



Promoting second year EFL students' writing engagement through online continuous assessment in a hybrid learning context

تعزيز مشاركة طلاب السنة الثانية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الكتابة من خلال التقييم المستمر عن بُعد في سياق التعلم الهجين

Promouvoir l'engagement des étudiants de deuxième année en anglais langue étrangère dans l'écriture par l'évaluation continue en ligne dans un contexte d'apprentissage hybride

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ملخص

إحدى أحدث طرق التقييم التي اكتسبت زخمًا مؤخرًا هي التقييم المستمر عبر الإنترنت، الذي يهدف إلى تعزيز مشاركة الطلاب في التعلم المدمج. هذا الأمر مهم بشكل خاص في الكتابة، حيث يكون التفاعل النشط ضروريًا، لأن استراتيجيات ما وراء المعرفة مهارات التفكير العليا غالبًا ما تكون مطلوبة لتحسين مهارات الكتابة. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة تأثير التقييم المستمر عن بُعد على تعزيز مشاركة الطلاب في الكتابة في التعلم الهجين. ولتحقيق هذه الغاية، أجريت دراسة شبه تجريبية شملت 118 طالبًا في السنة الثانية من تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الجزائر 2. تم جمع البيانات عن طريق استبيان المشاركة في الكتابة واختبار الكتابة. كشفت النتائج أن استخدام التقييم المستمر عن بُعد كان له تأثير إيجابي على تعزيز مشاركة الطلاب في الكتابة وعلى تحسين قدراتهم الكتابية. كما أظهرت النتائج وجود علاقة إيجابية بين مشاركة الطلاب وتطور مهارات الكتابة لديهم. وتخلص الدراسة إلى بعض التوصيات البيداغوجية المتعلقة بتطوير مشاركة الطلاب في الكتابة في سياقات التعلم الهجين من خلال هذا التقييم الإلكتروني. الكلمات المفتاحية: التقييم المستمر عن بُعد؛ طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ التعلم الهجين؛ مشاركة الطلاب في الكتابة؛ القدرة على الكتابة.

Abstract

One of the most recent assessment methods to gain momentum is online continuous assessment, which aims to enhance students' engagement in hybrid learning. This is particularly important in writing, where active engagement is

critical, as metacognitive strategies and higher-order thinking skills are often required to improve writing proficiency. The present study aims to examine the impact of online continuous assessment on promoting students' writing engagement in hybrid learning. To this end, a quasi-experimental study comprising 118 second-year EFL subjects was conducted in the Department of English of the University of Algiers 2. Data were collected using a writing engagement questionnaire and a writing test. Results revealed that the use of online continuous assessment had a positive impact on enhancing students' engagement in writing and on improving their writing skills. The results also demonstrated a positive correlation between students' engagement and their writing development. The study concludes with some pedagogical implications for the development of student writing engagement in hybrid learning contexts through this e-assessment method.

Keywords: online continuous assessment; EFL students; hybrid learning; student writing engagement; writing skills.

Résumé

L'une des méthodes d'évaluation les plus récentes à gagner en popularité est l'évaluation continue en ligne, qui vise à améliorer l'engagement des étudiants dans l'apprentissage hybride. Cela est particulièrement important dans l'écriture, où l'engagement actif est essentiel, car les stratégies métacognitives et les compétences de pensée de haut niveau sont souvent nécessaires pour améliorer la maîtrise de l'écriture. La présente étude vise à examiner l'impact de l'évaluation continue en ligne sur la promotion de l'engagement des étudiants dans l'écriture en contexte d'apprentissage hybride. À cette fin, une étude quasi-expérimentale portant sur 118 étudiants de deuxième année d'anglais langue étrangère (ALE) a été menée au département d'anglais de l'Université d'Alger 2. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un questionnaire sur l'engagement dans l'écriture et d'un test d'écriture. Les résultats ont révélé que l'utilisation de l'évaluation continue en ligne avait un impact positif sur l'amélioration de l'engagement des étudiants dans l'écriture et sur le développement de leurs compétences rédactionnelles. Les résultats ont également démontré une corrélation positive entre l'engagement des étudiants et le développement de leurs compétences en écriture. L'étude conclut par quelques implications pédagogiques pour le développement de l'engagement des étudiants dans l'écriture en contexte d'apprentissage hybride à travers cette méthode d'évaluation en ligne.

Mots-clés: évaluation continue en ligne; étudiants en ALE apprentissage hybride; engagement dans l'écriture; compétences en écriture.

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that twenty-first-century pedagogy is undergoing a significant transition towards hybrid learning. In this regard, e-assessment methods have developed significantly, becoming more flexible and

ubiquitous in order to provide students with ongoing scaffolding and monitoring outside the classroom. Given the strong correlation between learning and assessment (Vaughan, 2015), the transition from traditional to online learning has heightened the need for students to be fully engaged in the way they acquire knowledge and in the way they are assessed. Thus, student engagement can be regarded as a pivotal factor in hybrid learning, which necessitates enhanced reflective interactivity to reduce students' sense of isolation and facilitate their participation in the learning process.

Not only does the hybrid learning environment itself require active engagement, but so do the language skills that students develop within it. With regard to foreign language skills, it can be argued that active student engagement is of even greater importance in writing, where higher-order thinking skills are often required for the development of the skill (Hedge, 2000). It is therefore salient to facilitate students' learning with a variety of learning modalities that are based on digital support, peer support and teacher feedback. This will help them to monitor their learning and diagnose areas that need further consolidation. The effectiveness of traditional assessment methods in fostering student engagement and supporting higher-order thinking skills, particularly in writing, may need to be revisited within the context of the shift towards hybrid learning (Al-Husseiny, 2024). One could not deny the fact that traditional assessment has long been the cornerstone of student learning; however, it may not fully meet the needs of students in a blended environment that requires more flexible, continuous, and interactive assessment practices. As hybrid learning becomes more prevalent, there is a need to investigate how traditional assessment methods can be adapted or supplemented with digital tools to enhance student engagement, feedback, and learning outcomes, especially in the context of developing complex skills like writing. Therefore, given the prevalence of hybrid learning, online continuous assessment (OCA) has recently become a more prominent method for assessing student learning online. This is achieved through the use of various hybrid modes that can maximize student learning outside the classroom through feedback, peer review tools and teachers' instructional support.

To this end, the objective of the present study is to investigate the extent to which OCA can promote EFL students' writing engagement in a hybrid learning environment. It also investigates whether this form of e-assessment



improves students' writing skills. Based on these research objectives, the study addresses three research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent does OCA enhance EFL student writing engagement in hybrid learning?
- RQ2: Does OCA develop students' writing skills?
- RQ3: Is there any correlation between students' writing engagement and their writing development in a hybrid learning environment?

In an attempt to answer these research questions, three research hypotheses are advanced:

- Hp 1: The use of OCA enhances student engagement in hybrid learning.
- Hp 2: OCA develops students' writing skills in hybrid learning.
- Hp 3: The dependent variables are positively correlated.

This research could yield crucial insights into employing OCA in hybrid learning. It can inform practitioners interested in the field of assessment in hybrid learning contexts about the pedagogical potential of e-assessment in developing students' writing engagement. The findings of this study may shed light on effective strategies for integrating online assessments into hybrid learning environments.

1. Literature review

This section defines and explores key theoretical and empirical studies related to OCA and writing engagement. It also provides a foundation for understanding the interplay between the aforementioned constructs. The forthcoming section defines online continuous assessment.

1.1. Defining online continuous assessment

Known for its collaborative nature, online continuous assessment (OCA) is an emerging form of digital assessment that has been adopted to track students' progress and provide timely online feedback on their performance. This perspective is supported by Vaughan (2015) and Al-Husseiny (2024) who argued that online continuous assessment consists of the use of collaborative online tools that are based on synchronous and asynchronous communication to identify students' learning needs. This approach can help instructors adjust their instruction to the identified students' learning needs. Moreover, OCA can provide an authentic mode of assessment for students, as it is based on the use of collaborative web-based technologies, such as wikis, blogs, quizzes, and e-portfolios, to facilitate authentic interaction



between peers and the teacher and to help students reflect on their learning process.

OCA is based on self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment. Self-assessment, which can take the form of quizzes, checklists and blogs, can help students to monitor and reflect on their own performance. Peer assessment is facilitated by the use of peer review tools, such as wikis and checklists, which can provide authentic opportunities for students to learn together through interaction. This can facilitate the exchange of ideas, leading to better analysis, reflective thinking and the internalisation of cognitive skills (Graham, 2006). Teacher assessment is carried out through the use of clickers and portfolios with the aim of providing constructive feedback to students. These tools are multimodal in nature and attempt to combine different modalities to cater for different learning styles.

It is worth noting that hybrid learning may impose some challenges in terms of how to assess students remotely. These challenges can be broadly categorised into three main areas: Connectivity issues, lack of training, and lack of appropriate e-assessment tools. To address these shortcomings, Hamadouche and Ghoues (2023) suggested the provision of intensive opportunities for student-student and student-teacher interaction during online learning, as well as the creation of digital content by students to develop their digital literacy, intercommunication, and active reflection on their progress as writers. The next section defines writing engagement.

1.2. Writing engagement defined

Writing engagement encompasses four components, namely affective, behavioural, cognitive and social facets, each of which aims to describe what an engaged student is (Parsons et al., 2023). First, affective writing engagement is associated with students' interest and their active participation in writing tasks. Affectively engaged students are more confident and motivated to approach writing tasks, which in turn leads to autonomous writing. This can also help to foster positive attitudes towards the writing activity. The environment, as advocated by Vygotsky (1978), plays a crucial role in influencing the psychological state of students; this is reflected in Vygotsky's notion of *perezhivanie* (Cong-lem, 2022), which advocates the view that the environment with its social agents can positively or negatively influence the psychological state of the individual. Therefore, suboptimal learning experiences or assessments may lead students to develop negative attitudes towards writing skills.



Moreover, the second aspect is behavioural writing engagement that emphasizes students' effort and commitment to writing tasks, requiring focus and dedication. This includes regular revision and the use of strategies like peer feedback, and digital tools (Pearson, 2024). The third aspect of writing engagement is cognitive, which requires students to utilize metacognitive strategies. These strategies involve a recursive loop of planning, continuous reviewing, and evaluating. Cognitive writing engagement requires students' thinking about how they write and learn, focusing on writing as a cognitive act and a problem-solving activity that entails the systematic application of strategies. The latter, as referred to by Hedge (2000), encompass the setting writing goals, brainstorming, outlining, selecting appropriate writing style, drafting, reviewing, and editing.

The fourth element is social writing engagement, which is based on social learning. This requires students to collaborate, exchange ideas and engage in reflective interaction with their peers in order to complete specific writing tasks. Such type of writing engagement is derived from the sociocultural view of writing, which owes its genesis to Vygotsky (1978). The Vygotskian perspective considers learning to be a social, interactive activity in which peers and the use of tools can act as facilitators, mediators and influencers of learning.

In sum, writing engagement appears to be multidimensional, encompassing four interrelated internal and external dimensions of writing. Once these facets are promoted, students may have a greater willingness to achieve good learning outcomes and cultivate critical reflection on their own performance as writers. The forthcoming section presents some insights from research regarding the use of online continuous assessment to develop students' writing engagement.

1.3. OCA and student writing engagement: insights from research

Online continuous assessment with online feedback and monitoring can promote active learning by encouraging purposeful interaction, motivation, and active practice. According to Reeve and Tseng (2021), online assessment enhances various forms of student engagement, including agentic, behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement, by supporting student-faculty interaction, student-content interaction, technology-student interaction, and student-student interaction.



Regarding the implementation of online assessment to develop student learning, Lee (2007) suggested five principles of assessment for learning to foster active learning in an EFL/ESL context, with the aim of developing writing engagement. Although these principles are intended for use in onsite classes, they can be applied to online learning. The initial principle of formative assessment pertains to the sharing of learning goals with students, with the aim of helping students understand these goals by involving them in purposeful activities. For example, the goal of story writing is facilitated by immersing students in writing activities that target narrative writing structure, grammar, and vocabulary. The second principle is setting standards for learning and helping students work on them. This can be done by informing students explicitly about assessment criteria. Such activities, encompassing proofreading texts and consciousness-raising, can prepare students for self-assessment and peer feedback. This leads to the third principle of formative assessment, which is centered on involving students in assessment. As noted by Lee (2007), immersing students in assessment can fortify their critical thinking skills in terms of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. To achieve the third principle, the teacher needs to encourage the use of rubrics through modeling and explicit strategy instruction to help students reflect on their own performance.

The fourth principle of assessment for learning in writing is embracing students' mistakes and considering them as part of the learning process. This principle aims to motivate students to write and to lower their writing apprehension. Finally, the fifth principle is about blending instruction, learning, and assessment in writing.

A number of studies have explored the impact of online assessments on student learning outcomes. However, while research on OCA is quite limited, insights from online formative assessment studies can help in understanding OCA's potential. In 2023, Hamadouche and Ghoues examined the effectiveness of online interactive assessments for Algerian third-year EFL students. Their study, which involved ten EFL teachers, used interactive platforms for learning collocations through online tests. The results showed significant improvements in students' learning outcomes and positive perceptions from all participating teachers regarding the use of interactive platforms for teaching and assessment.

Regarding student engagement, Holmes (2017) investigated the potential benefit of online continuous assessment to increase student engagement.

The results revealed that the use of virtual assessment had a significant impact on student engagement in the learning process, and it was found that e-assessment encouraged the provision of timely feedback, reinforced extended practice, and facilitated the participants' interaction. These aspects contributed to lowering the participants' affective filter and to decreasing their sense of isolation that online learning often generates.

In their narrative case study, Fitriyah et al. (2022) examined the implementation of online formative assessment in a hybrid EFL writing class. The results showed that the participating teachers could improve planning and pre-assessment instruction, create communication channels with their students, provide students with online feedback, and use feedback from assessment to adjust instruction. However, the researchers hinted at some challenges that the participating teachers faced while assessing their students' writing online. These challenges revolved around the difficulty teachers experienced in engaging their students to improve their drafts and to provide peer feedback. It was difficult for the participating teachers to promote their students' behavioural and agentic engagement in online learning because their students were not trained in how to use peer-feedback. Therefore, it is crucial to provide explicit strategy instruction and modeling to students to help them know how to approach writing tasks adequately.

The findings of the reviewed studies appear to be promising, as they indicate the potential utility of online assessment in promoting various forms of student engagement. The subsequent section deals with the methodology of the present study.

2. Methodology

To examine the impact of OCA on promoting students' writing engagement in hybrid learning, a quasi-experimental study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024 in the Department of English at the University of Algiers 2. Selected according to a non-random sampling procedure, the subjects consisted of 118 second year EFL students divided evenly into 59 experimental subjects and 59 control subjects. The participants included 90 (76.3%) female students and 28 (23.7%) male students.

2.1. Research instruments

The study utilized a questionnaire and a writing test as research tools. The questionnaire, administered to both control and experimental groups before

and after the testing phases, was adapted from the Writing Engagement Scale by Parsons et al. (2023). It begins with a question on participants' gender and includes four scales with 16 items in total. These scales are as follows: Affective Writing Engagement (4 items), Behavioral Writing Engagement (4 items), Cognitive Writing Engagement (4 items), and Social Writing Engagement (4 items). Descriptive analysis was performed by calculating the mean for each scale. To interpret the results of the mean scores, data analysis followed Pimentel's (2010) interpretation, which is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Mean scores interpretation (Pimentel, 2010, p. 10)

Likert-scale description	Likert scale	Likert scale interval
Strongly disagree	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Neutral	3	2.61-3.40
Agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly agree	5	4.21-5.00

The second research instrument was a writing test. The writing pretest was administered to both samples before the treatment phase, while the posttest was administered after the treatment phase. Following the scoring system in force in Algerian higher education, the test was scored out of twenty (20) points. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the writing test results, including the calculation of the mean and the application of an independent samples t-test. Additionally, a correlation test was utilized to assess the relationship between student writing engagement in hybrid learning and the development of writing skills among the experimental subjects. To ensure practicality and validity, both research instruments were piloted prior to their actual use.

2.1. Research Procedure

The study, which took place during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024, spanned 12 weeks. In the pre-treatment phase, both samples under study were first administered a questionnaire about writing engagement. The questionnaire was followed by a writing pre-test. Then, the researcher collected the pretest results obtained by both experimental and control subjects in writing and started the treatment phase with the experimental group.



The treatment phase was based on Lee's (2007) principles of formative assessment in writing, with an inclination towards hybrid learning. The experimental subjects utilized the MOODLE platform and Google Classroom outside of class. Initially, the students received explicit strategy instruction and modeling on the writing process, including sharing goals and explaining narrative writing tasks that required group work. The tasks were specifically focused on writing narratives, aligning with the syllabus set by the Department of English where the study was conducted. The participants were then divided into groups of seven and instructed to set learning goals to collaboratively produce a digital three-page short story. This required active interaction with peers using synchronous and asynchronous tools to plan their writing. They also used the forum tool or chat system to post any questions about writing aspects they did not understand. Following this, they completed online writing quizzes and activities focused on narrative writing structure, grammatical patterns, and vocabulary specific to story writing, emphasizing sentence structures and style. During the editing phase, the students used the wiki tool to collaborate on editing and revising their drafts, engaging in peer feedback. The wiki tool was supported by criteria-based checklists to guide constructive feedback on peers' drafts. Finally, the participants submitted their reviewed short stories online and responded to polling questions to reflect on their performance and overall experience.

In the post-treatment phase, the writing engagement questionnaire and the writing posttest were administered to both groups under study to be able to compare the results obtained in before and after the treatment phases.

3. Results

The results emerging from the questionnaire and the test are presented in the following sections.

3.1. Results of the questionnaire

The table below demonstrates the findings of the questionnaire scales on student writing engagement in the pre- and post-testing phases:



Table 2: The results of the writing engagement questionnaire

Scales	Pre-testing phase		Post-testing phase	
	Mean for EXP	Mean for CTR	Mean for EXP	Mean for CTR
Scale 1: Affective writing engagement				
1. I was interested in doing my writing assignments.	3.26	3.51	4.71	3.68
2. Working on writing assignments was boring.	1.13	2.56	2.36	2.45
3. I was motivated when working on my writing assignments.	3.38	3.13	4.55	3.56
4. I would like to complete a writing assignment like this again.	3.31	3.42	4.62	3.63
Mean of scale 1	2.77	3.15	4.06	3.35
Scale 2: Behavioural writing engagement				
5. I remained focused when working on my writing assignments.	3.65	2.71	4.16	3.05
6. I persevered in my efforts to complete this writing assignment, despite the challenges it presented.	3.31	3.43	3.56	3.12
7. I worked hard to write a well-structured essay.	3.23	3.19	4.02	3.34
8. I worked as hard as I could on this writing assignment	3.27	3.47	3.73	4.03
Mean of scale 2	3.36	3.20	3.88	3.38
Scale 3 : Cognitive writing engagement				
1. I continuously engaged in rereading what I wrote to improve my essay.	1.98	2.63	3.68	3.59
2. I made sure to carefully select appropriate word choice.	2.71	3.07	4.12	3.43
3. I questioned myself to make sure that my ideas were coherent.	2.36	2.70	4.36	2.31
4. I regularly revised and edited my writing to improve it.	3.04	3.16	4.75	3.35
Mean of scale 3	2.52	2.89	4.22	3.17



Scales	Pre-testing phase		Post-testing phase	
	Mean for EXP	Mean for CTR	Mean for EXP	Mean for CTR
Scale 4 : Social writing engagement				
5. I made sure to discuss my ideas with my peers to see if they were relevant.	2.52	2.42	4.29	3.12
6. I enjoyed sharing my essay with my peers to get constructive feedback.	2.54	2.23	3.81	3.06
7. I enjoyed when my peers share their writing with me.	3.12	3.42	3.75	3.12
8. I regularly asked my peer to read and assess my writing.	1.71	2.36	4.32	2.53
Mean of scale 4	2.47	2.60	4.04	2.95

Table 2 shows the mean score of the writing engagement scales for the experimental and control subjects before and after the testing phases. In the pre-testing phase, the findings presented in Table 2 reveal that the mean scores of the experimental subjects' affective, behavioural, cognitive, and social writing engagement are 2.77, 3.36, 2.52, and 2.47, respectively. However, the results of the control subjects indicate that the mean score of affective writing engagement is 3.15; behavioural writing engagement is 3.20, cognitive writing engagement is 2.89, and social writing engagement is 2.60. Both groups' pre-testing scores fell between 'disagree' and 'neutral', with only minor differences between them.

In the post treatment phase, regarding the experimental group, the mean score of affective writing engagement is 4.06, behavioural writing engagement is 3.88, cognitive writing engagement is 4.22, and social writing engagement is 4.04. The results of the experimental subjects' mean scores range between 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. With regard to the control group, the mean scores of the four writing engagement scales, which are affective, behavioural, cognitive, and social writing engagement, are 3.35, 3.38, 3.17, and 2.95, respectively. The results are interpreted as being 'neutral'. The results suggest a noticeable improvement in writing engagement for both groups, with the experimental group showing superior results.



3.2. Results of the writing test

The table below displays the findings of the writing pretest:

Table 3: Independent samples t-test results of both groups in the writing pretest

Group	N	M	SD	T-value	Degree of freedom	Critical value	Significance
EXP	59	9.35	2.36	0.04	60 (approximating 59)	2.00 Alpha level =0.05	Not significant
CTR	59	9.56	2.13				

Table 3 demonstrates the results of the independent samples t-test on the experimental and control groups' writing pretest scores. The analysis reveals that the computed t-value of 0.04 is considerably below the critical value of 2.00 at an alpha level of 0.05. The findings of the writing posttest are displayed in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Independent samples t-test results of both groups in the writing posttest

Group	N	M	SD	T-value	Degree of freedom	Critical value	Significance
EXP	59	12.19	2.42	2.73	60 (approximating 59)	2.00 Alpha level =0.05	Significant
CTR	59	10.03	3.00				

Table 4 displays the results of the independent samples t-test conducted on the experimental and control groups' writing posttest scores. The results show that the calculated t-value of 2.73 exceeds the critical value of 2.00 at a significance level of 0.05.

3.3. Results of the correlation test

The relationship between student writing engagement in hybrid learning and writing development was determined by measuring the linear dependence between the two dependent variables. The findings of the correlation test are presented in table 5 below:



Table 5: The correlation test results

Correlation			
Research dependent variables		Student writing engagement	Writing skill development
Student writing engagement	Pearson correlation	1	0.843
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.05
	N		59
Writing skills development	Pearson correlation	0.843	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.05	
	N	59	

Table 5 illustrates the results of the correlation test examining the relationship between students' writing engagement in hybrid learning and their development of writing skills. The correlation coefficient obtained is 0.84 (or 84.34%), with an alpha level of 0.05 (degree of freedom = 60). This value of Pearson's r (0.84) exceeds the critical r -table value (0.05), indicating a strong positive correlation between the two dependent variables.

4. Discussion

The present study set out to examine the impact of OCA on promoting EFL students' writing engagement in hybrid learning. Regarding the first research question, before the implementation of online continuous assessment, the findings of the present study indicated that the experimental and control subjects exhibited a lower level of engagement with writing when learning online. However, after the implementation of online continuous assessment with the experimental group, the experimental subjects demonstrated enhanced levels of writing engagement compared to the control subjects. More precisely, the findings showed that this online assessment method could enhance the four types of student writing engagement. In this regard, the experimental subjects seemed to be motivated and interested in the various tasks they engaged in, as evidenced by their expressed willingness to complete similar writing assignments in the future. Furthermore, the analysis of the questionnaire results showed that the experimental subjects' behavioural writing engagement increased considerably, as the participants agreed that they could remain focused when



working on their writing tasks by making deliberate efforts to write accurately. With regard to cognitive writing engagement, the experimental subjects tended to approach the writing tasks using higher-order thinking skills. They could plan, review, provide feedback, and reflect on the quality of their writing through self- and peer-assessment. These results suggest that it is crucial to clearly communicate the assessment criteria and expectations by using checklists and guidelines to help students understand how they will be assessed. For social writing engagement, the findings revealed that the experimental subjects could approach the writing task socially rather than individually, by interacting with their peers and the teacher regularly through synchronous and asynchronous tools outside the classroom, participating actively in the different writing tasks posted on the platforms, and exchanging feedback to improve their drafts.

These findings can be explained by the fact that online continuous assessment provides different types of modalities and interactions, such as student-content interaction, technology-student interaction, and student-student interaction, that aim to facilitate learning outside the classroom and offer students the chance to extend their learning (Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Al-Husseiny, 2024). Consequently, equipping online platforms with peer review tools, such as wikis, polls, and collaborative spreadsheets, can foster social learning outside the classroom and facilitate the provision of peer feedback and instructional support. This can cultivate students' higher order thinking skills and lower their affective filter.

The second research question investigated the effect of online continuous assessment on students' writing skills. The pre-test results showed no significant difference in the mean scores between the control and experimental groups, leading to the rejection of the alternative hypothesis that predicted a significant difference, provided the p-value was below 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis, asserting no difference in pre-test scores between the groups, was supported, indicating that both groups had similar writing abilities before online continuous assessment implementation. However, after applying the online assessment method to the experimental group, a marked improvement in their writing skills was observed in the post-test results. This significant enhancement led to the rejection of the null hypothesis for the post-test, affirming the alternative hypothesis that a notable difference exists between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups. The results suggest that online continuous assessment

positively influenced the experimental subjects' writing skills in a hybrid learning environment.

The third research question was about whether there is a correlation between students' writing engagement and their writing skill development in hybrid learning. The findings revealed that, in hybrid learning, student writing engagement and students' writing skill development have a strong positive correlation. Therefore, these results suggest that the more the students were engaged in hybrid learning, the better their writing became. And when the students were provided with the necessary online tools that reinforce peer-mediated learning and authentic interaction, their sense of inclusion and engagement was likely to be enhanced. These findings seem to stand in line with the results obtained by Fitriyah (2022), Holmes (2017), and Hamadouche and Ghoues (2023), which suggested that the use of online assessment could hone student engagement and help them to achieve good learning outcomes, as they could be continuously monitored. One could conclude that online continuous assessment can forge a learning culture, where students are constantly engaged in an iterative loop of interaction, action, and reflection rather than in a standardized assessment method of learning, where making mistakes is perceived as a demotivating factor.

Conclusion

The present study sought to examine the impact of online continuous assessment on promoting student writing engagement in hybrid learning. The study was also meant to find out to what extent OCA can develop students' writing ability, and to determine whether there is a correlation between the aforementioned dependent variables. The quasi-experimental study comprised 118 second-year EFL students, divided evenly into experimental and control subjects. The analysis of the questionnaire and test results suggested that the use of OCA in a hybrid learning environment appeared to enhance students' affective, behavioural, cognitive, and social engagement, and may have contributed to improvements in the participants' writing skills. Furthermore, the students' writing skill development was positively correlated with their engagement in writing activities. On the basis of these results, some pedagogical implications seem worth emphasizing:

- Online platforms need to be equipped with synchronous and asynchronous tools, such as video conferences, live chat, discussions

forums, and emails, to foster reflective interaction among peers and facilitate the provision of feedback.

- Online learning should be organized around shorter sequences and activities to help students reflect on their performance.
- Peer-assessment and collaborative tools ought to be integrated into online learning to encourage peer-correction and improve students' higher-order thinking skills.
- Online learning needs to be supported with polls, wikis, and quizzes to diagnose student misunderstanding and provide additional formative feedback on their progress.
- It is important to regularly seek student feedback on the assessment process and be willing to make adjustments to better meet their needs and enhance engagement.
- It is recommended to support students by studying through reflection activities encompassing journals, blogs, or e-portfolios to help them reflect on their learning process and outcomes.

Future studies tackling the impact of online continuous assessment on enhancing other language skills are therefore warranted.

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