

Newsletter No. 8

Workshop in December

Date: December 9, 2017, 10:30-14:30

Venue: NSC College, Room 31

Presenter: Nancy Mutoh (Emeritus professor of NUFSS)

Title: "Assessment Shapes Learning: How to Use Speaking and Writing Assessments to Lead Students to Competence and Confidence as English Users"



Abstract: The way teachers assess (evaluate) students' speaking and writing skills greatly affects how well students learn. Workshop participants will collaborate in creating an assessment plan for a textbook unit. Beginning with "continuous assessment," conducted during the teaching weeks, you will learn numerous strategies for enabling students to become better English speakers and writers, to become more aware of their own learning processes and even to offer useful feedback to peers. You will then plan your "summative assessments," focusing on procedures as well as rubrics (score sheets) for testing speaking and writing, with the aim of maximizing transparency and fairness in grading.

The number of participants: 31

1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- Formative assessment by students. I have focused mainly on summative assessment so far. To enhance students' learning, it is really helpful. I will think about the assessments for next unit of the textbook.
- It was a great help. I introduced the textbook I was using and got great ideas from the participants. Good brainstorming!
- Making rubric for other teachers. Other experienced teachers shared a lot of useful information on the speaking and listening assessments. I can apply what I have learned today in my classes for tomorrow.
- I realized that I should use Formative Assessment more frequently in class.
- We made very useful rubrics for a play. One is for a skit and the other is for acting it. I want my students to perform a play in the near future.
- I might need to review the existing rubric for my class to address all sub-goals, not just the final goal of the class.
- Formative assessments by students. Actually I did this in my class already. I asked students how much they understand after reading from the textbook.
- I would like to have students do more self-assessment.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- I learned two assessment, Formative (also called Continuous) and Summative (also called Final test). Both assessments lead to improve their skills and it enable students achieve the year goal.
- Backward assessment is a good thinking. I never had the opportunity to think and process ideas from the rubric, so now I have other ways to make lesson plans.
- I learned a lot more about the difference between continuous and summative assessment. I also enjoyed learning different ways for students to evaluate themselves.
- Assessment is the most crucial thing in teaching. I never can learn enough. Now that it's been a quite long time after finishing MA program, it's always nice to pause and have a think about my assessment.
- I use handouts following the procedure but I should focus on productive ability and give students more opportunities to use those skills.
- I enjoyed the dynamism achieved by pooling efforts to produce a common plan. The process by which we exchange ideas and settle on the most appropriate ones. One of our members will actually use today's plan in his AR report over the next couple of months for a lesson he is going to teach in the textbook.
- I learned that teachers and students work together to improve students' communication skills by using formative and summative assessment. Careful planning can change students' learning and improve their communication skills.
- Learning from peers! Thank you for setting up this situation. We had interesting conversation with two newcomers.
- The collaborative process in itself was very interesting and useful. Brainstorming and sharing of ideas. I learnt to think about the different stages in lesson planning more clearly.



2. Questions and Answers

Q (1): I'd like to learn more about assessment. Do you know any information or resources about assessment for junior or senior high school in Japan?

A: Yes, I do!

- (a) Go to <http://www3.nufs.ac.jp/~yoshi/> which is the homepage of Prof. Sato Kazuyoshi. He has published two series of resource books for junior and senior high school teachers. One describes how to test your students' speaking and writing ("performance testing" also called summative assessment) and the other series is "Focus on Form" which shows how to teach grammar so that your students understand how to use the grammar for real communication (four skills). You can buy the books at our monthly NUFFS Workshop.



- (b) Prof. Sato has also produced DVDs that you can borrow from the Workshop library on workshop days. In the first part of each DVD Prof. Sato explains the theory of one important type of activity (such as “rotating pair conversations, “focus on form” grammar teaching, etc.) and then you see students doing it.

Q (2): I'd like to know how to deal with self-assessment. I understand it is effective for students to reflect themselves. What should teachers do with them? Sometimes good students give themselves a low score, vice versa.

A: You do not need to worry about “scores.” Teachers don't generally keep scores, but teachers do monitor that students are doing the self-assessment tasks, often by simply walking around and looking.

The purpose of student self-assessment is for each student to observe their own learning process and whether their English is improving bit by bit.

For that reason, teachers may have students self-assess frequently on a very short rubric, often in a corner at the bottom of a teacher-made worksheet. One minute is often enough time. Please see examples of “formative assessment” below.



Q (3): I couldn't follow the discussion part at the end of today's workshop. The topic was 'a problem about students' shyness' when they have a speaking test. What solutions were suggested?

A: The initial question was about a student who had a disabling fear of talking in front of groups.

Suggested solutions

- (a) Avoiding extreme nervousness or panic by assuring that students have so much practice in advance that they feel able to talk, even though they feel nervous.
- (b) Let the student do the test later with only the teacher listening (or with the teacher as conversation partner).

Types of Continuous Assessment

The following activities are solutions to learning problems that teachers saw students having. They are now a part of the teaching practice of many NUFS Workshop teachers, passed on to new teachers. Learners naturally have learning problems, so we need to continuously assess those problems and create more ways to solve them.

A. Continuous assessment by teacher

(1) **Problem:** Learners (Ls) come into English class speaking in Japanese. It's hard for them to switch quickly into textbook English.

Solution: Short timed rotating “warm-up conversations”: Light, interesting topic at Ls level of vocabulary. Three conversations with three classmates, same topic. Teacher (T) writes topic on board and gives an example of how to start.

(2) **Problem:** Ls need more English talking time.

Solution: Ls alternate reading aloud to partner sentences of a short passage from textbook that Ls are somewhat familiar with. There is a sequence of steps from easy to challenging: from T reads slowly and Ls read slowly to one partner reads chunks of sentence and other partner

(3) **Problem:** Ls need more English talking time.

Solution: Ls check own Q&A answers verbally in pairs (“Do you agree?” “Yes I do/No I don’t” “How about you?”)

(4) **Problem:** Students are told to talk about a given topic but don’t know how to start or structure their conversation.

Solution: T writes on board a simple structure (called a scaffold) for Ls to use.

(5) **Problem:** Grammar problems that many Ls made

Solution: “Common Errors” worksheet

T collected Ls’ texts and made a list of several short sentences or phrases containing those grammar problems, one mistake per sentence. Ls work in small groups to correct the sentences and also look at their text for those mistakes and help each other correct them.

B. Continuous assessment by students

Self-assessment

(1) The little one or two-minute rubric that is repeated over time so students become aware of their learning progress and often set their own improvement goals.

EX: T wants Ls to become more aware of these criteria of good conversations: Interesting content, Asking follow-up questions, Use of suitable communication strategies, Delivery (eye contact, loud enough voice).

(2) To increase amount of English spoken during English-speaking activities

15 second self-assessment chart conducted at the end of each class and dated: _____%

(3) Have students transcribe a short conversation in order to study it in some way (Did I use various words to show my interest in my partner’s speaking? Or did I use the same one all the time?; Did I share the talking time about 50/50 with my partner?)

(4) Peer assessment of writing (Review the sample in the Workshop resource packet)

The most helpful comment was “more”



Action Research Session

Date: December 9, 2017, 14:30-17:00

Venue: NSC College, Room 32, Room 41, Room 51

Advisers: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, Juanita Heigham (NUFS)

The number of participants: 15



Next Workshop (scheduled)

Date: January 13, 2018, 10:30-14:30, 14:30-17:00

Venue: NSC College, Room 31

Presenter: Curtis Kelly (Kansai University)

Title: “Task-Based Learning: Theories and Methods”