



The design of formative blended assessments in tertiary EFL programs: A case study in Saudi Arabia

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Despite a rise of blended learning approaches in foreign language education programs, little research has examined how such integration of technologies in the classroom affects assessment designs. Any 'electric dreams' that technologies will improve learning remains unproven without clear assessment designs. In this paper, we undertake a qualitative study of formative blended assessments within an English language program at a major Saudi university. Data was gathered through observations, semi-structured interviews and Participatory Design (PD) sessions. Thematic analysis of the data resulted in four emergent themes: definitions, approaches, alignment and requirements. After setting out and discussing the four themes, we conclude our paper with suggestions for further research.

Introduction

Blended learning, or the principled integration of technologies in face-to-face educational settings, has long been accepted as a mainstream concept throughout higher education (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Garrison & Vaughn, 2008). Despite the rise in integrated pedagogies, blended assessment practices remain underdeveloped. Issues of blended assessment design include the definition of constructs when new media are used as modes of presentation (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010), establishing 'modal free' criteria that focuses on activity and not technology, and recurrent challenges in professional development (Corbel, 2007).

Although improvement in the proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Saudi Arabia is a key national educational goal, students in most EFL language programs have limited exposure to English. Accordingly, interest in e-learning, m-learning and Blended Language Learning (BLL) has been based on increasingly the opportunities of students to be exposed to English. Innovative learning materials, that simulate life in the target language, have been produced, and they even include aspects of the target language culture (Jauregi & Banados, 2008).

In this paper, we examine the challenges of developing blended assessment designs within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs in Saudi Arabia. The role of EFL in Saudi Arabia is complex, important and pressing; EFL has been intertwined throughout the modern history of Saudi Arabia, and widespread EFL proficiency is seen to be a large part of a national agenda that seeks to foster greater international engagement. Traditionally, education in Saudi Arabia has been authoritarian and efforts are underway to evolve culturally appropriate ways to teach and learn to fit in with a changing world. Technologies, especially the Internet, are widely available throughout tertiary institutions and are instrumental in recent pedagogical innovations (Khan, 2011; Mohammed, 2011). One 'electric dream' then, of Saudi Arabia, is that global networked technologies will spur innovation throughout education.

To limit the scope of our paper, we set aside ‘high stakes’ or ‘summative’ instrument designs to focus specifically on formative assessment processes. Specifically, we highlight ways that assessment tasks can be blended into a technology rich EFL curriculum. After reviewing key concepts, we describe our qualitative study, detail cycles of analysis, and set out emergent themes. We conclude our paper with the wider implications of the study, and make suggestions for further research for a range of blended environments in tertiary education.

Issues in formative blended assessment design

Formative assessment practices focus on enhancing learning and prompt students to take more responsibility for their own work (Black & William, 2009; Stiggins, 2008) through the development of ‘intrinsic motivation’, improving ‘self-esteem’, fostering ‘independent learning methods’, as well as developing ‘the ability to improve cognitive strategies in solving problems’ (Wei, 2011).

Chapelle (2008) suggests that technologies can have three purposes in assessment. Educators, Chapelle writes, may want to create instruments and tasks that can be administered more efficiently than ‘paper and pencil’ formats. Another purpose is to create equivalent versions of ‘paper and pencil’ tests that can be used at different sites. A third purpose, according to Chapelle, is to utilize technologies to be better able to meet specific needs of a program, so that they are fit-for-purpose and aligned with established policies and pedagogical approaches. Here, our focus is on the final purpose.

If we follow the logic set forth by Chapelle (2008), then the use of technologies in EFL programs implies that learning designs must align with insitutional policies (Middaugh, 2010), departmental cultures (Boud, 2007) and classroom practices (Hill & McNamara, 2012). Accordingly, designs may help meet the students’ expectations that assessment tasks are authentic, unambiguous and allow for choice and flexibility throughout a university course (James, McInnes, & Devlin, 2002). Ideally, departmental staff would forge common practices within an overall course, as well as within their individual subjects, to create innovative tasks and activities to meet global standards (Healey et al., 2009).

Teachers, by and large, nonetheless resist large-scale curriculum change as they are forced to reconsider familiar practices and established approaches and materials. Coming to terms with e-monitoring, or the process of faciliating student development through online conferencing, for example, requires changes in technical and professional methods (Crisp, 2007). Further, as Vaughan (2007) writes, education professionals find that “bureaucracy and inertia can prevent changes in the curriculum, course structures, and timetables” (p. 81). The professional development received by educators regarding assessment influences their attitude towards the depth and breadth of student assessment. Students, in turn, may consider whether or not they have been fairly or unfairly assessed (Stiggins, 2008).

Designing assessments that are ‘fit-for-purpose’ has long been seen as a challenge in meeting the needs of 21st century learners (Cumming & Wyatt-Smith, 2009). As learners become more fluent with technologies, they expect teaching approaches will enhance their own digital literacies and social practices (Guth & Helm, 2010). Measuring the effortless movements from online to face-to-face interactions demands recognition of a range of skills that may not be easily captured in assessment (Kress, 2009). A final challenge, especially pertinent in language learning, centres on construct definition. How is listening, for example, to be understood when digital video clips are used as modes of presentation? How does the concept of ‘participation’ change between online forums, streamed video calls, social network sites and in the classroom? Gruba (2006), and others (Ockey, 2009; Royce, 2007), have suggested that educators must move beyond seeing language as a division between four sub-skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), and see communicative interactions as much broader, intertwined and multimodal; blended language learning approaches in language learning are now well developed (Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012).

In light of concerns raised in previous studies, we now focus this study on three questions:

1. How do language teachers and learners design formative blended assessment tasks and activities?
2. What ‘considerations’ or ‘standards’ do language teachers and learners use in the design of formative blended assessment tasks and activities?
3. What issues arise when language teachers and learners design these tasks and activities?

Method

Given the lack of established work in blended assessment for language learning, we take a qualitative, exploratory approach to our present work. In short, we worked with participants in online sites, through interviews and extended discussions at the Fait University English Language Centre (FUELC, a pseudonym) at a major Saudi university. The centre provides ten EFL training programs for both university and community students who need to develop their language abilities for work or other purposes. Within the university, FUELC assists with the English language training for around twenty courses throughout the sciences and humanities. The Centre is also responsible for delivering language programs for more than 10,000 students every year as a requirement of their mainstream studies.

To fulfil its responsibilities, FUELC has hired more than 80 EFL teachers to run programs in the male and female campuses. Teachers come from Western and Middle Eastern countries. English language programs are generally provided at the early stages of students' studies, in first and second year; however, for other students who need much greater language competence like students studying medicine, English training is provided throughout the degree. Recently, Fait University announced the establishment of a preparatory year program similar to a foundation year in Western colleges. Students have to finish the preparatory year before enrolling in their mainstream studies. In this year students are required to finish a comprehensive academic EFL program before enrolling in their mainstream subjects. This has resulted in an excessive load of responsibilities for FUELC in the provision of different English programs at different university levels. In our study, seven male participants agreed to help us. Each participant is male because Saudi cultural practices prevented us from interacting directly with potential female participants; at Fait University, there is a male campus and a wholly distinct and separate female campus. The two campuses are located approximately 25kms apart.

At the start of our data collection, the participants were asked to interact with an online website called Englishtown© [www.englishtown.com]. Following this, we interviewed participants to gain knowledge of their understanding of formative blended assessment. The participants then engaged in two sessions tasked with the design of formative blended assessment prototypes for writing and speaking. In each session, the participants were divided into two groups – students and teachers (Table 1).

Table 1: Participants' profile

No	Participant	Education	Experience
1	William	PhD in Applied Linguistics	EFL teacher
2	Sultan	MA in Applied Linguistics	EFL teacher
3	Soliman	MA in Applied Linguistics	EFL teacher
4	Isaac	MA in Education, CELTA certificate	EFL teacher
5	Salim	BA student	EFL student
6	Turki	BA student	EFL student
7	Omar	BA student	EFL student

Four of the participants were teachers with language qualifications, and three were students enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts. With the participants, we observed them using a website, interviewed them and worked with them in collaborative discussions. Data was collected in 2012 after we sought relevant ethical approval from The University of Melbourne.

Ahead of institutional development of its own resources, we sought to find an appropriate site to investigate and familiarize participants with formative blended assessments design. Websites like Englishtown© provide an ideal forum for such a purpose as it is a website that is well-known, and that it is already being used in different language centres. Throughout this online interaction, the understanding of participants', especially students, in how to use the website properly, was checked regularly. Participants were free to interact when and where they wanted. The objective of this online interaction – the first stage of activity for the participants – was to provide them with an opportunity to explore how formative blended assessments could be designed and delivered.

We conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the seven participants. The primary aim of our questioning was to encourage participants to reflect on their interaction with the Englishtown© website; secondly, we used the interview to ask them about their ideas concerning formative blended assessment design issues in detail. We asked them questions about their interaction experience with Englishtown© and their thoughts and observations regarding formative blended assessment design. To spark discussion, we also provided participants with an assessment scenario at the beginning of the interview to encourage them to think

about their preferred forms of blended assessment. The prompt provided us with a clearer image of how participants wanted to assess/be assessed in speaking and writing. We audio recorded, and then transcribed, each interview.

Participatory design (PD), or the involvement of a range of stakeholders in the processes of constructing artifacts (Cardenos-Claros & Gruba, 2010), lay at the heart of our investigation. As we conducted two PD sessions, we sought to work with participants to design blended assessment prototypes. To start, participants were divided into a group of students and a group of teachers. Each session commenced with brainstorming on what participants felt should be included in the design of writing and speaking formative blended assessments. The final designed prototypes for writing and speaking were completed by the teachers' group and later presented to the students for final checking.

In our first PD session, we worked with students to design the paper prototypes for the writing and speaking assessments. In the first half of the session, we discussed creating a writing assessment prototype and then working on designing a speaking assessment prototype. These student participants were novice in assessment task design, and one role we took on as researchers was to facilitate the process for them. To help ground our sessions, we based the target design on commercial learning materials that were familiar to the students and used widely throughout the region. Students worked collaboratively during the design, and used large sheets of paper to record their work and brainstorm ideas in a convenient manner.

Our second PD session comprised four teachers who were asked to also design similar writing and speaking assessment prototypes. We started this session with the teachers by brainstorming possible issues with the students' design ideas. Based on student ideas, the teachers designed their own assessment prototypes. The teachers were well engaged throughout the design process, and appeared to welcome the chance to talk about their ideas and air concerns.

Findings

The findings of this research involve the reflections of the seven participants regarding their Englishtown© interaction and their design of formative blended assessment tasks and activities in language programs. These reflections were noted from transcriptions of the taped interviews and from the written notes taken during the interviews and the PD sessions. The main data set – the transcribed interviews of the participants – was organized (according to subject matter) into four themes (or categories): definitions of formative blended assessments, approaches, curricular alignment and requirements (Table 2).

Table 2: Summary of emergent themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes raised
Defining and placing	Mixing of approaches Enhancement of learning
Approaches and practices	Feedback Interaction through new media
Alignment	Relevance Rubrics
Key requirements	Awareness Technical support Preparation

In the following section, the four themes are listed and their sub-themes elaborate on. This is followed by a discussion of each theme in relation to earlier research.

Theme 1: Defining formative blended assessments

Throughout our data analysis, one of the most prominent themes to emerge is the concern with defining what, specifically, blended assessment may be. Understanding how the participants defined blended assessment provided insights about the standards, and practices, that they associated with the prototypes we offered within blended assessment participatory design workshops. The participants saw blended assessment as a mix of on- and offline assessment practices and as way to enhance overall learning (Table 3).

Table 3: Defining formative blended assessments

Sub-themes	Definition	Sample data
Re-use of established practices	Established or 'traditional' practices are seen to be able to fit within blended learning curricula.	<i>Mixing traditional assessment forms with technology, that would be the best option I think in assessing the students' abilities in language skills</i> (William, interview 1, p4, lines 21-22).
Assessment practices	Reaffirm the principles of formative assessment, regardless of modality.	<i>The basic purpose of assessment is to increase learning. So ask, how is this assessment going to enhance this?</i> (Soliman, interview 3, p7, line 4-5.)

The most common definition provided by the participants on the meaning of blended assessment was that it was the mixing of two approaches, the traditional approach and the more modern approach that uses technology. Isaac explained the mixed approach nature of blended assessment:

I think it's important to keep in mind that it is blended assessment, so part of the assessment is done other than online and the other part is done online. So, both venues complement each other and I think keeping that in mind, it can be done effectively (Interview 4, p.1, lines 29-32).

Soliman saw blended assessment as an opportunity, but cautioned that such an approach needs to be clear on how it enhances learning, and that educators need to question purported achievements:

So what are the objects that you want to achieve through this blended assessment and how are they going to enhance the learning of the student? Basic purpose is the learning, how this assessment is going to enhance this or what sort of...what purposes...you are going to achieve through this assessment, and how it is going to be different from the traditional...This must be kept in mind (Interview 3, p. 7, lines 4-15).

In summary, it was apparent in our analysis that the participants considered that any attempt to introduce blended assessments must be grounded in solid principles of assessment, and justifiable according to the achievement levels they promise. In embracing blended assessment (as they all appeared to approve of it and respect it as being beneficial) the participants also acknowledged that it involves technology, and a variety of forms of assessment that utilize different technologies, from computers and all they involve, to even the use of mobile phone devices and *Skype*.

Blended assessment was defined simply as a mixture of assessment approaches. The participants may not have truly recognized that blended assessment designs require a far greater understanding of developing construct definitions that align with innovative approaches to teaching. Throughout the interviews, it was clear that participants saw blended designs as a potential enhancement of current practices (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Frey & Fisher, 2001).

Theme 2: Approaches and practices to formative blended assessment

The formative blended assessment methods theme refers to how speaking and writing are assessed within the framework of blended assessment. This theme is relevant in the study because the theme provides information about the first research question and third, which asked how language teachers design formative blended assessment tasks and activities in blended language learning programs. In this part of our analysis, we focused on how blended speaking and writing could be assessed. Two of the main methods cited by the participants included feedback and virtual interaction (Table 4).

Table 4: Approaches and practices

Sub-themes	Definition	Sample data
Feedback	Educators are aware of the need to provide comments.	<i>Feedback is always important. Instructors should have feedback sessions with students to know whether this process is being applied effectively or if there are some shortcomings</i> (Sultan, interview 2, p. 8, lines 26-29).
Interaction through new media	New technologies can be integrated into blended	<i>I think it's good to use a video camera, or webcam or Skype</i> (Salim, interview 5, p. 2, lines 15-16).

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Providing feedback was the method cited by several participants as a method for students understanding their levels of writing and speaking. However, William also explained that:

Online assessment...may help the students improve their speaking skills and writing skills also if they get feedback as quickly as possible and with positive feedback from the teacher (William, Interview 1, p. 3, lines 3-6).

Isaac also spoke about why feedback is essential in online assessment. When asked to clarify whether feedback should be made through face to face interaction or through online methods, Isaac explained his view that online feedback was good, and that further face to face feedback was also helpful:

...perhaps a couple of post-questions just to reflect on what they wrote. You know, further thoughts just to confirm - you know, sometimes we need confirmation. I think actually we always need confirmation when assessing (Isaac, Interview 4, p. 5, lines 10-12).

Within the theme *approaches and practices*, feedback and interaction through new media appeared to be the common method the participants articulated in blended assessment. Feedback refers to the teachers' articulation of the weaknesses and strengths of students performance in the language class while virtual interaction refers to the assessment conducted online to determine the competency of students in both writing and speaking. Participants prefer using technologies, and it is only natural that students would want to use them in their learning. As well as this, learning and being assessed with various forms of technology must be more interesting and motivating for the students.

The participants' desire for more feedback in assessment may reflect a move away from traditional teaching and assessment where 'rote' learning was more prevalent. As it is now commonly accepted that deep learning arises when it involves forms of learning that are student directed, then it makes sense that students have more involvement (and receive greater feedback) in their throughout their learning journey.

Both in the preparation and implementation stages, feedback is an element required for both teachers and learners. In the view of the administrator and teachers, feedback serves as their basis in improving the system of blended assessment operation. On the other hand, students felt that feedback benefits them by identifying their strengths and weakness in learning the structure of the language, and that it uses this information to subsequently provide lessons to enrich their learning. Feedback, both from teachers and peers, is crucial to formative assessment (James et al., 2002; Stiggins, 2008).

Theme 3: Curricular alignment

Clearly, the teachers were aware of a need to align what they taught with their assessment practices. Throughout observations and participatory design workshops, these teachers indicated a need for rubrics to include specific criteria for assessment, and relevance in terms of what is being assessed in the curriculum (Table 5).

Table 5: Curricular alignment

Sub-themes	Definition	Sample data
Criteria	There is a perceived need to create and announce clear assessment criteria (perhaps in the form of rubrics).	<i>I would like to suggest that preceding each test there must be some kind of rubrics. Rubrics must become a standard in assessment. Rubrics may need to be distributed among instructors to modify according to their situation, the level of their students and things like that.</i> (William, interview 1, p. 9, lines 15-18).
Relevance	Educators recognize the need to align what is taught to what is being assessed.	<i>This should be linked to my textbook, the exam or the assignment should be linked to my textbook, just like this.</i> (Turki, interview 6, p. 2, lines 22-23).

The participants perceived curricular alignment as something which needed to be based on rubrics which contained the predetermined set of criteria that needed to be assessed. William suggested that each test and each skill should be represented in a rubric. Soliman noted that the marking criteria, or rubrics, should be made

available to students at the very start such that they can familiarize themselves with the marking criteria:

...this way they will be having that thing in the[ir] mind and it is not any sort of bad thing that you are going to make secret. Just like in TEFL or in IELTS examination[s] students already know how [they] are going to be assess[ed] and what is the marking criteria. In this way they will act accordingly (Soliman, Interview 3, pp. 2-3, lines 40-43).

Assessment content also needs to be relevant to the curriculum. The participants in the study believe that there should be a clear connection between the learning tasks and the methods of blended assessment used by teachers. As Turki (a student) said in Table 5:

This should be linked to my textbook. The exam or the assignment should be linked to my textbook, just like this (Turki, Interview 6, p. 2, lines 22-23).

Clearly, as the participants are aware, assessments must align with set curricular goals, including what topics and subject matter a student needs to learn in a given period (Blokhin & Boyd, 2007; James et al., 2002). Indeed, clear criteria set out in the form of rubrics are important; overwhelmingly, the participants wanted to know in detail what it is that they are expected to learn. Hill and McNamara (2012) suggest that formative assessment requires establishing clear pedagogical goals from which rubrics can be created. For language learners specifically, rubrics can be made to meet levels of competency (e.g., beginners, intermediate, advanced) in a range of skill areas.

Theme 4: Establishing requirements

As we worked, it was apparent that requirements were necessary in the planning stages of formative blended assessment prototypes, and that they involved an understanding of an awareness of the approach, technical support, and preparation (Table 6).

Table 6: Establishing requirements

Sub-themes	Definition	Sample data
Awareness	Educators are familiar with the key challenges of technology integration in the curriculum.	<i>Students and teachers must be aware of how to use technology (William, interview 1, p. 2, lines 5-6).</i>
Technical support	Educators recognize the need to have technical support for blended designs.	<i>We need technical support, and trained staff, plus the students who know how to use this technology (Soliman, interview 3, p. 1, lines 34-36).</i>
Preparation	Educators understand that assessment construction takes time and dedicated preparation.	<i>There's a preparation stage and this is standard in all assessments (Isaac, interview 4, p. 2, line 34)</i>

The participants made many interesting and perceptive comments regarding the use of blended assessment requirements. According to Isaac, for example, there needs to be planning involved prior to the implementation of blended assessment, and this needs to consider issues of student concern. Isaac explained that through brainstorming with students and among teachers, a plan that captures the needs of students can be achieved:

There are certain skills that you emphasize that you expect to see, there are certain topics you want to remind your students about. Just to make sure that when the time comes, when the actual assessment time comes, they're well-oiled and ready to go, they have their engines running (Isaac, Interview 4, p. 2, lines 34-40).

One of the requirements of blended assessment is having the awareness of how the process can be accomplished. For this, the participants generally agreed that in order for blended assessment to be implemented, there should first be awareness. They stated that there needs to be an understanding of how blended assessment operates, both in terms of how it can benefit teachers and students and how the method can be implemented. William explained:

Sometimes we have access to online resources but we don't have the ability to use them, how to

access the relevant information. We don't learn how to make the online tests and how to conduct those tests (William, Interview 1, p. 2, lines 2-3).

Another requirement cited by some of the participants was the need for technical support. The implementation of blended assessment needs technical assistance so that both teachers and students know how the process works. William explained the importance of technical support in the implementation of blended assessment:

They should also provide technical support. That's really important in this context because if I don't have any technical support in the lab and I'm going to assess the scores online and there is a problem, it may create a problem for the students and for myself and assessments going on (William, Interview 1, p. 2, lines 21-24).

The responses of the participants indicated that a clearly defined preparation or planning stage should be standard in all assessments, and this should be followed by the implementation stage. The planning stage ensures that the goal is reflected in the blended assessment plan. In the implementation stage, both teachers and students need to have awareness and skills in terms of how blended assessment will be conducted. Technical assistance is needed to guide both teachers and students in becoming more at ease and knowledgeable in using technologies.

Emergent themes point to two implications. First, there must be an understanding of what the assessment is as part of their overall development of 'assessment literacy' (Taylor, 2009). Secondly, there must be an understanding by both the assessment designers, and the students, of how to use technology (Levy, 2009; Oxford & Jung, 2007). Such preparation is essential to the success of blended assessments. The fact that this arose from the research indicates a shift in thinking. Perhaps in the past, when traditional assessments involved little discussion and almost no feedback with students, there may have been a greater emphasis on the syllabus and course content (Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010). Student voices must be heard (Stiggins, 2008). Again, careful planning and preparation is important for the full implementation of formative blended assessments.

Implications and suggestions for future research

'Electric dreams' fueled by the innovation of principled integrations of technologies would become nightmarish if not well guided. It is clear from our work that professional development is essential to the successful design and implementation of formative blended assessments. Within the context of our study, we found strong support amongst participants that innovative approaches to foster greater student engagement would be welcome.

Secondly, we were left in no doubt that feedback is a crucial factor in effective assessment. Within the Saudi context of FUELC, there is a need to develop further understanding of how differing modalities (e.g., written, audio-recorded, video-recorded and/or live responses) may be combined to provide learner feedback. As we are familiar with the site, we are aware of work-load issues that new practices may foster; accordingly, we can only suggest that work with centre and university senior administrators be undertaken to determine the most appropriate ways forward. Would teachers resent being involved in a wholesale curriculum reform, or greet the opportunity as a opportunity for innovation?

At the site of study, assessment rubrics were seen to be an essential element. Participants saw that clear criteria could provide a transparent means of aligning the assessment with learning outcomes. Working with students, we need to see how the information in rubrics could be easily and readily interpreted by students. Having been assessed on their formative work with set criteria, do students follow up in specific areas that are identified as weak? Potentially, the identification of specified areas of improvement would require the FUELC to provide additional resources for learning support.

Beyond the immediate study, having more voices, using a wider and more diverse sample of students and teachers, would help to better discern levels of awareness of the concept of blended assessment in language learning. Accordingly, a possible step in further research is to develop survey questions based on the emergent themes alongside an awareness of potential problems that arise with blended learning (Stracke, 2007). Further, we see the need for a better framing of formative blended assessments. At present, published expert work in assessment tends to divide assessment to be either online (Crisp, 2007) or based within a physical institute or classroom. We see a need to develop specific guidelines for work in blended environments. After re-affirming core assessment principles, perhaps further studies could address issues to do with construct definition, characteristics of modality, alignment with innovative practices and policies, as well as professional development. Though our focus here has been on formative stages, we understand that classroom-based

assessments may well have 'high stakes' consequences (Rea-Dickins, 2006) and are seen as a focal point ripe for innovation with technologies (Garrett, 2009; Shohamy, Inbar-Lourie & Poehner, 2008).

Conclusion

Our purpose here was to examine the challenges of designing formative blended assessments. Using a qualitative approach, we investigated student and staff perceptions in assessing EFL in a Saudi Arabian tertiary institute. We used observations, interviews and PD sessions to explore the views of participants. In our analysis, four major themes emerged. First, when defining formative blended assessment, the participants highlighted that it was a concept that could involve the inclusion of both traditional and established practices, while the conventional goals of formative assessment such as increasing student learning remained dominant objectives. Secondly, the participants revealed that their views on blended assessment supported that educators needed to use such frameworks to provide meaningful feedback to learners. Participants argued increasing inclusion, and ultimately convergence of technologies, within the blended learning concept. The third theme concerned issues of curricular alignment, and participants saw a strong need for explicit rubrics within blended assessment designs for language learning. Finally, there was a need to have a keen awareness of what was required to build a robust system for blended assessments, including technical, professional and pedagogical training resources for ongoing professional development.

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