From Survival to Thriving Mode in EAP Classrooms in the Emergency Online Teaching: Student Perceptions of Learning-Oriented Assessment in Higher Education

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Abstract: Learning-oriented assessment (LOA) has gained attention as a class-room-based assessment approach because it is used to stimulate learning through assessment by focusing on actively engaging students in assessment and feedback. Although prior research has examined LOA from multiple vantage points, there is a lack of research on its implementation in online learning and how different stakeholders perceive the impact of online LOA practices. This chapter reports on a mixed method study exploring students' perceptions of the LOA approach based on an integrated assessment task (reading/listening-to-writing/speaking) and used within the scope of an EAP program in a Turkish context to study its impact upon learning. Participants included 45 university students who completed an initial questionnaire; 21 of these students then participated in focus group interviews. Findings revealed positive student perceptions of online LOA tasks because of the opportunities these tasks provided for improved language and academic skills, collaboration and dialogue, deeper learning, and longer engagement. In addition, there was evidence of a greater emphasis on teacher feedback over students' self- and peer evaluations when revising the written report. The findings highlight pedagogical implications for using integrated assessment tasks in online LOA practices.

Introduction

Worldwide school closures due to COVID-19 pandemic resulted in emergency online teaching to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on formal

teaching and learning (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). With the emergence of online teaching, standardized language assessment and testing procedures in many contexts were challenged by the sudden shift to emergency remote online education. Consequently, in some of the undergraduate English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses offered within the scope of the undergraduate English program at our university in Turkey, teachers adopted project- and process-based assessment procedures which involve learning-oriented approaches to assessment. Although online teaching and assessment have emerged as the "new normal", little is known about how students perceive the effects of online assessment practices on their learning (Ma et al., 2021). This paper describes a learning-oriented approach (LOA) based on an integrated assessment task (reading/listening-to-writing/speaking) in higher education in a Turkish context and discusses its design and implementation during emergency online teaching. It also relates findings of a classroom-based research study, based on a student questionnaire and interviews, conducted to examine learner perceptions of the assessment task's impact upon learning.

Learning-oriented Assessment (LOA) has gained prominence in second and foreign language teaching (L2) contexts because it conceptualizes the view of assessment as "supporting learning in a systematic and integrated fashion" (Salamoura & Morgan, 2021). LOA engages students in discussions about constructs and expectations of assessment, facilitates learner self-regulation, promotes the use of metacognitive tools to plan, monitors and evaluates the learning process, and empowers lifelong learning (Baker et.al., 2021). Thus, LOA is conceptualized as an interactive means which focuses on providing greater learning opportunities and improvement of learning rather than simply ranking, measuring, and selecting learning (Scarino, 2013). From an LOA perspective, the key point of all assessment, whether formative or summative, is the extent to which it facilitates and promotes learning (Green, 2017).

According to Green (2017), when evaluating assessment use, it is important to unpack the perspectives of teachers, learners, and other stakeholders in terms of how they comprehend the demands of assessment and integrate these demands into their practice. In contrast to

traditional standardized assessment, which is often used in a wide variety of contexts for different purposes, LOA is associated with diversity of assessment across educational contexts and approaches. Thus, it is argued that further research is necessary to examine "the underlying features of LOA for a better understanding of how it is conceptualized and operationalized in different contexts" (Gebril, 2021, p. 2). Findings and implications derived from this study have the potential to contribute to the growing literature on LOA practices in different higher educational contexts.

In addition, exploring student perceptions can promote fairer assessment practice, which has emerged as a key challenge of online assessment procedures in various educational contexts. Aitken (2012) argued:

> By listening to students, and reflecting on what they say, teachers will have important information to improve student learning and teacher praxis. Pedagogically-oriented teachers not only listen to students' voice respectfully, but also step back and trust students for taking much of the responsibility for their own assessment and learning. (p. 197)

Therefore, involving stakeholder voices provides insights for teachers and curriculum/testing developers for effective instructional design and implementation of LOA programs, bringing more learning opportunities. Consequently, within the context of this research study during online education, students' perceptions about their own needs and experiences gained prominence. LOA can establish assessment practices in a new conceptual framework, in turn guiding teachers to "develop and use assessment in more exciting and empowering ways to enhance meaningful learning" (Zeng et al., p. 213).

This study is an attempt to address the research purposes explained above through exploring the following research questions:

1. How do university L2 students consider the impacts of learning-oriented online integrated assessment tasks on their learning?
2. What are the perceived factors that facilitate student learning in online learning-oriented assessment?

Literature review

Features of learning-oriented assessment

According to Carless (2015), LOA primarily aims at developing "productive student learning processes" (p. 964), which involves the interaction of processes such as assessment tasks undertaken by students, expansion of self-evaluative capacities, and learner engagement with feedback. LOA requires cognitive engagement of both learners and teachers (Hamp-Lyons, 2017) and involves assessment for learning (AfL) strategies (Black & William, 1998; Stiggings et al., 2004) to harness assessment to facilitate the learning experience (Fulcher, 2021). In addition, Khan and Hassan (2021) suggest that LOA produces tasks that have three benefits: synergizing assessment's formative and summative functions, promoting active involvement of teachers in giving feedback that informs both teaching and learning, and promoting active engagement of learners in self-/peer assessment.

According to Carless et al. (2006), learning-oriented assessment involves three elemental features: (1) deliberately designed tasks to bring about effective learning, (2) active engagement through self-/peer evaluation, and (3) timely feedback providing learners with what-next strategies to improve their work. The first principle refers to tasks that engage learners in processes that support learning and guide them to "build the skills they will require if they are to perform effectively in the real world" (Hamp-Lyons, 2017, p. 90). Green (2017) concurs that this first principle is associated with task authenticity, relating assessment tasks to "language use in the world beyond the classroom" (p. 121). The second principle encompasses broader concepts of self- and peer assessment, such as learner training for identifying different performance levels used with evaluation criteria, judging one's own performance, determining actions to improve performance, and gaining assessment literacy in criteria use. This principle puts forth learner agency through self-regulation, interdependence, and building skills for life-long learning (Green, 2017). The final principle is associated with a feeding-forward approach (Duncan, 2007) in which learners are both supported to improve their task performance and use the feedback in different tasks and learning contexts

(Hamp-Lyons, 2017). Green (2017) points out that in LOA, feedback is conceived as a regulatory mechanism for both teachers and learners to act on the insights gained to improve their performance.

All learning-oriented principles cultivate "sustainable assessment" since they stress "the need for all assessment practices to equip learners for the challenges of learning and practice they will face once their current episode of learning is complete" (Boud & Soler, 2016, p. 401). This emphasizes learning how to learn and how to self-direct. Zeng et al. (2018) remark that: "Knowledge and skills that school students of today will need when they join the workforce have not yet been created". Consequently, rather than simple knowledge transmission, education in the new century should target capacity building in the creation, management, and transfer of knowledge alongside its acquisition (Zeng et al., 2018). LOA aims at harnessing assessment practices to facilitate the learning experience through tasks that require "learner involvement in the process of doing and assessing the tasks, and the feedback provided to the learners on task performance" (Fulcher, p. 34). In addition, in LOA schemes, authentic language use can be achieved by the exploitation of integrated tasks (reading/listening-to- writing/speaking) (Fulcher, 2021; Plakans, 2013). Fulcher emphasizes the use of integrated, creative, goal-driven, authentic tasks that "require discussion, analysis, and response to reading or listening texts to reveal the ability to interpret and use language for practical purposes" (p. 38), leading to a change in the learners themselves. Similarly, Baker et al. (2021) argue that change and growth in academic writing is facilitated through integrated tasks involving regulation of metacognitive strategies (e.g., identifying the key information in source texts and planning its use in the written outcome) and cognitive processes (selective attention while reading, recall of reporting language when giving reference to source texts). To target change and growth in learners, effective LOA tasks should include opportunities for communication and integration of skills through dialogue, learner involvement, support through scaffolding, and feedforward feedback (Fulcher, 2021). The design of the integrated assessment task (explained in the Methodology section below) ensures these features.

Impact of LOA on learning

Based on the core elements of a learning-oriented assessment approach, Carless (2015) draws attention to learning-oriented tasks, developing students' evaluative expertise, and enhancing students' engagement with feedback for the development of quality student learning in higher education. Studies in higher education concur that emphasis on learning-oriented assessment practices and self-/peer evaluation fosters effective learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Sadler 2010). Hartle (2020) explored the efficacy and affordances of using LOA in an EAP program offered at an Italian university and concluded that adopting LOA as a framework in both summative and formative assessment tools may impact teaching pedagogy and student learning positively. Ma et al. (2021) examined students' perceptions of the impact of LOA on their feedback literacy in an online EAP writing course at a Hong Kong university during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers remarked that students held a primarily positive view of the influence of LOA on feedback literacy development in terms of appreciating feedback, developing judgements, and taking actions, but less favorable student opinions of the online mode of learning in promoting such literacy.

Learning-oriented classroom assessment has been shown to improve academic achievement (e.g., Baker et al., 2021; Kim & Kim, 2017; Navaie, 2018; Salamoura & Morgan, 2021), foster students' learning motivation and engagement (Keppell & Carless, 2006), and reduce their anxiety (e.g., Bayat et al., 2017). In their critical meta-analysis, Zeng et al. (2018) argue that LOA positively impacts student learning because assessment is seen as a process of learning, alongside assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment of learning (AoL) approaches. Assessment as Learning (AaL) refers to active student participation in their own assessment. AaL, it is argued, engages students in meta-cognitive processes such as setting learning goals, considering learning strategies, assessing learning progress, and using feedback to reach new understandings. It also directs students to autonomy and draws attention to complex tasks "that encourage students to show the connections they are masking among the concepts they are learning as they integrate their assessment into their learning" (p. 221).

Kim and Kim (2017) explored how reading-to-write tasks given to 10 TESOL graduate students within the scope of an EAP program in Korea are used for LOA, focusing on the instructor's feedback and its impact on learners' performance, concluding that the feed-forward approach provided improved student performance. The findings suggest that through learning-oriented feedback, LOA supported improvement in students' language and academic skills. It also provided an opportunity for the instructor to critically reflect on their own instruction. Researchers also noted that students recommended peer assessment for additional writing feedback.

In addition to teacher feedback, which feeds forward to the learners, LOA programs both value self- and peer assessment practices and position learners as assessors of their own/peer performance, which in turn promotes more efficient learning. By becoming critical evaluators of their own and/or peer performance, learners can become more independent as they are able to identify their current level of performance and determine what action they need to take to reach their desired level of competency (Black et al., 2003). Lam (2013) compared teacher, self- and peer assessment to investigate the extent to which each facilitated writing revision, concluding that while self-assessment might not guarantee text revision, if combined with focused teacher feedback, it may improve final drafts. On the other hand, Fyfe and Vella (2012) argued for explicit learner training on exploitation of assessment criteria, which would lead to improvement in writing. They examined assessment rubrics as an explicit teaching tool in the classroom that had the potential to lead to improved understanding and, consequently, to better outcomes in academic writing tasks. Findings revealed that students believed that reflective intervention had a beneficial effect.

Similarly, Shen et al. (2020) reported that while peer assessment significantly reduced Chinese college students' dependence on the teacher as well as enhanced learner autonomy and confidence, it did not improve their ability to evaluate their learning process in English writing classes. In another study, Lopez-Pellisa et al. (2021) examined peer feedback during a collaborative writing assignment in a blended learning environment comprised of 85 university students. They found that students were

encouraged to reflect on and discuss the content they worked with, consequently revising their written outcome.

Methodology

The research context

This research study was conducted with first-year university students enrolled in a reading-into-writing-and-speaking EAP program in the Turkish context. This course consisted of 4 contact hours each week over a 16-week semester, and, due to COVID-19 lockdowns, it was conducted online through Zoom meetings integrated into the university's learning management system, Moodle.

Throughout this integrated skills undergraduate English course, students work on their academic and language skills to increase their autonomy in their field of study. Students' aims include improving their group presentation skills and academic writing skills (detecting a social, economic, or environmental problem, writing a research question, doing literature review, evaluating existing solutions and suggesting a new solution, citing, and referencing). The course objectives are embedded into content exploring the concepts of "sustainability" and "sustainable development goals". The EAP program aims to meet course objectives as well as provide comprehensive content knowledge. The content of the course entailed videos, abridged versions of United Nations' reports on various aspects of sustainability goals, authentic academic and newspaper articles, as well as articles and sources contributed by the students. Thus, the integrated approach employed a process-based reading-to-write-and-speak assessment task which was used both formatively and summatively.

The assessment task adopted the core features of LOA, including a deliberate focus on effective learning, self-/peer evaluation, and timely feedback, as illustrated in Table 1 on the next page.

Groups of students were required to work on a problem-solution paper in three stages, concluding with a presentation of their work to peers. In each phase, groups evaluated their own performance when working with a specifically designed rubric. Tutorials with their instructor provided

Table 1. Illustration of the Integration of LOA Features into the Assessment Task

Features of LOA	Integration of LOA Features into the Assessment Task
Learning task	Adaptation of integrated skills (reading-to-write, reading-to-speak), approach to simulate authentic real-life language tasks expected in academic life
Student involvement in self-/ peer evaluation	Rubrics to be used in each stage of the project to encourage learners' active engagement in their own learning through self- and peer assessment.
	Evaluation of performance in group to foster opportunities for collaborative learning
Feedback as feed-forward	Written feedback and online Zoom tutorials to discuss suggested changes for improvement to guide and promote future learning

students with opportunities to reflect on their outcome in comparison to the course objectives, ensure understanding of the feedback through discussion within the group, allow for further clarification, and consider ways forward. Student work was retained on the course Moodle page for revisiting prior feedback, which was used for corrective actions. Groups also used Google Files to work collaboratively online. In phase 1, they were asked to choose one of the UN sustainability goals as their research topic, determine a local context (e.g., their own campus and city) and formulate their solution-oriented research questions (i.e., How can we prevent plastic waste from being thrown into the sea off the coast of Istanbul?). Then, they outlined their research aims and briefly listed their preliminary research findings regarding underlying causes, major effects, and existing solutions with respect to their chosen threat. In phase 2, they submitted a research report of around 1,000 words, building both on their work in the prior phase as well as on teacher, self-, and peer evaluations. Acting on feedback, they revised the relevant parts of their work and went into more detail on the problem's significance (defining and analyzing the problem, referring to relevant and reliable external sources to demonstrate the scope of the problem). They also elaborated on causes, consequences, and existing solutions. Each group provided brief information on the solution player, summarized the existing solutions with research-based data, and evaluated the existing solutions based on their strengths and weaknesses in the target context. Then, learners assessed these solutions in relation to the research question and decided on actions to deal with their researched issue. In this phase, to support their research reports, learners

cited information from course readings and their selected research-based sources in line with academic conventions (e.g., using citation practices such as quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, and referencing). In phase 3, groups explained their own solution in detail and provided justification for its superiority to existing ones within the chosen context. At the end of phase 3, groups submitted their final draft after considering the feedback provided. They performed group presentations of their project with suggested solutions to their chosen sustainability problem in online Zoom meetings.

Participants

This study was conducted with undergraduate Turkish native speakers enrolled in an undergraduate EAP program at a Turkish University. There were 45 volunteer students who completed the questionnaire, and 21 of these participated in group interviews. At the onset of the study, 60 students were invited to take part, and 75% responded to the questionnaire. These first-year university students had fulfilled the university English language entry requirement by achieving either a minimum of 65 on the institutional proficiency test or a mean average TOEFL iBT score of 80. They had taken a prerequisite undergraduate English course aiming to improve their academic skills (with a focus on reading and writing) and linguistic skills, based on the theme of "sustainability". In addition to establishing topic familiarity, this prior EAP course also took an integrated approach, employing reading-to-write assessment tasks to practice integrating sources into their own work. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the courses were moved online during the spring semester of the 2021 academic year (at the time of this study).

Data collection and analysis

Perceptions of the online LOA task were gathered through a questionnaire and focus group interviews. Banerjee (2021) identifies interviews as a common data collection approach in L2 LOA studies. Focus groups consisted of group members who worked together during the assessment

process. These interviews generate diverse perspectives because the discussion allows negotiation about how meanings are made. Also, some participants feel safer discussing issues within a group rather than as an individual. "The discussion may lead to unanticipated findings because of the ways in which the discussion itself generates thoughts and feelings" (Blaxter et al., 2006, p. 194). Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The data analysis incorporated inductive thematic analysis without being framed by *a priori* expectation (Thomas, 2006). During thematic analysis data was coded based on iterative reading, and then codes were merged into categories which conflated into main themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Quotations are incorporated into the findings of the current study to represent these main themes. On the other hand, questionnaire data were analyzed quantitatively with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) using descriptive statistics.

As their teacher and researcher, I briefed my students about the aims of the research and invited their voluntary participation. Informed consent of the participants was taken. The data collection process was conducted at the end of the semester. Focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed for later analysis. An "informant interview" approach was adapted, allowing participants to contribute to the research agenda to uncover relevant issues. I often initiated our interaction with phrases, such as "Can we talk a bit about …" and "Can you tell me about …" rather than confining their response to strictly structured and set questions (Atkins & Wallace, 2012).

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the data interpretations, triangulation and member checking were used. The researcher shared the emerging themes from the transcripts and asked participants to comment on the way the issues were framed and clarify any ambiguities.

Findings and discussion

Regarding the participants' profiles, the majority (63%) considered themselves "good", and some "advanced" (19%) in terms of their information technology (IT) skills, while others believed (19%) that they had average level skills (Mdn = 3 and SD = 0.62). They also held a

positive impression regarding their participation in the online course; the overwhelming majority (91%) considered that they actively engaged (Mdn = 3 and SD = 0.65).

Learners widely acknowledged favorable perceptions of the online LOA task as summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Summary of Student Perceptions of the Online LOA Task

	Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**Std**
	(%)	**(%)**	**(%)**	**(%)**	**Mean**	**Dev**
1. The online assessment task was easier to complete in comparison to in-class assessment (time & energy savings)	5	21	37	37	3.07	.88
2. The online assessment platforms (e.g., LMS, Turn-it-in, Zoom, Panopto) were user-friendly	0	7	49	44	3.37	.62
3. The online assessment (in terms of delivery, tools, and posting of results) in this course was fair and transparent.	0	2.3	47	51	3.50	.55
4. I was comfortable with the assessment platforms during online learning	0	2.3	44	54	3.51	.55
5. The online assessment task helped me understand how much I had learned and what more I needed to learn.	0	14	42	44	3.30	.70

Students' response to the questionnaire revealed that some factors are deemed important for quality student learning in online LOA. The majority of the learners (74%) expressed that the online assessment task was easier to complete in comparison to the in-class assessment with regard to the time and effort required to fulfil the task. In addition, it was reported that the overwhelming majority (93%) considered the online platforms that are used to carry out assessment to be user-friendly. During the interviews some students further highlighted user-friendliness by referring to the easy access to their previous work as well as the feedback from their teacher, which in turn was reported to bring about longer engagement opportunities. Also, 98% perceived online assessment as "fair" and "transparent" regarding the delivery, tools, and posting of the results. Nearly all students pointed out that they felt comfortable

with the assessment platforms during online learning. However, during interviews some students expressed that the shift to digital learning was challenging. Consequently, the positive trends expressed by the students may imply that these factors are deemed significant in facilitating quality student learning through online assessment tasks which adopt an LOA framework. An important finding was that the overwhelming majority (86%) believed that the online assessment task positively impacted their learning, implying a change and growth in their language and academic skills. This finding was also reflected by the interview results.

Interview findings revealed further details and led to the identification of three emerging themes: (1) social learning through collaboration and dialogue, (2) deeper learning, and (3) the prolonged effects of online LOA assessment tasks and their interaction with student learning.

Social learning through collaboration and dialogue

Findings revealed diverse perceptions regarding the emergency online learning experience. Some students expressed that this experience had been difficult and challenging. One participant stated: "This time period's been cold and dark both mentally and socially". Another disagreed: "Online learning's been efficient and easy because you're only a click away from each class" (S2). Similarly, learners expressed diverse opinions about the online LOA assessment task and the way it interacted with their learning.

Learners acknowledged that the assessment task positively impacted their learning, indicating opportunities for socialization and dialogue; however, the degree of effectiveness depended on factors related to individuals, such as motivation, approach to learning, and group dynamics. A student commented:

> My group consisted of people who really wanted to do something. We made a fair distribution of duties in the group, and everyone had a fair workload. However, my friends in other groups complained about their groups because they said the others in their group didn't do anything. We were lucky, and we did well. (S7)

Different opinions were voiced regarding the effectiveness of online group work during this assessment task. Some learners contended that working online hampered their socialization process, as expressed in the following quotation:

> If we were physically at school, we could have gotten together and worked on the project. But using Zoom made things less effective. Sometimes we just shared the work, and everyone worked individually. If this had been face-to-face, we could have built up the group dynamics much faster and worked much more efficiently. (S1)

For others, however, working online as a group was a valuable learning experience. One student asserted: "I think working online helped us to socialize with one another. I was able to stay in contact with others. I usually can't easily get to know people in my classes. But here through this project, I had my group members as friends" (S5). In a similar vein, another student remarked that the project provided a rationale for them to engage in communication and dialogue:

> We were also using Zoom and breakout rooms in other courses, too. In one of them, we were told one day to go to a breakout room and discuss a topic with our other group members. But when we got there, nobody spoke. We didn't even turn on our cameras. It was like we'd closed a curtain on each other. So, we were there, but at the same time we weren't. But in a project like this, which lasted for a whole semester, our discussions in breakout rooms were meaningful. We participated, befriended each other, and had open communication. (S9)

Deeper learning

Participants widely acknowledged that the online LOA program provided opportunities for effective learning. Students seemed to believe in its benefits, especially in terms of writing and reading skills. One conceded:

> Writing is hard. And it's gotten a lot more difficult, especially for our generation, one that doesn't read and write a lot. In this respect, I think I've improved a lot. This project was different from the writing work I did in previous classes. It was

> in the style of deep learning. It's very important to read the texts, pay attention
> to the keywords, extract the main ideas, then synthesize them with your own
> ideas and use them in quotations. I think it's a lifelong learning opportunity. It's
> an experience that every student at the university should have. (S12)

Overall positive perceptions were expressed in the questionnaire and interviews regarding the assessment task's impact upon learning, and these echo conclusions of previous LOA studies (Baker et al., 2021; Bayat et al., 2017; Navaie, 2018; Salamoura & Morgan, 2021).

When considering the impacts of the online assessment task upon learning, learners tended to make comparisons with the one-shot online exams in other departmental courses. Almost all expressed their appreciation for the EAP course's process-based LOA program, praising its opportunities for deeper learning. Some learners argued that the assessment task in this study motivated/guided them in setting goals and provided opportunities for collaborative learning and better comprehension:

> I think it was to our advantage that there is no specific exam for this course and
> that we worked on the project throughout the entire semester. We learned a lot.
> We worked in a step- by- step way, planning what to do next, helping each other.
> I think we liked it a lot, and so we studied more. (S3)

It can be inferred that the online LOA task improved motivation, resonating with previous research findings (Keppell & Carless, 2006).

Some students acknowledged the authenticity of the skills targeted in the course and tested through the assessment task. These skills were seen as transferable to academic courses beyond this one. As one student postulated:

> While doing this research project, we learned about how to conduct research
> using reliable sources, and it was very beneficial. I made use of this skill in my
> other courses as well. Similarly, I think what I learned about citation skills was
> also very useful. (S9)

Furthermore, one learner praised the real-life skills that the task encompassed, highlighting the benefits of having felt greater motivation and a more positive attitude towards learning:

> To be honest, my perception of English courses was a bit negative. I thought I already knew a lot of English, what was the point? But then when we created our project, I really felt excited, and I worked hard. It was great to make and present a project that we loved doing. It seemed like there was nothing we couldn't do in the project. It was very close to real life. (S11)

Such positive views suggest that employing integrated skills approach in LOA via inquiry-based activities and authentic problems piqued learners' curiosity, encouraged critical reflection, questioning, and knowledge-building around genuinely interesting topics; consequently, it created opportunities for deeper learning as well as higher levels of engagement.

It was also argued that the assessment program targeted real-life skills commonly required in professional life beyond formal education and was seen as "a good practice for the future" (S14). One student pointed out that the integrated skills, and academic citation practices, would be valuable in an academic career. Another prioritized the group work required: "Group work's an experience that must definitely be acquired because in working life, there's a lot of teamwork, or group work. When evaluated in this way, it's critical to gain group work experience at university" (S21). These findings align with prior studies emphasizing sustainability in LOA schemes (Boud & Soler, 2016; Zeng et al. 2018).

However, the speaking component (i.e. delivering an online presentation) received some criticism in terms of authenticity. One student commented:

> I don't think that doing presentations online on Zoom seems real. It's not possible to have eye contact with people. I felt like I was talking into thin air. I was talking to a camera … Not being able to see other students and their reactions stressed me out. (S15)

Another learner drew attention to the differences between face-to-face and online presentations:

> Presenting online is different. When we do presentation in an in-person class, we must be careful about different criteria. Body language, for example, is

important to me. So, presenting online was difficult for me. I think standing up and presenting in front of other people is much different. (S17)

From the above-mentioned comments, it can be inferred that online learning may require a reassessment of the construct of speaking when delivering a presentation.

Longer engagement

Learner responses in interviews posited prolonged engagement in learning through feedback, performance self-evaluation, and accessing online records. To begin, learners reported using teacher feedback to improve their work in each stage of the assessment task. One commented:

> In each step of the project, we had to improve our work based on teacher feedback. We also evaluated it ourselves. It was like making a promise to ourselves. I think all of us felt responsible to build something step-by-step and put in effort to make our work better. (S13)

Some stated that they worked with the assessment rubric to evaluate their performance and combine teacher feedback with their own self-evaluation while revising their drafts. The phrases "making a promise", "feel responsible", "build something", and "put in effort to make our work better" signify both commitment and strategy use to improve one's own outcome. Learners reported actively employing rubrics to understand learning expectations and use as a planning tool in their revisions. This quotation highlights the point that self-evaluation was deemed a factor that triggered students' prolonged engagement with the task via sustained effort to understand learning expectations. Thus, both teacher- and self-evaluations are considered to be a means for making learning transparent for students and providing scaffolding for their understanding of the learning objectives, leading to enhanced performance.

However, not all held this view; indeed, the focus on evaluating one's own performance with rubrics was criticized by some learners, who argued that emphasis should be placed upon teacher feedback rather than self-evaluation: "I think self-evaluation of our work was ineffective

because some of us took it lightly. And after all, our teacher's feedback was the most important" (S18). In addition, as seen in the following quotation, some students expressed discomfort with giving peer feedback, fearing that it would harm their social interaction: "It's difficult to give feedback to your friend. They may resent it. Also, I've never worked with criteria and giving feedback to my friends before. So, I'm not very good at it" (S16). This leads to the inference that some consider peer evaluation as an alien and unfamiliar practice that has not been an aspect of their previous learning experience.

Secondly, some learners felt that keeping and accessing records online enhanced their engagement. All course content and drafts were kept on the learning management system (LMS), and students expressed mixed (but mainly positive) views about having easy access to these materials. One stated: "I think it's super to have all the materials online. With online learning my attention is more focused working online instead of worksheets and papers. I became more organized. It's great to be able to access them whenever I want" (S8). However, other remarks indicated that the shift to digital learning has been challenging: "It was difficult to have all the material on the screen. Normally, I'm a person who's very used to paper" (S1). However, overall, most highlighted that online learning was well-supported by the record-keeping aspect of LOA tasks; consequently, this led to prolonged learner engagement and interaction with the course content. To illustrate, one participant concurred:

> One of the best aspects of online learning was that lessons were recorded. We even recorded the tutorial session in which we were given feedback for our friend who'd missed the discussion. When we worked on our draft, we listened to our discussion because sometimes you might not understand written feedback. Hearing the discussion again was helpful. (S2)

Reviewing the video of their tutorial created an opportunity for students to lengthen their period of engagement. In relation to this point, Salamoura and Morgan (2021) remark that learning management systems and/or other digital platforms provide efficient technological support for collecting and recording different types of evidence which both shows learning and promotes it further.

Conclusion

Students are key stakeholders in all assessment programs, including classroom-based assessment. The current study focused on how EAP students in a Turkish context perceived an online LOA-oriented integrated assessment task administered during emergency online education, and how they interpreted its effect on their learning. The assessment task was used both formatively and summatively, fulfilling a variety of assessment purposes, including AfL, AoL and AaL. Findings indicate that even under the difficult circumstances caused by COVID restrictions, the online LOA assessment task brought about a positive learning experience. Students reported having acquired improved language and academic skills due to the opportunities for collaboration and dialogue, deeper learning, and a longer period of engagement provided by the assessment task. The findings also reveal that the online assessment task facilitated longer engagement and critical reflection via record keeping, despite a certain amount of criticism regarding the emerging construct of delivering presentations online. In addition, there was evidence of a greater emphasis on teacher feedback over self- and peer evaluation by students when revising their written reports.

The present study holds several implications for teaching and assessment in EAP contexts in higher education. The analysis of the questionnaire and interview data reveals that integrated reading-to-write and reading-to-speak tasks were considered highly beneficial for the expansion of students' language and academic skills. Therefore, LOA-oriented integrated assessment tasks should be considered for EAP programs.

In addition, in view of criticism with respect to self- and peer evaluation, it is important to stimulate learners' engagement in their own learning and progress; thus, prior research studies have emphasized the development of student assessment literacy, or "evaluative expertise" (Carless, 2015). This can be achieved through explicit teaching on how to use criteria for self-/peer evaluation and examples/models, illustrating different levels of performance and how these correspond to the bands/descriptors in the given criteria (Hamp-Lyons, 2017; Zeng et al., 2018). Sharing, clarifying, and discussing the criteria with learners is a key element for ensuring students' comprehension of learning aims (William,

2011). One possible approach is integrating learner training in assessment into instruction in local context, along with other approaches which rely on LOA, to support effective assessment practice, boost learners' evaluative expertise, and create a learning culture (Zeng et al., 2018).

As an illustration, teachers may create activities to raise students' awareness of self-/peer evaluation procedures and processes. Learners expressed positive perceptions regarding the group tutorials with teacher feedback and found watching these videos later to be helpful as well. Fulcher (2021) posits "when learners have received peer or teacher feedback, this involves creating activities in which they have time to consider the feedback, ensure they have understood it through discussion with other learners or asking the teacher, and attempting parts of the task again in order to see if they can change the quality of their performance" (p. 44). Other useful forms of training may include in-class demonstrations and modeling through the use of rubrics, followed by work in teacher-student conferences (Shen et al., 2020).

The study is limited in terms of educational context and confined to a particular time and student profile; as a result, it is considered necessary to explore the efficacy of LOA in different educational contexts, which will facilitate professional learning by practitioners, administrators, and researchers alike (Khan & Hassan, 2021). Therefore, future research areas may be expanded to include the perceptions of diverse stakeholders. In addition, written outcomes could be examined in follow-up studies to identify students' progress in learning; this can in turn shed light on the relationship between student beliefs about LOA and its actual impact on their learning.

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