

NUFS Workshop 2014

Newsletter No. 1

Workshop in May (Day 1)

Date: May 10, 2014, 13:00-16:20

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322

Title: Demonstrations (Performance test)

Presenter: Yukimi Fukumoto (Oguchi Junior High School)

Abstract: Why do we assess our students? Why do we need performance assessment? The term "assessment" may have negative connotation for some teachers/students. However, it can be a powerful tool that promotes student learning, increases students' motivation, and develops their confidence. In this workshop, participants will learn the importance of assessment in a language program and how we can use it to maximize student learning. I will share my action research and some examples of speaking tests to show how I used assessment to develop students' communicative abilities, grammatical understanding, motivation, and confidence.



Presenter: Noriko Okuda (Tenpaku High School)

Abstract: "Tests should not be divorced from how one learns something." (p.183, Lee and VanPattern 1995) Overall objective of language education in high school is "to develop students' communication abilities...". "Paper tests cannot measure speaking ability, then performance tests are necessary. How can we conduct a performance test? What do we need to do before the test? How can we evaluate it? I will demonstrate classroom activities, a preparation lesson, and a conversation test. Participants will take part in this demonstration by playing roles of students. I will share the results of a practice at my previous school including washback effects.



The number of participants: 64

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

- I want to make sure to show students the rubric for the speaking test before the speaking test.
- Conversation about travel was interesting for me. Students can talk about travel step by step. First, they do pattern practice and then they can talk about their own experience. I thought this was great.
- I'd like to use short responses "Uh-huh", "I see", "Sounds interesting" and so on. I think it's important for students to feel real English conversation atmosphere.

- Conversation strategies practice with rotating partners. Practicing with different partners is fun. I hope students will enjoy practicing.
- To choose a topic from textbook and make activities, then let students do timed-conversation in pairs. This is the best task and students can acquire grammar rules and vocabularies naturally and smoothly.
- Changing partners: stand up, move and have seats. I used to let students walk around. My ways were not good.
- How to do speaking test with AET. In my last speaking test, my students only read model conversation in their textbook. I can change the test with a lot of practice.



2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I learned how important 'speaking test' and 'assessment' are. When I was a junior high student, I never experienced like these activities well. So, I want to try to use these activities I learned today.
- Performance test will increase the motivation of studying English. It will also improve the class atmosphere.
- I have learned that assessment is an integral part of teaching/learning. The results of the performance tests shows the teachers and the students the areas where more work needs to be done. Students can also gain a feel of accomplishment when they see the positive results.
- I learned the importance of speaking test. I was also inspired with this workshop. There were many teachers who were enthusiastic to make their lessons effective. I learned a lot from this workshop.
- I was wondering if giving lessons in English for junior high students is good or not, because their vocabulary is limited. But I'll try to keep using English in the class so that they'll get used to my lessons and they'll like English.
- How to conduct 'English Expression I' class, making it more communicative. We should make the goal clear for each unit and have the students realize what they should do in class and at home.
- I learned it's important to let students know how the speaking test goes beforehand not to put them under too much pressure. This year, I'm teaching 1st graders, so I want my students to know English is fun through speaking tests.
- I have to make classes in which students can speak and practice many times. I have my students do activities in my class, but they are about grammar I teach. So they understand grammar well, but they can't use it when they speak. I thought I have to give them a lot of opportunities to speak English.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): Do you know any other books published in Japan about performance test?

A (Yukimi): Do you mean books written in Japanese or books available in Japan? All the books I read about assessment were written in English. So, my recommendation is "Blaz, D. (2001). *A collection of*

performance tasks and rubrics: Foreign languages. New York: Eye On Education," which I cited in my presentation. You can get it through Amazon.

(Noriko): 「英語教師のための新しい評価法」松沢伸二著 大修館

Q (2): What is the percentage of ‘performance test’ in evaluation, compared to ‘written test’?

A (Yukimi): It depends on how much performance tests I give in a term, but I try to give almost the same percentage to performance tests, maybe slightly less than written tests.

(Noriko): Here is the percentage of last year’s 1st term evaluation:

paper tests (mid-term100 + final 100) 200points (67%),
performance tests(show&tell 30, conversation test 60, attitude10) 100 points (33%)

Q (3): I want to introduce more pair work in my lesson, but my students don’t have enough vocabulary to express what they want to say. How can students, especially slow learners, increase their vocabulary through lesson?

A (Yukimi): When I give communicative activities, I introduce vocabulary that students benefit learning to express themselves. I also give lots of example sentences that students can imitate to express their thoughts. This is because students need enough input before they become able to produce output.



(Noriko): How about giving them enough examples, or choices? It may be better to start with vocabulary input before starting output activities.

Q (4): I’d like to know how to make a class in 40 students. I can’t control students well, because 40 students are too large to teach English. / In communication I, we have 40 students. I find it hard to deal with 40 in speaking test. I want to know some ways to handle large number of students.

A (Yukimi): It takes time to conduct speaking tests to 40 students. One way that I could suggest is to have students record their paired/group conversation and transcribe the English they spoke on a sheet of paper. They can analyze their language use and self-evaluate their performance. Teachers can evaluate based on the recordings and students' language analysis and reflection.

(Noriko): I agree a class of 40 is too large. One idea is that they can have a group presentation or a group project.

Q (5): How many times do you have performance test a year?

A (Yukimi): I used to give three or four performance tests per year, at least one in each term, when I

worked at a previous school a few years ago. However, now I'm trying to give more performance tests. I've just made a plan of giving three performance tests in this term.

(Noriko): I had “show & tell” twice and “conversation test” three times, so in total 5 performance tests in a year.

Q (6): Why does everything need to be decided by janken? What is the ‘learning’ value with janken?

A (Yukimi): I use Janken when I want to invigorate students and/or have students decide who goes first. There may be more learning values, but I rarely use it in my class. When I give paired conversation, for example, I simply tell students that anyone can start off a conversation as in a natural conversation.

(Noriko): For a conversation test, it can help to make an impromptu and fair situation in a sense. Sorry that might be too much...I sometimes decide saying, “Window side is A, and another is B”.

Q (7): My students are very shy. Some has very low ability to speak or express themselves in English. How can I or where should I start to encourage more English communication in class.

A (Yukimi): I try to convince students that it is important and fun to use English to express themselves and communicate with each other. Words are not enough, so I do my best to create communicative activities that are interesting and conducive to learning. Introducing backchannels and fillers will make a difference, too because students find it amusing to use them.

(Noriko): I think Japanese students tend to be afraid to embarrass themselves by making mistakes. It is important to make a classroom where everyone can make mistakes. Some ideas are (1) doing activities which have more weight on fluency (or amount of English) than accuracy, (2) getting them into groups or pairs before individuals to speak in class (ex. checking answers in pairs before checking them in class), (3) praising a lot.



Q (8): I wanted to know more about how teachers evaluate student’ speaking abilities.

A (Yukimi): I ask my ALT to conduct speaking tests, having prepared all the materials needed for speaking tests (handouts and rubrics) and given enough scaffolding to my students to make them comfortable with the test formats. However, I can't give this kind of more-or-less interactive speaking tests with the ALT very often because they are very time-consuming. So, I've started to incorporate peer assessment to evaluate speaking abilities in such cases as making speeches. I have each student in groups of five make a speech in turn, and I ask the leader to evaluate if each member was able to make a speech smoothly without looking at his/her handout, based on the criteria spelled out in my rubric.

(Noriko): There is no one ideal way. These are steps, I think, teachers need to do. Teachers need to (1) clarify the goals or objectives (CAN-DOs), (2) decide the way(ways) of testing students achievement, (3)

consider the criteria, (4) make a rubric with as concrete descriptions as possible, (5) share the rubric with other teachers, (6) try out the rubric, finally (7) conduct a speaking test and evaluate their abilities.

Q (9): How would you monitor a three student speaking test (stop a student copying/hiding)?

A (Yukimi): I ask my ALT to conduct speaking tests. He sets a timer and evaluates students one by one within the time I specified. I, as a main teacher, plan it all out before we give speaking tests, and I create/improve the system of how we give speaking tests so that tests go smoothly. To prevent students peeking their handouts, for example, I ask students to leave their handouts behind before taking the seats in front of the ALT who gives the tests.



Q (10): For beginners in English, it's important that learners copy a form, but for higher level students it's difficult and can get in the way of actual communication. How can we teach the grammar forms while still being communicative? For example, 'How is the weather today?' is not actually communicative.

A (Yukimi): Learners go through steps to acquire a second language. Beginners need more framework and set phrases to imitate before they can produce their own utterances by themselves, while advanced learners need more freedom so that they can try out making original sentences to stretch their language control.

Q (11): The key point of performance (communication) is how to put in words like 'Oh, really!', 'Sounds nice'. However, if I do drama performance test, what should I do?

A (Yukimi): I'm not sure if I understand the term "drama performance test" correctly. Do you mean that students need to perform based on a fixed script? If so, how about asking students to make their lines as natural as possible using communication strategies? Then, they can practice reading lines with emotions.

Workshop in May (Day 2)

Date: May 11, 2014, 9:30-12:30

Venue: Aichi Kenko Plaza, Conference Room 1

Title: Orientation for Action Research

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (NUFS)

Presenter: Takemi Morioka (Takinomizu Junior High School)

Abstract: I conducted action research at public junior high school for three years, supported by this workshop. I implemented focus-on-form instruction to teach grammar communicatively and also gave tasks in which students could



express themselves in English, such as essay writing, poster sessions and timed-conversations. Students' communicative skills were assessed based on rubrics. I will tell how students improved their communicative competence and attitudes toward English learning as well as how I have learned from this research and changed as an English teacher. Action research helped me understand my students better and improve my teaching.

The number of participants: 21



Workshop in June (Scheduled)

Date: June 14, 2014, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

Venue: NSC College, Building Minami, Room A31

Presenter: Tim Murphey (Kanda University of International Studies)

Title: "Experiential Creating, Learning, and Teaching as Overlapping Co-Constructed Concepts"

Please send an email to Chihaya (chiha143@nufs.ac.jp) to attend this workshop.