing in web-based and blended learning environments and introduces a learning management system, WebClass. The author, Wojciech Malec, describes the features of this web-based system that helps make testing more practical and effective.

In Chapter 15, ‘Framework for assessment from an institutional perspective’, Jean-Marc Wise and Tami Im introduce an institutional assessment framework, which includes three primary areas of performance (education, academia, and economy), three agents (student, instructor, and institution), and six core dimensions (certification, performance, facilitation, qualification, accreditation, and globalization).

3. Evaluation

The major strength of the book lies in the state-of-the-art discussions through qualitative studies on formative and summative assessment practices in online and blended learning environments. The chapters of the book not only provide theoretical background on types of assessment but also link the in-depth discussions to current practices in several online and blended learning projects, thus providing a good balance between theory and practice. For example, the chapter entitled ‘Strategies for success: Using formative assessment to build skills and community in the blended classroom’ describes how online tools such as online quizzes and discussion boards can be integrated into a literature course. It is clear that the

authors have strengthened the content of this book by making clearer references to research on assessment.

The digital tools introduced in several chapters do not require much in terms of technical knowledge and can be adopted by researchers and teachers willing to take some of the assessment practices outside of the classroom. Moreover, the implications and suggestions for further research can lead to some new ideas on the use of assessment practices.

Overall, the book proves to be an invaluable reading for researchers, teachers, and graduate students interested in implementing summative and formative assessment in online and blended learning environments. As most chapters include practical application of digital tools in assessment outside the classroom, those looking for studies with research and practice perspectives in assessment will find the book quite useful.

However, several points of criticism are also worth mentioning. The book does not have an index, making it difficult for readers to find the chapters and/or pages in which some specific terms are discussed. Moreover, it would be also useful to provide the definitions of important terms used throughout the chapters at the very beginning of the chapter. It would also have been beneficial to include a final chapter written by the editors at the end of the book so that the issues and findings discussed throughout the chapters would be outlined and combined, indicating future issues and trends regarding formative and summative assessment in online and blended learning environments.

References

- Irons, A. (2008). *Enhancing Learning through Formative Assessment and Feedback*. New York: Routledge.
- Littlejohn, A., & Pegler, C. (2007). *Preparing for Blended e-Learning*. New York: Routledge.
- Marsh, D. (2012). *Blended Learning: Creating Learning Opportunities for Language Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stein, J., & Graham, C. R. (2014). *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide*. New York: Routledge.