

Collaborative Versus Conventional Assessments: A Thematic Analysis of Mock Business Meeting Assessments

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Abstract

Meetings for business are essential to an organization's performance. Therefore, in order to improve students' abilities to conduct mock business meetings as a preparation for the real workplace, business schools that offer courses on business meetings must incorporate business meeting skills. Thus, the purpose of this study is to compare the characteristics of conventional and collaborative assessments and to offer suggestions for both types of evaluations. The methodology of this study is qualitative in nature by means of interview after a mock business meeting was carried out. Three assessors who were chosen through purposive sampling were the interview subjects, and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to the results, collaborative assessment fosters accuracy and a more thorough evaluation procedure. Conversely, it was discovered that traditional evaluations had problems with fairness.

Keywords: Mock Business Meeting, Collaborative Assessment, Conventional Assessment, Thematic Analysis

Introduction

In professional business surroundings, assessing the skills and competencies of students is crucial to their development and success in the industry after they graduate. One effective way to evaluate these skills is through oral discussion assessments like mock business meetings. These would allow students to hone their critical thinking, communication, and teamwork abilities, which are essential for success in the business world. Evaluation for oral discussions, such as mock business meetings, has commonly been done conventionally. However, this paper also intends to consider collaborative assessment or evaluation, where more than one assessor is involved.

Conventional assessment methods usually involve individual evaluation based on predetermined rubrics. In mock business meetings, this could include assessing participants' performance based on predefined parameters such as presentation skills, content knowledge, and communication skills. As such, this type of assessment lacks the interactive and dynamic elements found in collaborative settings. The educator is responsible for creating, delivering, and grading the assessment in a traditional environment. The assessment usually aims to gauge specific learning objectives, and students must show that they understand the material covered in the lessons. A standardized rubric or scoring guide that describes the standards for assessing student replies is frequently used as the basis for grading.

While this is the case, mock business assessments have been said to be very subjective and challenging for educators. According to Nguyen and Le (2021), teachers were challenged in preparing young learners for the Cambridge speaking test due to a lack of facilities and equipment, lack of teaching resources, teachers' lack of proficiency in the English Language, and learners' inhibition. Similarly, Alahmadi, Alrahaili, and Alshraideh (2019), found that one of the most challenging tests faced by Arab Saudi undergraduates was the summative speaking test, and this has led to a need to seek approaches to enhance their competency in the speaking test and to provide constructive feedback to improve students' speaking performance.

Unlike conventional assessments, collaborative assessment emphasizes collective participation, teamwork, and shared responsibility. In mock business meetings, collaborative assessment could include evaluating how well participants engage with each other, contribute to group discussions, and collectively work towards a common goal. This approach allows the assessors to integrate interpersonal skills, cooperation, and the ability to synergize efforts within a team setting.

To compare the conventional and collaborative assessments, this study will interview assessors who have experience in both conventional and collaborative assessments in the assessment of mock business meetings. Data collected will then be analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify patterns or themes in a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study will employ thematic analysis to compare the outcomes of conventional and collaborative assessments in mock business meetings. The study aims to provide insights into each assessment approach's attributes by analyzing the themes that emerge from the data.

Literature Review

According to Gikandi et al (2011), effective learning depends on assessments, which show what has been taught at the end of a lesson or course. According to Swan, Shen, and Hiltz (2019), assessments are what counts, and gathering data to assist students' learning and development is part of this process. An assessment is, therefore, a potentially powerful, all-encompassing, and widely applicable measurement to gauge the performance and understanding of a student. In other words, it determines how effectively the students have understood the lesson taught by the teacher and acts as a standard to measure how well students learn new information.

Understanding the necessity and complexity of assessments for students learning progress, it has been argued that speaking tests are subjective and exceptionally challenging for teachers. Nguyen and Le (2021), found that a lack of facilities and equipment, teaching resources, inadequate English language proficiency, and learners' hesitancy made it challenging for teachers in Vietnam to prepare young children for the Cambridge Speaking Test. Alahmadi, Alrahaili, and Alshraideh (2019), asserted that one of the most challenging examinations faced by Saudi Arabian undergraduates of Arab descent was the summative speaking test. It is now essential to find ways to help students improve on the speaking exam and provide helpful feedback so they can talk more clearly.

Luoma (2004), found that assessing oral tests is inherently complex and requires teachers to make instantaneous judgments on various aspects of language use. This difficulty can tamper with accurately evaluating students' speaking skills in real-time assessments. As such, teachers need adequate training and resources for conducting oral assessments effectively. Continuous professional development, updated assessment techniques, and support in utilizing electronic tools for assessment are needed to equip teachers for speaking assessments (Noor et al., 2010; Ahmed & Alamin, 2012). Besides that, time constraints, large class sizes, low student proficiency levels, and technical difficulties in recording and evaluating oral assessments have also challenged oral assessments' fairness, accuracy, and efficiency (Sook, 2003; Mekonnen, 2014).

Other researchers have highlighted that Asian education systems tend to prioritize exam-oriented learning, leading to a heavy reliance on summative and standardized tests. This focus on traditional assessments, which often place more importance on reading and writing skills, can neglect the development of speaking and listening skills crucial for effective communication (Vongpumivitch, 2012; Aziz et al., 2018).

Speaking is one of the four essential language skills required for effective communication since the ability to communicate in a language distinguishes speakers of that language (Zaremba, 2006; Ur, 2000). Speaking makes it possible to observe language formation, which makes it another beneficial skill (Nashruddin, 2013). Speaking is the most important component of developing communicative competence, according to (Le, 2019). Speaking also creates a spark for group and pair discussions in the English language classroom.

Groups usually participate in conversations. Oral discussion exams evaluate students' interactive communication abilities while allowing for interactional work. In this situation, real dialogue can be fostered through idea sharing and various speech functions, including challenges, agreement or disagreement, explanations, and suggestions. However, there is a chance that the calibre of student conversation and engagement could suffer (Gan, 2010).

Authentic assessments involving forums, debates, mock meetings, and interviews have replaced traditional speech evaluations. According to Mueller (2014), genuine assessment is a type of evaluation where students must complete real-world activities to show how important information and abilities are applied. In keeping with this, university courses now include mock business meetings, which give students a taste of real-world situations.

Numerous investigations have been carried out to evaluate the efficacy of group discussions. A study by Cempaka (2024), found that increased practice of group discussions can increase speaking ability. Gok and Akbulut (2019), looked into how well university students' communication abilities were assessed using a mock business meeting. According to the study, having students participate in mock business meetings enhanced their capacity for teamwork and communication.

Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich (2006), have investigated the usefulness of conducting mock business meetings in an online learning setting. The results showed that simulating business meetings improved students' communication abilities and capacity for cooperation and productive work in virtual teams. A study on the influence of mock business meetings on college students' critical thinking abilities discovered that these students' critical thinking abilities were effectively developed using mock business meetings. Therefore, it can be concluded that mock business meeting assessments are useful for assessing students' critical thinking, communication, and teamwork skills. Students who graduate and seek employment should be skilled in oral communication, particularly speaking.

Hardly any literature has been found on collaborative assessments in group oral tests. However, research by Sandlund and Sundqvist (2019), showed that integrating collaborative assessment in the context of oral assessments positively impacted mixed-ability English as a foreign language student, indicating the effectiveness of collaborative assessment methods in enhancing learning achievements in oral assessments.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To examine the attributes of collaborative assessments compared to conventional assessments.
2. To examine the attributes of conventional assessments compared to collaborative assessments.
3. To make recommendations for collaborative and conventional assessments.

Research Methodology

This qualitative research involved three assessors who were selected using convenient sampling methods as they were the instructors involved in teaching the English for Business Meetings course at the undergraduate level of a local university. The assessors were experienced lecturers who had taught the course for several semesters. Therefore, they would have had experienced using both the conventional and collaborative assessment methods in their assessment of mock business meetings.

Participants

The participants were assessors selected using the convenience sampling method as they were the lecturers teaching the English for Business Meetings course code. The three assessors had given voluntary consent to accept the interview. They were lecturers with more than three years of teaching the course and conducting assessments using conventional and collaborative methods.

Instruments

The Mock Business Meeting Assessment

Based on the provided standardized course evaluation structure, the mock business meeting assessment scored 30 marks (Content = 8 marks; Language = 12 marks; Delivery = 5 marks; Participation = 5 marks). Two descriptors—the Business Meeting and the CEFR descriptor—were provided because the assessment's rating was subjective. To make the assessment easier, the descriptors were presented as bands.

Interview

After the mock business meeting assessment, a structured interview was conducted with all three assessors. The interview consisted of four open-ended questions and was conducted online via Google Meet. Before the interview, the assessors consented to participate voluntarily and with confidentiality. The interview questions were: (1) Do you prefer conventional assessment to collaborative assessment in mock business meeting assessments? Please give reasons for your choice. (2) What are the limitations of conventional assessments in conducting mock business meeting assessments? Can you give me a few limitations from your experience? (3) How do you find collaborative assessments for mock business meetings? (4) What are the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative assessments in mock business meetings?

Procedure

The collaborative and conventional assessments were conducted in real-time via the Google Meet platform. Each group was allotted ten minutes for preparation before presenting their mock business meeting. The mock business meeting lasted twenty minutes. The evaluation included scores for participation, topic, language, and delivery while assessing the usage of several abilities like bargaining, expressing disagreement, agreeing, and disagreeing. The three assessors were present in real-time during the collaborative assessment to evaluate the oral discussion during the mock business meeting. The groups were informed that they would present before the three assessors. Each assessor would focus on particular items for assessment, such as content (assessor 1), language (assessor 2), delivery, and participation (assessor 3). For the conventional assessments, only one assessor was present for the assessment and had to evaluate the groups for content, language, delivery, and participation alone for the respective class group.

After the assessments, each assessor was interviewed regarding their views on collaborative and conventional assessments. The interviews lasted less than an hour and had 4 question items. After the interview, the researchers transcribed data, and the data collected was run in NVivo for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The assessors' interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis from the NVivo software package. The thematic analysis approach was chosen because it is useful for summarizing key features to formulate themes and generate insights on assessments for oral group discussions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The NVivo software is a robust platform for conducting thematic analysis. The software can streamline coding processes, enhance accuracy, and improve transparency in qualitative

studies (Zamawe, 2015). It allows researchers to code data effectively, link paragraphs across sources, and manage all sources in one place. This simplifies the retrieval and reshaping of coding structures. In addition, it enhances accuracy by enabling quick and accurate searches, reducing the time needed for manual searches, and ensuring precise results. This makes it easier for others to understand and follow the analysis process. Hence, this study used thematic analysis with the help of NVivo software to facilitate the analysis process.

Results

The results are discussed based on the three objectives of the study.

The Attributes of Collaborative Assessments Compared to Conventional Assessments

Six sub-themes were identified under the theme of collaborative assessments, as shown in the hierarchy chart in Figure 1. They include accuracy, effectiveness, elimination of bias, extra work and time, learning from other assessors, and shared responsibility. This also accounted for the attributes of collaborative assessments compared to conventional assessments, as expressed in the interviews.

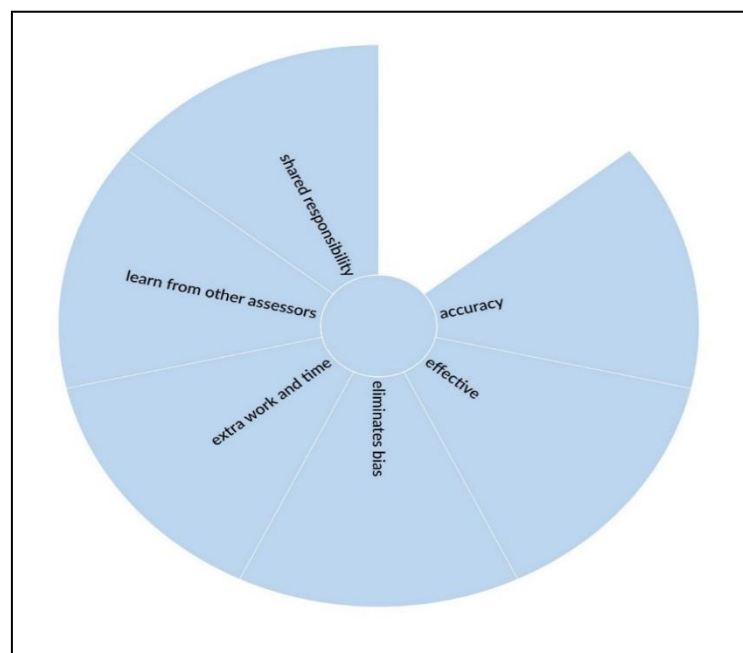


Figure 1. Attributes of Collaborative Assessment

Accuracy

Under the theme of collaborative assessment is the sub-theme of accuracy. This positive description of collaborative assessment shows that it can provide accurate assessment results, as indicated in the expressions of interviewee 1, “has more accuracy,” and interviewee 3, “more accurate when it comes to evaluation.”

Effectiveness

According to the assessors, collaborative assessments were effective compared to conventional assessments. Effectiveness is a positive description of collaborative assessment

showing effectiveness. Interviewee 1 expressed that it “is more effective,” while Interviewee 2 stated, “I find that the evaluation is carried out effectively.” Interviewee 3 expressed, “I prefer collaborative assessment as I need to concentrate only on one aspect of the evaluation instead of all three or four aspects” and “I also enjoy the part where evaluators discuss their scores among themselves before recording the final marks.”

Elimination of Bias

Another attribute observed in the interview was the elimination of bias. This positive description of collaborative assessment shows that it can provide fair scoring and eliminate bias. This can be illustrated in the expressions of interviewee 1, “eliminates bias in grading,” and interviewee 3, “For the students, being assessed by more than one evaluator, of which two are not their class teachers, means that they have fair scores for the assessment.”

Extra Work and Time

Another sub-theme found under the theme of collaborative assessment is extra work and time. This is a negative description of collaborative assessment. It shows that collaborative assessments need work, such as careful planning and preparation, rescheduling of assessment to meet the students' and assessors' time, and more classes and groups to assess. Interviewee 1 expressed this by saying, “need much planning” and “rescheduling of the assessment time needs to be done to ensure that the students and assessors can attend the mock meeting assessment.” Interviewee 2 stated that “It is very difficult to administer the assessments according to everyone’s schedule,” and Interviewee 3 stated that “the evaluators now need to evaluate more groups instead of just evaluating the groups from their class(es).” Interviewee 3 also expressed that “more time is needed to complete evaluating groups from other classes as well.”

Learning from other Assessors

While the assessors work together to assess the mock business meeting, they share how they teach and find out how other assessors are doing with their class. This helps them to improve their assessment and teaching. This positive description of collaborative assessment shows that it can help assessors learn from each other to improve their teaching and learning. This can be seen in the expressions from interviewee 3, “I enjoy evaluating groups taught by other lecturers as it allows me to observe how they conduct the mock business meeting assessment and compare their performance with that of my students,” “Opened the opportunity for me to improve my instructions for the course in the future,” and “the discussion carried out to finalize the marks also allows them to learn from one another, which in the long run will make them better instructors and evaluators.”

Shared Responsibility

Shared responsibility is a sub-theme of collaborative assessment, which shows that the assessors can share the responsibility of assessing and scoring the assessment. This can be seen in the expressions of interviewee 1, “Responsibility is shared between the evaluators.” Interviewee 2 stated, “Assessors also get to discuss and moderate the marks together, which validates the grading awarded to each student.” Likewise, interviewee 3 expressed that “the discussion between the evaluators after each mock business meeting assessment means that all evaluators agree upon all scores” and “It is refreshing to share the responsibility to score subjective assessments with other evaluators.”

The Attributes of Conventional Assessments Compared to Collaborative Assessments

Four sub-themes were found under the theme of conventional assessment. The sub-themes are issues of fairness, less effective, sole responsibility, and taxing or stressful as shown in the hierarchy chart in Figure 2. This accounted for the attributes of conventional assessments compared to collaborative assessments.

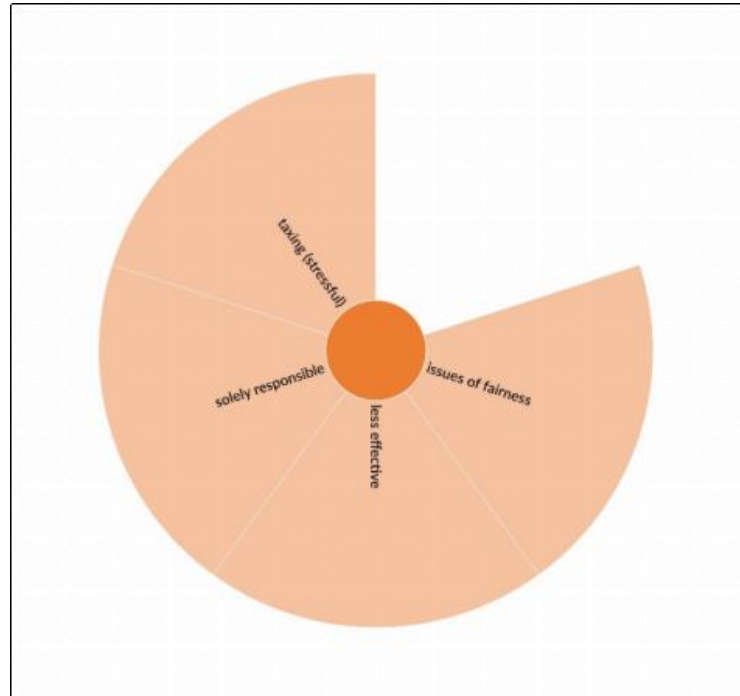


Figure 2. Attributes of Conventional Assessments

Issues of Fairness

Under the theme of conventional assessment, the issue of fairness is expressed in the interview. This is a negative description of conventional assessment, where the issue of fairness in grading may arise. Interviewee 2 mentioned, "Awarding marks for every student in each group can also be very subjective, which leads to issues of fairness that are being lenient or strict."

Less Effective

The conventional assessment was also described as less effective. This is a negative description of conventional assessment, which shows that the assessment may be less effective than a collaborative assessment. In the interview, interviewee 1 mentioned, "Also, the assessor does not have anyone to consult with if there are some matters regarding the assessment that need discussion. So, assessment in this manner is less effective." Likewise, interviewee 3 asserted that "I usually have only three groups doing their mock business meeting assessment in one day. This results in assessing the rest of the groups outside of class hours."

Sole Responsibility

Another attribute of conventional assessment is the sub-theme of sole responsibility. This description of conventional assessment shows that the class instructor will be solely responsible for the assessment and grading. For instance, Interviewee 1 stated, "In

conventional assessment, the assessor is solely responsible for evaluating all the different aspects and, because this is a live mock meeting, may not be able to focus on all the aspects at the same time fully." Interviewee 1 further stated, "conventional assessments are limited to one person doing the grading" and "a single assessor monopolizes the load or task of grading."

Taxing or Stressful

The fourth sub-theme under the theme of conventional assessment is taxing or stressful. This description of conventional assessment shows the burden that can be taxing, stressful, and mentally exhausting. This is expressed by Interviewee 1, "very taxing for the assessor," as well as Interviewee 2, "very taxing for the assessor," and Interviewee 3, "very taxing for the assessor" and "it is mentally exhausting."

Recommendations for Collaborative and Conventional Assessments

Table 1

Descriptions and Recommendations

Themes	Subthemes	Descriptions	Recommendations
Collaborative assessment	Accuracy	This positive description of collaborative assessment shows that it can provide accurate assessment results.	Expressions from the interviewees indicate that collaborative assessment is recommended for accuracy.
	Effectiveness	This is a positive description of collaborative assessment showing effectiveness.	Expressions from the interviewees indicate that collaborative assessment is recommended for effectiveness.
	Elimination of bias	This positive description of collaborative assessment shows that it can provide fair scoring and eliminate bias.	Expressions from the interviewees indicate that collaborative assessment is recommended for elimination of bias.
	Extra work and time	This is a negative description of collaborative assessment. It shows that it needs work such as careful planning and preparation, rescheduling of assessment to meet the student's and assessors' time,	Expressions from the interviewees indicate that they do not recommend collaborative assessment as it

		and more classes and groups to assess.	requires extra work and time.
	Learning from other assessors	This positive description of collaborative assessment shows that it can help assessors learn from each other to improve their teaching and learning.	Expressions from the interviewees indicate that collaborative assessment is recommended to improve teaching and learning.
	Shared responsibility	This is a positive description of collaborative assessment, showing that the assessors can share the responsibility of assessing and scoring the assessment.	Expressions from the interviewees indicate they enjoy the shared responsibility of assessing the students and moderating the marks.
Conventional assessment	Issues of fairness	This is a negative description of conventional assessment, where the issue of fairness in grading may arise.	Expressions from the interviewees indicate that grading can be biased.
	Less effective	This is a negative description of conventional assessment, which shows that the assessment may be less effective than a collaborative assessment.	Expressions from the interviewees indicate that comparatively, conventional assessment is not recommended for effectiveness.
	Solely responsible	This description of conventional assessment shows that the class instructor will be solely responsible for the assessment and grading.	Expressions from the interviewees indicate that sole responsibility promotes mistakes, so conventional assessment is not recommended for this attribute.
	Taxing or stressful	This description of conventional assessment shows the burden of	Expressions from the interviewees indicate that

		assessment that can be taxing, stressful, and mentally exhausting.	conventional assessments are taxing, stressful, and mentally exhausting, and therefore, they are not recommended for this attribute.
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Table 1 shows the descriptions and recommendations for the attributes of collaborative and conventional assessments based on their themes and subthemes. In the table, Collaborative assessments have six attributes, and all indicated positive recommendations for Collaborative assessments compared to conventional assessments except for the attribute of “extra work and time.” On the other hand, conventional assessments have four attributes. From the interview, all four attributes did not show that conventional assessments are to be recommended for mock business meetings assessments. Therefore, the results suggest that collaborative assessments are recommended for mock business meetings assessments compared to conventional assessments.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the attributes of conventional and collaborative assessments and make recommendations for the assessments conducted for a mock business meeting by interviewing the assessors. Swan, Shen, and Hiltz (2019) asserted that conducting assessments is an important data-gathering tool for students’ learning and development. As such, based on the thematic analysis conducted on the interviews with assessors of the mock business meetings, it is evident that collaborative assessments offer several advantages over conventional assessments. The analysis revealed six subthemes for collaborative assessment: accuracy, effectiveness, elimination of bias, extra work and time, learning from other assessors, and shared responsibility. On the other hand, conventional assessment had four subthemes: issues of fairness, less effectiveness, sole responsibility, and taxing or stressful. The findings suggest that collaborative assessment promotes accuracy, effectiveness, and the elimination of bias due to the diverse perspectives and shared responsibility involved. Additionally, it allows for learning from other assessors and encourages a more comprehensive evaluation process. In contrast, conventional assessments were found to have issues of fairness, low effectiveness, sole responsibility on a single assessor, and increased stress.

This research therefore contributes to the existing body of knowledge on assessment methods by providing empirical evidence that supports the shift towards collaborative assessment practices. Theoretically, it aligns with the constructivist paradigm, which stresses the importance of social interaction and collective learning. By demonstrating how collaborative assessments can impact students’ performance, this study reinforces the notion that assessment is not merely a measurement tool but a vital component in the learning process.

Contextually, the study is highly relevant to educators and learning institutions to enhance their assessments for business education. In effect, incorporating collaborative assessments

can lead to a more effective evaluation process. This not only better prepares students for real-world scenarios where teamwork is essential but also promotes a culture of shared learning and accountability among assessors.

Based on these results, it is therefore recommended that collaborative assessments for mock business meetings be adopted over conventional assessments. Collaborative assessments not only enhance the quality and accuracy of evaluations but also foster a more inclusive and effective assessment process. By leveraging the strengths of collaborative assessment, assessors and instructors can benefit from a more insightful evaluation of mock business meetings, leading to better decision-making and outcomes.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to the research design, data collection, data analysis, and write up. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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