Continuous Cumulative Assessment as an Alternative to One-Off Final Exams

Ekaterina M. Popkova

MGIMO University, Moscow
Content

1. Traditional assessment in tertiary education as it is

2. The concept of continuous cumulative assessment:
   - characteristics
   - impact on validity and reliability

3. The case for the new assessment approach:
   - empirical data
   - benefits observed
Traditional Assessment in Tertiary Education As It Is

EFL IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

DIVERSE STUDENT NEEDS:
ESP & EAP

➢ educational programmes vs national curriculum at schools
  o use of standardized test problematic
  o universities’ own requirements: language level, competencies, skills
ASSESSMENT AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL AS IT IS

ONE-OFF FINAL EXAMS NOT COMPREHENSIVE:

➢ ineffective to accurately measure the diversity of needs

• Validity? ✗
• Reliability? ✗
• Practicality? ✗ ✓
ASSESSMENT AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL AS IT IS

Quality of Learning

➢ Studying usually delayed until examination time
➢ Student’s physical condition at the time of exam
➢ Students’ misconceptions internalised

➢ Deep learning replaced by cramming, information retained only until exam is over
➢ Outcome depends on uncontrollable factor
➢ Fossilisation of errors
CONTINUOUS CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT:

CONCEPT

A series of tasks testing a variety of students’ skills and knowledge \textit{(cumulative)}, with each task repeated over time \textit{(continuous)}
CONTINUOUS CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT

FORM

SUMMATIVE
- ONE-OFF: A single test / exam upon completion of a discipline
- A series of tests distributed throughout the course (ONGOING)

FORMATIVE
- ONE-OFF: A single test, incidental / planned, distributed within a course

PURPOSE
- Measures students’ achievements
- Collects information to enhance learning
CONTINUOUS CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT: CONCEPT

A series of tasks with a summative function testing a variety of students’ skills and knowledge, with each task repeated over time to contribute to formative effect.
CONTINUOUS CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT:
IMPROVED VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

✓ A variety of assessment schemes applied:
  o provides more reliable evidence by encompassing assessment from multiple perspectives and thus enabling data triangulation
  o caters for different learning styles
CONTINUOUS CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT GRADES AND EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE:

IS THERE A CORRELATION?
RESEARCH DATA

- Participants: 2nd year ESP students (№53)
- Course: optional
- Assessment: one-off cumulative summative
- Ten-point assessment system:
  - grades 10-8 – excellent
  - grades 7-6 – good
  - grades 5-4 – satisfactory
  - grades 3 and below – unsatisfactory
Cumulative Grade:

(Presentation x 0.1) + (LMS Test x 0.2) + (MidTermTest x 0.3) + (Homework x 0.4)

Final Grade = (Cumulative Grade x 0.6) + (Exam Grade x 0.4)
A series of low-stake graded tasks repeated for each component:

- increased number of **presentations**, detailed peer feedback;
- **LMS tests**: correct answers on completion, dispersed throughout the course with equal time spacing;
- **homework** preparation check: a series of tests, with subsequent tests including some of the material tested before

Feedback provision obligatory
CUMULATIVE FINALS & EXAM GRADES

High correlation irrespective of the group’s proficiency level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>№</th>
<th>Cumulative final</th>
<th>Exam grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1₂</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2₂</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total mean</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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</table>
IMPACT ON ATTENDANCE RATES

✓ Attendance 2-3 times better compared to groups with one-off cumulative assessment

✓ Better attending groups benefited more from the testing effect of class work and scored higher both in the cumulative final and on the exam
CONTINUOUS CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT:

FORMATIVE BENEFITS

✓ Diagnosing students’ misconceptions “while they are still remediable” (Svininvyky & McKeachie, 2011)

✓ Synthesizing feedback and making it meaningful:

students focus on feedback due to awareness that the same skill / knowledge will be tested again and they can score higher on subsequent tests if they take into account present weaknesses and recommendations
CONTINUOUS CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT:

SUMMATIVE BENEFITS

✓ Increased worth of in-course work & student involvement:

   ‘... in a system which allows coursework to count, real standards rise’

   (Dixon & Rawlings, 2017, p. 26)

✓ Enhanced attendance & students’ consistent exposure to content

✓ Better long-term retention of information due to ‘spacing effect’

✓ Improvement in learning outcomes
REFERENCES


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