Design and Implementation of Synchronous Cyber Assessment and Its Potential Issues

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Abstract: Teaching and learning with cyber face-to-face feature has become a new trend for improving the quality of online courses. We argue that the synchronous cyber classroom can be used not only for conducting synchronous teaching and learning but also for synchronous cyber assessments. However, there are very few practices really adopting the synchronous cyber assessment. A guideline of how to effectively design and implement synchronous cyber assessments is definitely needed. Four different methods have been designed for conducting synchronous cyber assessments based on the commonly adopted assessment principles. These four types of synchronous cyber assessments are synchronous quiz test, synchronous written test, synchronous oral test and synchronous practice test. We have implemented these designs in a real online credit course and got very positive feedbacks from the learners. Some potential challenges and issues while conducting synchronous cyber assessments are discussed. The possible solutions are also proposed according to interviews and feedbacks of participants.

Keywords: Online assessment, synchronous cyber assessment, cyber face-to-face, synchronous cyber classroom

1. Introduction

Assessment is a process of measuring a person’s knowledge, comprehension, capability or skill. An assessment contains evaluation and feedback which has a profound influence to instructor and learner. In other words, if assessment can be applied properly, it could make a great contribution to effective learning (Nicol, 2007). Online assessment is able to improve procedure and method of assessment. Moreover, it has the advantages of time saving, immediate feedback, better use of resources, assessment records saving and more convenient (McCormack & Jones, 1998). Dermo’s study reveals that learners’ perceptions about online assessment are positive in six dimensions: affective factors, validity, practical issues, reliability, security, and learning and teaching (Dermo, 2009). While online assessment is indeed becoming more and more important for assessing online courses, software supporting and developer joining are definitely necessary (Whitelock, 2009).

Online assessment refers to any evaluation method conducted on the cyber space by using the Internet as platform or media. Online assessment can be classified into two main types, asynchronous cyber assessment and synchronous cyber assessment. There are still many limitations due to lacking interactive and monitoring mechanisms in asynchronous cyber assessment.

Recently, teaching and learning with cyber face-to-face feature has become a new trend for improving the quality of online courses. However, there are very few practices really adopting this kind of synchronous cyber assessment and a guideline of how to effectively